

## **The Reception of Oscar Wilde and Bernard Shaw in the Light of Early Twentieth-Century Austrian Censorship**

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### **Introduction**

In an article that appeared in the Viennese newspaper *Neue Freie Presse* on 23 April 1905, Bernard Shaw wrote of his own and his Irish compatriot and fellow dramatist Oscar Wilde's reception in Vienna:

There are three European capitals that have not yet advanced beyond the first quarter of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. [...] In Vienna, I will not be understood for at least another hundred years, because I am part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century [...]. But Vienna will more easily get used to the style of Oscar Wilde, for not only did Oscar Wilde embody the artistic culture of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, but he also showed a very mundane inclination towards wealth, luxury, and elegance. [...] Seeing that Vienna, apart from Paris, is the most regressive city in Europe, though it still considers itself an 'enfant de son siècle par excellence', it ought to appreciate Oscar Wilde far more greatly than he will ever be appreciated anywhere in Germany or England.

In this context, Jacques Le Rider has argued that certain cultural aspects of Vienna Modernism between 1890 and 1910 can be attributed to the movement's essentially pre-modern socio-economic and political environment, where the urban modernisation process set in at a later stage than in other Western European countries ("Between Modernism" 1). Throughout Europe, these modernising developments entailed far-reaching changes of the social structure, and an accelerated pace of social differentiation within urban milieus, which characteristically led to a "loss of familiar patterns of orientation and subjective individual fragmentation" (Csáky, Feichtinger, Karoshi, and Munz 14). However, in Central Europe, the larger region historically and politically united by the state entity of the Habsburg Monarchy, the consequences of commonly experienced vertical differentiation of society and its implied disruption of individual and collective consciousness were multiplied by horizontal ethnic-cultural diversification (ibid. 17; Stachel 18-19).

As the capital of the k.u.k. Monarchy, Vienna, the majority of whose population was made up by migrants from the periphery of the Austro-Hungarian crown lands, presented a

microcosm of the entire ethnic, linguistic and cultural plurality of the Habsburg multi-nation state (Kokorz and Mitterbauer 401). It appears worth considering whether this exceptionally high degree of “internationality,” reflected in the cultural networking activities and pronouncedly cosmopolitan outlook assumed by Viennese artists and intellectuals (397), finds its expression in the local literary and theatrical reception of foreign cultural elements.

In this respect, cultural transfer research becomes particularly relevant in view of the cultural scene of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy. Its heterogeneous structure particularly invited processes of cultural transfer, which rely on the context change of cultural elements within and between hybrid cultures, resulting in their modification and/or appropriation (399). As cultures are “inherently unstable, mediatory modes of fashioning experience” (Greenblatt 121), the stability of a culture can only be ensured by means of recontextualising or even excluding foreign cultural elements, thus regulating their otherwise unrestricted circulation (Suppanz 28). This process of “cultural blockage” (Greenblatt 121) involves a careful selection and standardisation of texts, primarily being carried out by officially authorised institutions such as censorship offices. According to Pierre Bourdieu, censorship plays a particularly important role in times of political and social upheaval, when restrictive rules and laws are enforced by those who dominate in order to preserve the prevailing discourse (91, 227; Merkle 15). Considering the growing instability in the Habsburg empire with its ethnic and cultural heterogeneity, the regulating mechanisms employed by the censorship authorities not only served to convey a certain conception of a homogeneous national culture on the surface, but also functioned as a means of “legitimation and de-legitimation in the process of cultural consecration<sup>1</sup> within a plural society” (Suppanz 31).

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<sup>1</sup> Suppanz uses the German term ‘Deutungsmacht’, which corresponds with the term coined by Pierre Bourdieu.

### **Principles and Practice of Early Twentieth-Century Austrian Stage Censorship**

Censorship regulations in early twentieth-century Austria-Hungary were essentially based on the 1850 Theatre Act, which contained a catalogue of prohibited forms of stage representations. This covered anything that might constitute an offence against penal law, public peace and order, the Habsburg imperial dynasty, the constitution, public decency, religion or the privacy of living individuals (*Theaterordnung* 1976-1980). Moreover, the provisions required organizers of any public theatre performance to apply to the governor of the respective crown land for a production licence, in the process of which two copies of the textbook were to be delivered to the authorities, who returned one of them, containing potential textual amendments. In case of rejection, the theatre management could launch an appeal to the Ministry of the Interior, while works giving rise to partial objection could become subject to revision. However, even if a production licence was granted, the authorities maintained the right to attend not only the public performances, but the dress rehearsals as well, to forestall any possible infringement of the legal provisions (Spitaler 32-33).

A reformed and modified ordinance “pertaining to the administration of theatre censorship” was issued in 1903, allowing for greater freedom in the dramatic depiction of contemporary social and political questions, and generally recommending a liberal implementation of censorship regulations (*Erlass* 82-83). In case of a violation of the principles set down in the Theatre Act, the play was to be submitted to a censorship advisory board, which remained subject to public appointment by the governors of the crown lands, and consisted of three members, among them an administrative and a judicial officer, and a representative of the literary and theatrical scene. Their statement as to whether, or under which conditions, a production licence could be issued, was to form the basis of the governor’s final decision (82-83.).

**When Censors Disagree, the Artist Perseveres<sup>2</sup>: Blockage Averted in the Viennese premiere of Oscar Wilde's *Salome***

When, in June 1892, the Lord Chamberlain imposed a ban on Oscar Wilde's symbolist one-act tragedy *Salome*, it marked only the beginning of censors' repeated preoccupation with the play on both sides of the Channel. Characterising the play as "half Biblical, half pornographic" (qtd. in Donohue 118), the Lord Chamberlain's Examiner of Plays, Edward F. Smyth Pigott – once acidly described by Bernard Shaw as a "walking compendium of vulgar insular prejudice" (qtd. in Holland and Hart-Davis 98) – officially refused a licence on account of traditional Protestant law that prohibited the depiction of Biblical subjects on stage (Ellmann 351), which sparked Wilde's boundless fury and indignation. "The whole affair is a great triumph for the Philistine, but only a momentary one," Wilde wrote to the theatre critic William Archer, adding firmly: "We must abolish the censure. I think we can do it" (Holland and Hart-Davis 534).

However, Wilde's essentially "unEnglish" play, a "continental work, realizable only in Paris or Germany or Moscow" (Raby 330), whose suggestive moral and sexual ambiguity fed on a toxic cocktail of eroticism, blasphemy and necrophilia, decidedly overtaxed English audiences' indulgence of artistic licence. It remained confined to a handful of largely indifferently received private London productions for almost four decades until the suspension of the censor's ban in 1930. In England, *Salome* was mainly, in the wake of Wilde's high-profile public court-case and subsequent social downfall, perceived to reflect and highlight the moral and sexual depravity its author had come to stand for. But, according to Wilde's literary executor Robert Ross, it was this play which effectively remade his literary reputation "wherever the English language is not spoken" (qtd. in Donohue 119). There was substantial public interest in the work, life and persona of Oscar Wilde in Germany and Austria, generated by the astonishingly broad coverage in the local press of the author's court

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<sup>2</sup> "When critics disagree the artist is in accord with himself" (Wilde 22).

case and death. The following brief analysis of the commentaries by the Austrian censorship authorities prior to the Vienna premiere of *Salome* in December 1903 reveals a dominant sense of inseparable interdependence of the author's life and work.

Of all Wilde's dramatic works, *Salome* suffered most poignantly from its originator's social ostracism, since it was considered highly reflective of Wilde's personal lifestyle, making the play the epitome of morbid decadence and moral depravity. In the first statement issued by the police official in charge of censorship on 14 March 1903 (after the Deutsches Volkstheater in Vienna had applied for a production licence of *Salome*), the argument against the play's approval included factors such as its stark emphasis on "the sensuous moment," and the representation of Biblical characters, which were likely to "cause offence to religious sentiments." Moreover, "the Englishman [sic] Oskar Wilde was publicly named sexually perverted, and therefore traces of his morbid inclinations could be detected in his work" (NOELA [Lower Austrian Archives], censorship records, 1582 ex 1903).

Similarly, upon the theatre's submission of the revised textbook, the literary historian and censorship advisory board member Dr Carl Glossy regarded the play as essentially indicative of Wilde's public image of moral degeneracy. *Salome*'s author, he elaborates in his recommendation to the Lower Austrian governor, is known as the main representative of Decadence, a "poet whose dialogue is dazzling, whose imagination is fuelled by wild passion. Here [in the play], [his] morbid, deviant disposition [...] is crudely expressed." Essentially, Glossy harbours considerable reservations about the "product of [Wilde's] diseased mind," by whose stage representation parts of the audience could be "offended in their sense of decency" (18 October 1903, NOELA 1184 ex 1907).

Whereas Glossy's objections remain centred on the moral implications of the play, the former First Crown Prosecutor of Vienna, Franz-Josef Ritter von Cischini, in his function as legal advisor to the board, expresses grave doubts about the reception of its religious aspects, expecting "a storm of protest" to emanate from the enraged Catholic clergy. Surprisingly,

Cischini believes that “the erotic parts do not appear likely to offend the sense of decency and cause public nuisance, since they are always attended by a sense of horror, which reaches its climax with the play’s concluding scene” (1 November 1903, NOELA 1184 ex 1907). Additional weight is given to the fact that the core audience of the Volkstheater, which had indeed earned a reputation for its artistically ambitious repertory and the production of progressive, slightly “risqué” contemporary European plays (Höslinger 300), would be expected to be familiar with modern drama and its contents (1 November 1903, NOELA 1184 ex 1907).

As one of the more notable works of modern drama, “it cannot be denied that alongside many paradoxes [*Salome*] contains poetic beauty [...] and is, in any case, the work of a ‘poet’”: thus Court Counsellor Ludwig Tils, government representative in the Lower Austrian parliament, pleads in favour of the play’s approval (18 November 1903, NOELA 1184 ex 1907). Not surprisingly, Tils’s brief introductory summary of Wilde’s career and eventual public disgrace establishes an automatic link between the scandalous revelations of Wilde’s sexual orientation and the play in question, demonstratively testifying to the common observation that the interest in the author’s biographical details repeatedly intruded upon the critical reception of his works. However, even though “*Salome* too shows traces of perverted inclinations,” the princess’s sexual advances do not imply a sacrilege or defamation of John the Baptist, since “[t]he poet lets Salome perish, slain like a beast, while John gloriously dies a martyr’s death. Thereby the balance between poetic and moral justice is established and spelt out clearly in whose favour it is” (ibid.) It seems to Tils that the play cannot be denied to the Viennese audience, since *Salome*’s objectionable parts can be attributed to ulterior “poetic motives (even if their source emanates from a poisoned imagination)”, merely proposing a number of cuts and that the Baptist’s head be covered with a piece of cloth (ibid.).

Despite the advisory board members’ contradictory responses, *Salome* was approved by governor’s decree on 20 November 1903, under the condition of further textual

eliminations, and that the audience be spared the gross sight of the Baptist's severed head as much as possible (20 November 1903, NOELA 1184 ex 1907). Eventually, the play experienced its first night at the Deutsches Volkstheater on 12 December, and, in tune with its scandal-tainted previous history, met with an essentially mixed reception, as the police report on the performance notes: "The violent protest, which, immediately after the curtains had closed, found its expression in an intense chorus of hissing, soon had to contend with roaring applause" (13 December 1903, NOELA 1184 ex 1907).

In contrast to the Berlin situation, where *Salome* had initially been banned, the Viennese authorities appeared to have no fundamental objections against the play, which was passed without major controversy. However, the Berlin example had shown that the censor's ban – widely covered in the Viennese press – had only promoted public interest and contributed to boosting the play's popularity (Davis 156). The approval of Wilde's controversial play was, even if the mechanisms of blockage could not be enforced entirely, connected with a host of recommended textual amendments and modifications, as well as moral and religious considerations.

### **“[D]ramatic Art as Unfit to Deal with Serious Questions”<sup>3</sup>: Blockage Enforced and the Reception of Bernard Shaw's *Press Cuttings* in Vienna**

In a letter to his literary agent, translator and mediator, Siegfried Trebitsch, Bernard Shaw wrote on 28 June 1909:

There has been a great fuss over here over the enclosed play Blanco Posnet [*The Shewing-up of Blanco Posnet*], which was [...] forbidden by the Lord Chamberlain (our Censor) on the ground that it is blasphemous. [...] On the same day the Lord Chamberlain forbid [sic] the performance of another play of mine called *Press Cuttings* which I also enclose. This time the objection was that it contained political personalities. (Weiss, *Letters* 144)

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<sup>3</sup> Bernard Shaw. "The Censorship of Plays (A letter to the Editor of *The Times*, London, 30 June 1909)." *The Bodley Head Bernard Shaw: Collected Plays with their Prefaces*. Vol. 3. Ed. Dan H. Laurence (London: Max Reinhardt, 1971, p. 890). Following the censor's objection to *Press Cuttings*, Shaw wrote a number of letters to various London newspapers.

As a matter of fact, Shaw had repeatedly protested against the fierce regulations of British stage censorship (Nicholson, 24-25); consequently, “there can be little doubt that he would have anticipated and relished the problems he would be causing” (42) by submitting these plays for licence at the Lord Chamberlain’s Office.

Subtitled “A topical sketch compiled from the editorial and correspondence columns of the daily papers during the women’s war in 1909”, *Press Cuttings* was “obviously designed mainly to annoy a number of public figures” (Hynes 233). In the one-act play, two of the leading characters, a General Mitchener and a Prime Minister called Balsquith, find themselves confronted with militant suffragettes, and are eventually “converted to votes for women and civil rights for the Army” (233). The Lord Chamberlain, however, would only permit a performance of the play provided that the suggestive names were altered, “as they were too like Kitchener-and-Milner and Asquith-and-Balfour for his approval” (Mander and Mitchenson 130). After Shaw had agreed to make the changes, *Press Cuttings* was licensed and ultimately presented by the Civic and Dramatic Guild in a special private performance at the London Royal Court Theatre on July 9, 1909 (Laurence 843).

It appears that the publicity the *Press Cuttings* affair had attracted in Britain soon aroused the interest of both German and Austrian newspapers (Weiss, *Letters* 144). Apart from the fact that Shaw’s dramatic works were widely known among German-speaking theatre audiences thanks to the incessant efforts of his Viennese translator Trebitsch, *Press Cuttings* had a strong appeal because of a passage dealing with the possibility of a German invasion of Britain. Actually, in the play General Mitchener contends that England rules the seas “by nature” and must prepare for a German invasion (145).

When *Press Cuttings* (or *Zeitungsausschnitte*, as the title was translated into German by Trebitsch) was submitted by the Theater in der Josefstadt in Vienna in 1910, it was instantly rejected by the Austrian stage censorship authorities. Shaw wrote a letter of protest to the Viennese newspaper *Neue Freie Presse*, which reported the affair in an article sharply

criticising the practice of stage censorship.<sup>4</sup> It suggested that the play had been disapproved of only because of the “war scare which certain people [in England] are fomenting” (Weiss, *Letters* 144). In reality, it was feared that a public performance in Austria would “severely harm international considerations” (19 March 1910, NOELA 1525 ex 1916), since the play had failed to obtain a licence from the Lord Chamberlain. Even though advisory board member Glossy maintained that the play’s prohibition in London did not justify a suspension of the performance licence in Vienna, “considering that a non-British audience does not even show as much interest in the subject matter of the play as British theatregoers” (5 July 1910, NOELA 1525 ex 1916), he fully agreed with Cischini that the Josefstadt audience would immediately recognise Shaw’s derision of the British military. According to Cischini, “it is a commonly accepted fact that the British are very easily offended if they find their superiority over other nations challenged. As a result, a performance in Austria could be understood as an hostile action towards Britain” (9 July 1910, NOELA 1525 ex 1916). In addition, the censorship advisory board pleaded for the deletion of certain passages from the dialogue between Mitchener and The Orderly. In accordance with censorship regulations, Glossy stated that “in any case, a degradation of the military must not be staged in Austria” (5 July 1910, NOELA 1525 ex 1916).<sup>5</sup> Consequently, the play was banned, despite Trebitsch’s attempts to intervene with the censorship authorities by agreeing to make some major adjustments to the text, as is testified by a handwritten letter by the translator included in the *Press Cuttings* archive record (20 March 1911, NOELA 1525 ex 1916).

In Britain, after the publication of Shaw’s highly controversial pamphlet *Common Sense about the War* just as the First World War was beginning, the playwright “turned almost overnight from a tolerated, popular provocateur into a national persona non grata” (Bertolini 128), due to his harsh condemnation “of British foreign policy, exposure of British

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<sup>4</sup> The article appeared anonymously in the *Neue Freie Presse* on 10 September 1911.

<sup>5</sup> As Steven Beller puts it, “[t]he army held a central place in the Habsburg Monarchy; indeed, because of the constitutional structure of Austria-Hungary, it was, next to the emperor-king himself, the most important institution common to the empire’s two halves” (129).

Pecksniffery, and sympathy for Germany's dilemmas" (Weiss, *Letters* 180). However, Trebitsch managed to re-establish Shaw's plays on the Viennese stage (Weiss, *Further Letters* 236). To do so, he followed Shaw's advice: "[I]f you are bent on the desperate enterprise of having my plays performed in Vienna [...], you had better try *Press Cuttings*. It makes a British Commander in Chief sufficiently ridiculous to please the patriotic section of Vienna" (Weiss, *Letters* 189). Consequently, the Theater in der Josefstadt made a new attempt to obtain a licence of performance for *Press Cuttings* in 1916, arguing that circumstances had changed during the intervening six years (13 August 1916, NOELA 1525 ex 1916). Indeed, the police official responsible for censorship declared that "in view of the current state of war between the [Austro-Hungarian] monarchy and England no objections can be raised against the performance of the play, which at that time had been banned only out of political considerations" (ibid.) The governor of Lower Austria, however, gave instructions to change the name of the "English General Mitchener (Kitchener) [...], who had recently died under tragic circumstances" (17 August 1916, NOELA 1525 ex 1916).<sup>6</sup> Nevertheless, the play never made its way onto the Viennese stages.<sup>7</sup>

## **Conclusion**

An examination of early twentieth-century Viennese stage repertoires reveals that both Oscar Wilde and Bernard Shaw, for very different reasons, produced a lasting and impressive imprint on Vienna's theatrical landscape. Even though the Anglo-Irish playwrights shared a similar background of satirical subversion aimed at the 'core values' of English society, they remained essentially divided in their conceptions of art, world view and lifestyle, which could

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<sup>6</sup> General Kitchener drowned in June 1916 while embarking on a diplomatic mission to Russia.

<sup>7</sup> On 27 October 1916, the Josefstadt staged Shaw's one-act plays *The Shewing-Up of Blanco Posnet*, *The Man of Destiny*, and *How He Lied to Her Husband*, with theatre manager and actor Josef Jarno starring in the leading roles of Blanco Posnet and Napoleon respectively. It appears that Jarno had originally intended *Press Cuttings* to be part of this production and thus applied for a production licence. However, the records are not conclusive about the reasons why he eventually decided against the performance.

be subsumed under the programmatic headlines Aestheticism vs. Asceticism, or, as Shaw himself phrased it so succinctly, Artist vs. Propagandist.<sup>8</sup>

In Vienna, as elsewhere, the early reception of Wilde and his works was distinctly characterised less by any serious interest in the merits of his literary achievements than by the scandalous nature of his court-case, subsequent prison-sentence and untimely death (Bridgwater 48), and became subject to mechanisms of public curiosity, lurid sensationalism and ideological instrumentalisation. However, it seems as if Wilde's aesthetic theories, influenced by French Symbolism, "found considerably more resonance in Francophile Vienna (and Munich) than in Francophobe Berlin" (47), more naturally harmonising with and fertilising the local artistic avant-garde milieu. There, Wilde's work had been introduced in the early 1890s, mainly due to the cultural mediation of Hermann Bahr, the main catalyst and agent of European Modernism within the "Young Vienna" movement (Daviau 13).<sup>9</sup> Thus, the Viennese fin-de-siècle affinity with Parisian Symbolism and basic orientation towards the aestheticism of French *Décadence* certainly eased the transfer of *Salome*<sup>10</sup> into the Austrian theatrical context. Moreover, the comparatively unobstructed granting of a theatrical production licence to *Salome* could potentially be considered a symptom of deliberate contrast and distancing from Berlin and its aesthetic, theatrical and even political norms. The latter tendency found its most striking expression in Bahr's critical work *Die Überwindung des Naturalismus* [*Overcoming Naturalism*], which programmatically emphasised Vienna's independent cultural development, and, at the same time, proposed its artistic opposition to Berlin Naturalism (Kokorz and Mitterbauer 403).

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<sup>8</sup> "Wilde wrote for the stage as an artist. I am simply a propagandist." (Laurence, *The Bodley Head Bernard Shaw* 127).

<sup>9</sup> As early as in November 1894, Bahr dedicated a lengthy essay to the Anglo-Irish writer in the liberal weekly *Die Zeit*, which, by suggesting that Wilde's fame to a greater extent rested on his notorious public persona than on the quality of his writings, laid the foundation of one of the major currents in the German and Austrian Wilde-reception (87-89). Due to its substantial coverage of foreign-language literature, the journal played an important role as a "journalistic expression of cultural hybridity in Vienna modernism" (Kokorz and Mitterbauer 407).

<sup>10</sup> *Salome* was, it is worth noting, written in French, and had its 1896 premiere in Paris.

To be sure, as the above-cited recommendations delivered by the censorship board members, and contemporary press reviews, imply, Wilde's play – and, by extension, even Richard Strauss's opera – were read and perceived in the context of disease, sexual aberration and pathological degeneration (Gilman 55). Nevertheless, parts of the censors' evaluations betray a startlingly open-minded awareness of the aesthetic and literary quality of Wilde's text, as *Salome* is repeatedly deemed the "work of a poet" (Glossy and Tils, NOELA 1184 ex 1907) and one of the more notable works of modern drama, containing "poetic beauty" (Tils) and "dazzling" dialogue (Glossy).

Despite the ostensibly liberal censorship policy employed by the authorities towards the play, it needs to be borne in mind that the proposed textual modifications constitute an attempt to regulate the circulation, and achieve at least a partial transformation of cultural artefacts (Greenblatt 121; Lüsebrink 28). Moreover, the available records suggest that the capacity for creative licence and artistic open-mindedness was contextually determined by the framework of the local theatre scene, which finds revealing expression in board member Cischini's reference to the progressively-oriented core audience of the Deutsches Volkstheater (NOELA 1184 ex 1907). It appears worth mentioning, therefore, that Richard Strauss's opera *Salome*, despite Gustav Mahler's persistent interventions, remained banned from production at Vienna's court opera house until 1918, and experienced its Austrian premiere by way of a German guest performance likewise at the Deutsches Volkstheater in 1907 (Höslinger 300-305).

Similarly to Wilde, the early reception of Shaw's works in Vienna, the theatrical centre of Austria, was profoundly influenced by the playwright's public image. Fostered by the extensive first-hand accounts of his "interpreter and apostle" (Weiss, *Letters* 4) Siegfried Trebitsch, which regularly appeared in local newspapers, the Viennese public soon perceived Shaw as scathing satirist of current political and social affairs. Though the critical impact of his dramatic works had been discussed in Vienna socialist circles (Schweiger 136), Shaw's

unusual dramatic conception and methods were met with mixed reception by the theatre-going public. Therefore, the adaptation – or, as regards *Press Cuttings*, the total cultural blockage – of Shaw’s plays to “some uniquely Austrian traditions” (Le Rider, *Modernity* 11), which characterised the Habsburg Monarchy at the turn of the century, necessitated an activation of regulating mechanisms in order to preserve the perceived stability of a specific conception of Austrian culture. By eliminating the socio-critical and innovative aspect from Shaw’s plays, the agencies in control of cultural transfer processes blocked the circulation of cultural elements representing the Other (Suppanz 31). These agencies, it should be noted, included the Irishman’s translator, himself a member of the Viennese literary establishment, and central figures of Vienna fin-de-siècle culture such as Bahr, who argued that “it is crucial to render foreign plays such as Shaw’s less foreign by adapting them to Austrian theatrical conventions” (qtd. in Schweiger 142).

Significantly, the failed cultural transfer of *Press Cuttings* can be attributed to the play being rooted in a certain cultural, historical, and socio-political situation.<sup>11</sup> This is particularly exemplified in the Austrian censorship records, as the authorities tried to wholly incorporate foreign elements by suggesting serious modifications to the play’s setting and characters. In addition, cultural mediators facilitated the successful transfer of plays by Shaw that were more agreeable to the conservative Austrian theatrical tradition. When the prestigious Burgtheater considered the production of *Candida* at the very beginning of Trebitsch’s ceaseless efforts to establish Shaw on the German-speaking stage, the translator expressed his delight (Weiss, *Further Letters* 222). Shaw, though, inimitably pointed out that the play, “this snivelling trash” (Shaw, *A Devil of a Fellow* 250) was “too sentimental” (Weiss, *Letters* 20) for the Burg: “I shudder to think of what will happen when all the German-speaking peoples of

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<sup>11</sup> Interestingly enough, Shaw’s discussion of women’s suffrage was not examined by the censorship authorities, even though the dramatist had been established as a feminist writer in some Austrian and German newspapers (Schweiger 143).

Europe become acquainted with *Candida*. Hermann Bahr has already declared his infatuation” (Shaw, *A Devil of a Fellow* 251).

In the case of Bernard Shaw, the assimilation and representation of the cultural Other involved a process of play selection in accord with the prevailing dramatic concepts, as well as specific mechanisms of cultural blockage by means of disregarding the political aim of Shaw’s plays. Oscar Wilde’s society comedies quickly managed to establish themselves as periodically revived classics on the Viennese stage, where they were perceived as apolitical farces toying with social gesture and convention, and therefore appeared more in tune with Austrian comic tradition. In contrast, the author’s Symbolist one-act-tragedy *Salome* did not generate much interest beyond its European-wide fin-de-siècle craze, and, eclipsed in fame and popularity by Strauss’s operatic version, more or less disappeared from the Viennese theatre scene. The two plays considered in the context of this discussion therefore reveal censorship as crucial in the institutionalised regulation of processes of selection, transfer, creative adaptation and further reception, while remaining prone to the individual influence of cultural mediators, such as translators, agents, or theatre companies.

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