University of Reading

Bloomsbury in Berlin: Vita Sackville-West's 'Seducers in Ecuador' on the German literary marketplace

Article

Accepted Version

Martin, A. (2018) Bloomsbury in Berlin: Vita Sackville-West's 'Seducers in Ecuador' on the German literary marketplace. Modernist Cultures, 13 (1). pp. 77-95. ISSN 2041-1022 doi: 10.3366/mod.2018.0195 Available at https://centaur.reading.ac.uk/71832/

It is advisable to refer to the publisher's version if you intend to cite from the work. See Guidance on citing.

To link to this article DOI: http://dx.doi.org/10.3366/mod.2018.0195

Publisher: Edinburgh University Press

All outputs in CentAUR are protected by Intellectual Property Rights law, including copyright law. Copyright and IPR is retained by the creators or other copyright holders. Terms and conditions for use of this material are defined in the End User Agreement.

www.reading.ac.uk/centaur

CentAUR

University of Reading

Central Archive at the University of Reading

Reading's research outputs online

Bloomsbury in Berlin: Vita Sackville-West's *Seducers in Ecuador* on the German Literary Marketplace

Alison E. Martin

In 1924, Vita Sackville-West's novella *Seducers in Ecuador* appeared with the Hogarth Press. Dedicated to Virginia Woolf, it was a piece Vita had written while holidaying that summer in the Dolomites with her husband, the diplomat Harold Nicolson. Like her best-selling novels *The Edwardians* (1930) *and All Passion Spent* (1931), which would win her immense popularity with an interwar middlebrow readership, it had been written quite quickly and freely. Woolf appreciated this freshness, musing in her diary that it was 'a story which really interests me rather', adding, 'I rather marvel at her skill, & sensibility'.[1] In characteristically self-deprecating mode, Sackville-West termed *Seducers in Ecuador* 'a very slight thing', but it not only intrigued Woolf.[2] In 1929, it was put into German as the 'Verführer in Ecuador' by Ernst Wolfgang Freißler, by then an established translator of Joseph Conrad's work. However it did not appear in book form: rather, it was published as a short story in the Berlin literary magazine *Die Neue Rundschau* [*The New Review*] alongside essays by leading German modernists such as Thomas Mann and Hermann Hesse. By locating his translation of Sackville-West's story in the *Neue Rundschau*, Freißler therefore also brought her work into dialogue with important discussions initiated by other contributors to the magazine about the development of German culture within Europe in the late 1920s.

This article focuses on the international reception of Sackville-West, an author who has largely been side-lined, despite being demonstrably successful in terms of her publishing record – she was twice winner of the Hawthornden Prize (1926, 1933) – and her critical reception. Thirteen of her prose works appeared in German during her lifetime and a further nine have been translated

since, to say nothing of numerous re-editions and re-translations. In terms of the number of titles translated, Sackville-West actually fared better on the German literary scene in the interwar and immediate post-war years than Woolf. Yet while scholars of translation studies and transnational book history are uncovering the networks that enabled works of 'high' British modernism to circulate across Europe, scant attention has been paid to middlebrow authors like Sackville-West. Here I seek to recover the networks of translation, publication and re-circulation that enabled *Seducers in Ecuador* to reach a German-speaking audience. In line with transformations in modernist scholarship over the last two decades, I explore what Douglas Mao and Rebecca Walkowitz have hailed as a crucial shift towards an emphasis on transnational exchange which highlights the significance of translation in modernist production.[3] If, as Melba Cuddy-Keane has argued, studying the rise of translation in the modernist period is key to understanding better global modernism, then an author's agents, translators and foreign publishers – central in orchestrating such transcultural encounters – are also deserving of closer scrutiny.[4] Laura Marcus's study of the Hogarth Press as a conduit for the internationalist dimensions of modernist culture has been instrumental in showing how Woolf's reception in Europe was driven by complex negotiations with translators and publishers to steer her entry onto foreign markets.[5] As we rethink the cultural geography associated with the Bloomsbury group beyond its 'local world',[6] then from an Anglo-German translational perspective it is Berlin, Hamburg, Frankfurt and Leipzig which are also pivotal in the dissemination of British modernist production in the 1920s and 1930s.

To emphasize the significance of Germany in Sackville-West's European literary career seems surprising, given the centrality of France in her life and work. As a *débutante* she made frequent trips to France with her mother, and as the lover of Violet Keppel it was to Paris, Avignon and Monte Carlo that she speeded so headily before the affair was abruptly ended in Amiens by Denys Trefusis. Three of her biographies – *Joan of Arc* (1936), *The Eagle and the Dove* (1943),

which included a study of St. Thérèse of Lisieux, and *Daughter of France: The Life of Anne Marie Louise d'Orléans* (1959) – narrated the lives of key female figures in French history. Although modernist scholarship has done much to reveal the vitality of transnational exchange that British modernists enjoyed with French intellectuals, we are only beginning to chart more fully which figures were central in enabling British modernist texts to enter the German-speaking world.[7] While Sackville-West's writing is now enjoying popularity in French, with a dozen of her works translated, her brand of 'Englishness' carried a far stronger appeal for German-speaking readers during her lifetime.[8] Her dedicated translators ensured her writing appeared quickly in German from the late 1920s until the outbreak of war. They were equally swift to promote her on the emerging post-war literary market and to consolidate her reputation through the 1950s and into the 1960s, by working with major publishing houses like Wegner in Hamburg and Fischer in Frankfurt.[9] A resurgence of interest in the 1980s, stimulated by the feminist turn in literary scholarship, realigned her work within gendered discourses. Twenty-first-century re-editions are now appearing with the major paperback publisher *dtv* and the more niche women's press Ebersbach & Simon that emphasize how early translations of her work still form a basis for her success today.

The two-year diplomatic posting of Sackville-West's husband to Berlin in 1927 coincides with the initial awakening of interest in her work. As Counsellor in the British Embassy and Chargé d'Affaires between the German and British ambassadors, Nicolson came into contact with various translators, chief among them Hans Beppo Wagenseil who was eager to tap into emerging literary talent. As Colin Storer observes, the formation of the Weimar Republic placed Germany 'at the heart of international developments in politics and the arts' and was 'uniquely in tune with the *zeitgeist* of the 1920s'.[10] But as German intellectuals looked to America in the mid-1920s, with its 'advanced technology and unprecedented economic prosperity, its high wages and brisk work pace,

its dizzying consumption patterns and emergent mass culture', Britain must have seemed – to some, at least – the antithesis of the liberated attitudes in Weimar Germany.[11] Petra Rau notes that in the opening decades of the twentieth century, some English intellectuals felt themselves to be 'behind the age', hidebound by an emphasis on tradition and no longer the inventors of technologies that would revolutionise the world.[12] Indeed, she argues, 'there is nothing English modernism is more anxious about than modernity and modernization'.[13] It was precisely this critical reflection on social and cultural change that gave British modernist writing a relevance for a German audience. Sackville-West's preoccupation with charting Edwardian society on the cusp of change and the decline of Britain as an imperial power would have made her work particularly attractive to translators seeking texts that appealed to a German audience in the late 1920s.

As Andreas Gipper and Dilek Dizdar's recent work on nation and translation reminds us, the translator's role as interlingual and intercultural mediator has sometimes been seen all too naively as that of a bridge-builder between nations.[14] Translation can equally be about 'bordering', namely the selective acceptance of cultural transfer or, conversely, acts of cultural resistance through which boundaries are fiercely demarcated.[15] As I examine how Sackville-West acquired visibility in the German-speaking world, I place particular emphasis on Freißler's agency in singling out her novella for translation and publication, thus orchestrating her debut on the German literary market. I begin by discussing how *Seducers in Ecuador* was promoted in Britain and abroad, what kind of a Continental 'presence' it enjoyed in the original English, and how it was received by a British and American press. I then investigate the position that the *Neue Rundschau* held in the German literary marketplace, its political persuasions and its aesthetic concerns, to understand the repositioning of Sackville-West's writing on the Continent. Finally, I explore possible biographical and aesthetic motivations for Freißler to select this story, and analyse how he tailored Sackville-West's work to align it with the formal characteristics of the *Neue Rundschau*.

Marketing Vita

'*Seducers* was a curious little story', recalled Leonard Woolf as he reflected in his later autobiography on the works published in the early 1920s.[16] 'We made a very pretty book out of it and published it at 4s. 6d. just before Christmas', he noted, but added that '[w]hen we sold out the edition of 1,500 copies we did not reprint'.[17] The first of Sackville-West's works to appear with the Hogarth Press, *Seducers in Ecuador* is considered the most experimental and highly stylised of her prose – 'brief and brilliant', as Mary Ann Caws puts it.[18] Its plot turns on the notion that our perception of the world has a profound influence on the decisions we make. By wearing glasses with different coloured lenses, the protagonist, Arthur Lomax, not only determines his way of seeing but also of acting upon what he sees. These shifting perspectives enable him to become the ultimate experimenter with life, entering into a world that was 'more than curious; it was magical'.[19] The distorting power of the imagination is also central to the plot. It drives Bellamy, the owner of the yacht on which Lomax is sailing, to fear imminent death from a terminal illness and encourage Lomax to kill him out of mercy. It enables Miss Whitaker, another guest on the yacht cruising the Egyptian coast, to entangle Lomax in a web of fictions about herself, not least that she is pregnant by a former suitor who has now scarpered, which compels the chivalrous Lomax to marry her in Cairo. Ironically, it is the seducer in Ecuador, seemingly the most imaginary figure of all, who returns to claim his wife, Miss Whitaker, at the end. Only Artivale, the scientist, is free of delusions. It is to him that Lomax admits his crime and bequeaths the money inherited from Bellamy before being hanged: 'Science would have the money; and science was a fact . . . He had had enough of living in a world where truth was falsehood and falsehood truth'.[20]

On reading Vita's *Seducers in Ecuador*, Woolf was full of admiration for its 'texture' and its 'beauty in itself when nothing is happening – nevertheless such interesting things do happen, so

suddenly – barely too'.[21] She noted to Vita in an exuberant letter: 'I like the story very very much – in fact, I began reading it after you left, . . . went out for a walk, thinking of it all the time, and came back and finished it, being full of a particular kind of interest which I daresay has something to do with its being the sort of thing I should like to write myself'.[22] Indeed, it encouraged a burst of creativity in Virginia herself: 'I felt rather spirited by your story, and wrote a lot – 300 words – perhaps, this morning'.[23] Contemporary critics remarked upon the Woolfian texture and form of *Seducers in Ecuador*. The *Spectator* heralded it 'a slim fantastic *conte* in the best Bloomsbury manner', different from Sackville-West's 'full-length dramatic and rather old-fashioned novels'.[24] Hugh Walpole, writing in *The Bookman*, considered Vita 'one of the earliest pupils in Mrs. Woolf's school for good writing', but hastily added that she had 'kept her independence, the most precious of gifts, so resolutely, for *Seducers in Ecuador* is the only one of the books that shows any sign of Mrs. Woolf's influence'.[25] As Victoria Glendinning deftly puts it, this short story 'out-Bloomsburied Bloomsbury',[26] and the New York *Saturday Review of Literature* advertised it as 'a brilliant little tour de force' by a 'clever young writer'.[27]

Published on 30 October 1924, it appeared as Leonard Woolf was starting to develop different strategies for marketing books to a larger audience, following the closure of the subscription scheme which he had devised for the Hogarth Press and which had run between 1919 and 1923.[28] Visual appeal was not high on his agenda: as he reflected in his autobiography, 'we wanted our books to "look nice" . . . but neither of us was interested in fine printing and fine binding'.[29] Indeed the British edition of *Seducers in Ecuador* was a much drabber affair in its plain maroon cover, than the striking blue and red geometric repeat on the cardboard cover of Doran's American edition. But what the British edition lacked in appearance, Leonard and Vita made up for in a remarkably energetic advertising campaign that saw Vita work hard to boost sales with booksellers in Continental Europe. As Claire Battershill and Helen Southworth rightly note,

Sackville-West was keen to manage issues regarding international rights herself, and was therefore a particularly pro-active author when it came to promoting her work,[30] an issue which became rather fraught when Sackville-West allowed Curtis Brown, her agent for world and translation rights, to negotiate a deal with Canadian agents for *The Edwardians*, while her American agents Doubleday Doran mistakenly thought they held the Canadian rights.

In this case, strategies of advertisement were relatively simple and it was primarily the author herself and her publisher who attempted to attract the interest of a reading public at home and abroad. In October 1924, Sackville-West requested 'advanced copies for travelling' and noted in mid-November to Leonard, 'I am going to Paris next week, and will saunter negligently into booksellers there & enquire after our protégé'.[31] Around the same time, Leonard met with the 'Advertising Service Agents' Ogden and Spencer, who drafted an advertising scheme for him, detailing how much the Hogarth Press should spend on advertising the book and in which newspapers.[32] Meanwhile Vita was busy drawing up a 'List for circulars', which comprised fifty-nine names and addresses of her acquaintances in the arts and book trade, to whom advertisements could be sent out. It ranged from the former Viceroy of India, Marquis Curzon of Kedleston, to the poets Charles Hanson Towne and John Drinkwater, and a series of 'honourables' including Lady Wodehouse and Mrs Asquith.[33] Vita therefore had a particularly high-class audience in mind as she made initial attempts to market her work. In January 1925, Vita was scribbling enthusiastically to Leonard, 'We must sell the whole Edition! Have you passed the 1000th [?]'.[34] In early February 1925 he sent out the thousandth copy to Vita's mother, the formidable Lady Sackville, who was deeply impressed by her daughter's career choice and vigorously tried to encourage sales, sometimes to Vita's immense irritation ('I fear that my mother is displaying a great deal of energy. I try to control it, but I might as well try to push against a Tank').[35] Yet despite their concerted efforts, Leonard later reported that the book was selling poorly abroad. He had not had time to stop

off in Cannes and Monte Carlo, but *Seducers in Ecuador* was certainly not being stocked by the major booksellers of English works in Nice and since the season had not begun, there had been no interest whatsoever: 'One shop thought the book too expensive, of course, it does seem rather a lot when translated into francs'.[36] Leonard was therefore aiming to attract the British leisured classes holidaying on the Riviera. Even here, though, there were limits to what readers would pay and compared with French book market prices, it was not an attractive purchase.

Three years later – and one year into Harold's posting to Berlin – interest in *Seducers in Ecuador* awakened from different quarters. In November 1928, Vita informed Leonard that 'Messrs. Fischer Verlag are going to translate "Seducers in Ecuador" and publish it first in the "Neue Rundschau", which, as you probably know, is the German equivalent of La Nouvelle Revue Française, after which they will publish it in book form'.[37] Fischer's offer sounded promising, given that it proposed publication both in a leading literary journal and also as a book (although the latter never happened). The German publisher was not just interested in her novella: 'the same people want to have a look at Passenger to Teheran, and Twelve Days'.[38] The appearance of *Seducers in Ecuador* in the Fischer Verlag's 'in-house' journal, the *Neue Rundschau*, was therefore a potential springboard into further contracts with them, while at the same time implicitly drawing attention to Vita's other writing – she already had six novels and a biographical work to her name – and heightening her visibility in the German-speaking world. When the London office of the literary agents Blau-Rot notified the Hogarth Press at the close of 1928 that it had formally acquired the German rights on behalf of the S. Fischer Verlag, Sackville-West's début on the German literary scene was assured.[39]

Changing Contexts, Changing Forms

Repackaging Sackville-West's book as a journal contribution meant a rather radical repositioning of its print media status, in turn implying different integrative strategies. As Mark S. Morrison rightly notes, 'the intricate relationship between modernist production and the mass market involved not only the dissemination and reception of works, but also the actual form and content'.[40] In line with recent studies of journal print culture, I explore here both the *internal* dialogics of the German literary magazine in which *Seducers in Ecuador* appeared in translation, by looking at the relationships between Sackville-West's work and other contributions to the same issue, while also examining the *external* dialogics of the *Neue Rundschau*, namely the geographical and cultural reach of the territories on which it reported and the ideological agenda with which it aligned itself.[41]

The *Neue Rundschau* was a far cry from the many modernist magazines that were springing up in German and Austria in the 1920s.[42] It tended to reflect the concerns of a middle-class readership rather than more experimental cultural impulses. It therefore projected Sackville-West into a community of authors that was not necessarily so very different from the virtual company she kept at the Hogarth Press, which had increasingly turned towards publishing more middlebrow and non-Bloomsbury writers such as Coralie Hobson and F. M. Mayor. The quarterly *Neue Rundschau* was just one of myriad journals on the extremely vibrant literary scene in the Weimar Republic. As Fritz Schlawe has argued, the periodical press was a particularly powerful force shaping literary and cultural life: at their height in 1931, there were an astonishing 7,652 periodicals on the market, of which 96 could be classified as literary.[43] The *Neue Rundschau* was a leading liberal, non-partisan cultural review established in 1890, and in 1929, the year the 'Verführer in Ecuador' appeared, it was celebrating its fortieth anniversary. Its political editor, Samuel Saenger, listed the qualities that he felt had underpinned its success: its comprehensive coverage of a range of cultural fields, its ability to keep pace with change and its concern to protect humanity from those forces which had caused spiritual and moral decline.[44] Saenger emphasized the culturally

open-spirited character of this magazine in the wake of the First World War and the 'age of global nihilism' ('Epoche des Weltnihilismus') that had followed.[45]

While it was not, as such, an organ of the avant-garde, the roots of the *Neue Rundschau* had originally been in the naturalist movement. The work of Gerhart Hauptmann, Arthur Schnitzler, Rainer Maria Rilke and Julius Hart was well represented in the issues that appeared around the turn of the century. Through the 1910s it published writing by Georg Simmel, Max Brod and Georg Lukács and by the 1920s it had become a literary standard-bearer of German writers published by Fischer, including Mann and Hesse. Extracts from Alfred Döblin's *Berlin Alexanderplatz* (1929), a central work of German modernism, were published in the *Neue Rundschau* in the second half of 1928, in advance of the book coming out on the market. Another aspect of its policy of inclusion was, as Wolfgang Grothe rightly emphasizes, a concern to include female authors.[46] Particularly in the initial decades after its establishment, it featured essays by the German novelist and pacifist Anette Kolb, the thinker, writer and poet Ricarda Huch and the Swedish novelist and author of children's fiction Selma Lagerlöf.[47] The *Neue Rundschau* continued to promote emerging or leading writers of the time, until such an inclusive policy became increasingly difficult to pursue in the 1930s with the rise of Nazism.[48]

How did the editors of the *Neue Rundschau* conceive of their audience? Wolfgang Grothe's assessment of those connected with the journal summarizes them as 'liberal, educated and European in outlook' ('liberal, gebildet und europäisch orientiert').[49] Unlike other journals of the time, the *Neue Rundschau* did not actively seek to engage with its readers, there was no column with readers' letters, very little detail on the biographies of its contributing authors, which might have otherwise encouraged personal interest, and any advertisements it did carry were for either bookbinders and printers or for books appearing with Fischer or competing publishers, such as Insel in Leipzig or Kiepenhauer in Berlin. Its circulation figures were also modest, thought to stand

at around 8,000 in 1920 and 10,000 in the period around 1930.[50] Its content was primarily essayistic, although travel memoirs, poetry and drama were also included, and of the essays, more than a quarter turned on literature, closely followed by art and history.[51] In terms of length, subject matter and style, then, the *Seducers in Ecuador* was clearly a good fit for this journal.

Under the aegis of Rudolf Kayser, appointed editor in 1924, the *Neue Rundschau* deliberately strengthened its European focus and with it a greater consciousness of its place on the cosmopolitan literary scene.[52] The S. Fischer Verlag's *Almanach* for 1925 described the journal as the 'leading organ for artistic and spiritual creativity in the German-speaking countries' and as a key publication that addressed major political and sociological problems and was both in attitude and approach a truly European review ('*Die Neue Rundschau* ist das anerkannte führende Organ für das künstlerische und geistige Schaffen der deutsch sprechenden Länder wie für ihre großen politischen und soziologischen Probleme und in Gesinnung und Einstellung eine wahrhaft europäische Revue').[53] From the 1910s onwards, the *Neue Rundschau* had been keen to showcase foreign writers, among them Wilde, Bernard Shaw, Conrad, Yeats, Strachey, Woolf and Osbert Sitwell. German translations of Anglophone prose formed the vast majority of foreign-language pieces included and there was a strong correlation between what appeared in the *Neue Rundschau* in abridged or serialized form and the works published in translation by the S. Fischer Verlag. The issues published in the late 1920s and early 1930s are important in contextualising how Vita's *Seducers in Ecuador* was presented to a German audience. From the mid-1920s, Freißler was a frequent contributor. He was completing a translation of Conrad's collected works for the S. Fischer Verlag and extracts appeared regularly from 1926 onwards. Hans Reisiger's translation of parts of Lytton Strachey's *Elizabeth and Essex* appeared in the first issue of the *Neue Rundschau* for 1929, as did Hans Wagenseil's translation of Virginia Woolf's 'An Unwritten Novel', and his translation of her 1921 essay 'Modern Fiction' appeared in the second issue for 1930.

But it was not only literary company that Vita kept in the 1929 edition in which the 'Verführer in Ecuador' appeared. As Kayser had intimated, the *Neue Rundschau* was also preoccupied with 'major political and sociological problems', and essays examining Anglo-German relations were a recurring feature. Osbert Sitwell's 'Eiland England' ['Island England'], published in 1924, debated whether the insularity of the English was a weakness or a strength and argued that the English were individualists, whose artistic creativity had been strengthened through resistance to Continental influence.[54] Sitwell also lauded the spirit of intellectual freshness, rigour and versatility he had recently seen in young German scholars, and argued that a shared Anglo-German cultural tradition existed, centring on writers like Shakespeare, that urgently needed to be revived. The German sociologist Alfred Weber, writing the same year, considered that the notion of a European identity had been a revolutionary unifying force in world history, deplored the decline of its centripetal hold ('Nichts ist so sichtbar untergegangen, wie dieses ideelle Zentrum von Europa') and proposed that Germany's geographical centrality in Europe could enable a sense of a shared cultural past to be restored.[55] Another essay in this issue was by Robert Dell, a member of the Fabian Society and foreign correspondent for the *Manchester Guardian*, who called for the German government to take greater initiatives in ensuring a pact with France and England which would create greater stability in Europe: English democrats were prepared to forge close political ties 'with the Germany of Goethe' but not with that of the German nationalists Alfred von Tirpitz and Erich Ludendorff.[56] Similar concerns were voiced in a 1929 essay by Moritz Julius Bonn, a key economist in the Weimar Republic. Writing about the influence of Europe on the British Isles, he argued that they could no longer consider themselves a floating bulwark on the periphery of Europe, allying or distancing themselves at will. German zeppelin attacks had shown that England's insularity did not make it impenetrable, while its economic reliance on the import of foodstuffs meant that it was obliged to conduct a policy of peace with Europe.[57] These articles

therefore not only illustrated the *Neue Rundschau*'s engagement with current concerns. They also signalled its attempt to be future-looking and restore Anglo-German cultural relations in the wake of the First World War, which, as Leonard Woolf would later argue, had 'destroyed . . . the bases of European civilization'.[58]

Translation, Transmission, Omission

Why did Freißler come to select the *Seducers in Ecuador*, how did it fit in to his own translation oeuvre and how did his German rendering diverge from the English original? Since the *Neue Rundschau* had increasingly turned its attention to publishing translations of British modernist writing, other authors on the periphery of the Bloomsbury Group would obviously also have fallen within their purview. In 1927 Freißler was made commissioning editor of foreign language books by the S. Fischer Verlag and was therefore aware of which British authors were emerging onto the literary scene. As the author of two semi-autobiographical short story collections *Schwefelblüte* [*Sulphur Flowers*] (1913) and *Der Hof zu den Nußbäumen* [*The Farm with the Nut Trees*] (1916), as well as numerous short contributions to the satirical magazine *Simplicissimus*, he would also have known what would be well received by German readers. By the time he came to work on the *Seducers in Ecuador*, he had translated or co-translated a story collection by Edgar Allen Poe, George Bernard Shaw's *The Intelligent Woman's Guide to Socialism and Capitalism* (1928; trans. 1928) and seven titles by Conrad, including *The Nigger of the Narcissus* (1897; trans. 1927).[59] As the figure overseeing the Fischer Verlag's Conrad collected edition, he was essentially the specialist in Germany on this author.[60] But in 1928 he rather abruptly passed on the translation of Conrad's remaining works to Elsie McCalman, which suggests his editorial duties had become too arduous to allow much time for translation. Given, though, that *Seducers in Ecuador* was short and clearly of a similar format as other contributions to the *Neue Rundschau*, he may have taken it on

to keep his hand in as a translator. It may also have caught his eye precisely because it was by an author who had elsewhere been considered akin to Conrad. In a review of Sackville-West's *Knole and the Sackvilles* (1922), the respected literary critic Grant Overton had described it as similar to Conrad's work in its 'identity of method and art . . . for in both cases I think the artist has achieved a proportionately impressive and living and beautiful result'.[61]

Not only Vita's style but also the mood and themes she incorporated into *Seducers of Ecuador* made this work well suited to inclusion in the *Neue Rundschau* in the late 1920s. As Valerie D. Greenberg has argued, while in the early 1920s this journal tended to print short stories which were 'in the affirmative category' and carried a positive outlook on life, from the mid-1920s onwards, there was a definable turn towards those that 'find resolution in defeat or destruction or refutation of those values and ideals'.[62] *Seducers in Ecuador* embodies this outlook on various different levels. The opening sentence is programmatic for the story's fateful development: 'It was in Egypt that Arthur Lomax contracted the habit which, after a pleasantly varied career, brought him finally to the scaffold'.[63] The story is essentially about deception, half-truths and false assumptions: even Lomax allows himself to be fooled by Bellamy and Miss Whitaker and only the scientist Artivale appears to have any intellectual, moral and social integrity. For while Bellamy and Lomax are both members of the leisured classes, sailing the yacht around North Africa, it is he who is constantly catching, dissecting or incubating creatures and is 'consumed by a burning zest for life and his profession'.[64] But if science represents certainty and truth, it is all the more ironic that Lomax's intention to bequeath Bellamy's fortune to Artivale should be thwarted by Bellamy's nearest relations who ensure it goes to the Treasury as conscience money.

Another, more personal, reason why Freißler was motivated to translate *Seducers in Ecuador* was its setting: Egypt. Freißler's childhood spent in the flat farmlands of Silesia formed the basis for some of his prose fiction, but a one-year stay in Cairo as a banking official had an

inspirational effect on his life and his writing. Its exoticism, its climate with supposedly health-restoring properties, its historic sites at Luxor and Thebes and the Egyptian Museum at Cairo were points of fascination for the many European travellers of the time. But as Jörg Krappmann has observed, it was Egypt's status as a British colonial territory that particularly intrigued Freißler.[65] A white skin automatically made of any European visitor a figure around whom servants would immediately swarm: regardless of their character, whites acquired as if by magic an authority, a power and a status not necessarily held in Europe.[66] Stepping on to Egyptian soil therefore seemed to confer on the European traveller – whether British or Silesian – a very different identity and perception of oneself and the world. Lomax's realization that his spectacles 'altered the world in the most extraordinary way' may well have struck chords with Freißler too, as he recalled while translating Sackville-West's story his own immersion in colonial life while working in Cairo.

Freißler, a proficient translator, took the complexities of Vita's prose in his stride. While his translation lacked the initial dedication to Virginia Woolf – the significance of which might have been lost on German readers – it on the whole remained close to the original. There were no major changes to register, syntax or style, and Freißler came up with remarkably fluent solutions for constructions such as 'to fritter out into the commonplace', 'life jumbled madly in his brain', or 'the prosecution was thick with argument' – phrasings remarkably compressed in what they conveyed, whether through the unusual preposition allied to 'fritter', the pairing of 'life' with the verb 'jumble' or the adjective 'thick' combined with 'argument'.[67] If anything, Freißler heightened the internal coherence of the story with the translations solutions he adopted. Lomax, described by Vita as 'a tall, cadaverous man' becomes in Freißler's translation 'ein langer, totenähnlicher Mann', the word 'totenähnlich' – literally 'like a dead person' – already giving fuel to Lomax's later presumption that Bellamy is a dying man.[68] As Vita laid down early on the order in which she would describe Lomax's companions, dependent on the precedence they had in the story, she noted,

'The practised reader will have observed by now that the element of surprise is not to be looked for in this story'.[69] Freißler translated 'element of surprise' as 'Zutat der Überraschung' – literally 'ingredient of surprise' – to emphasize the sense of control the narrator displays over a narrative which is being constructed from various 'ingredients' which, when mixed, contribute to the final product.

A close comparison of the English source text and its German translation does, however, point up occasions of omission. Freißler abridged the text to shoehorn it tightly into the 33 pages that must have been assigned to it in that issue of the *Neue Rundschau*. One of the shortened passages comes relatively early on just after Miss Whitaker has realised that she can reel Lomax in and that his sense of chivalry will cause him to play into her hands. The omitted paragraph had enabled Sackville-West to give us a snapshot of the activities taking place contemporaneously behind the hotel façade, in the 'square compartments enclosing single individuals'.[70] Further on we see Artivale neatly dissecting a chameleon, the Swiss waiter in his broom cupboard of a bedroom paring a corn from his toe and Lomax and Miss Whitaker each, separately, contemplating the 'madness' of the situation into which they are about to plunge.[71] Freißler may well have cut this section precisely because it represents a moment of stasis and does not drive the plot forward. But its omission from the translation means that German readers are prevented from seeing Lomax and Miss Whitaker take stock of a situation which is about to become quite extraordinary, in comparison with the relatively mundane activities of others in the hotel. A later, much longer, passage omitted from the German is likewise more reflective in character, coming just after the yacht has left Alexandria and is about to head into the storm that serves as the backdrop to Bellamy and Lomax's fateful conversation. In this passage, Lomax takes leave of his 'land-life, now withdrawn' and reflects idly on what the future may bring.[72] As he looks out across the blue of the

sea, we are reminded that perception is individual and 'we cannot even be sure that our eyes see colours alike'.[73]

A later abridgement in Freißler's translation which turns upon the scene at Bellamy's funeral is more problematic in terms of what the omission withholds from German readers. It is here that we are shown most clearly that Lomax is aware of Miss Whitaker's fabulation – 'She might, knowing that she was going to meet him at the funeral, at least have thrust a cushion up her skirt' – and is irritated by her refusal to play the part in what has, to her, been an artificial performance of roles.[74] It also, though, suggests that Lomax continues to believe Bellamy's assertion that he is terminally ill, and emphasizes the illogical sense of guilt that pursues Lomax: 'So long, and no less, would Lomax be haunted by the rotting corpse of Bellamy, as he would not have been haunted by the man dragging out a living death'.[75] Similar questions raised at the beginning are posed again here: 'What bearing had the extrinsic world upon the intrinsic? Why should the contemplation of life through coloured glasses make that life the easier to ruin?'[76] Perhaps this section was too heavy-handed for Freißler, given its explicit formulation of ideas introduced more subtly much earlier. Perhaps Freißler also felt it was too explicit in its clarification of the relationship between Lomax and Miss Whitaker, for by omitting this passage in the 'Verführer in Ecuador' the mystery of what Lomax knows and what he merely suspects, what is true and real, and what is imaginary and constructed, is sustained for longer. In that sense, then, Freißler's abridgements are not as harmful as they might initially seem. Rather, they lend the German translation of the *Seducers in Ecuador* greater pace and a heightened sense of the enigmatic, potentially increasing the impact of Sackville-West's novella on the German reader.

Conclusions

Sackville-West's 'crisp, ultra-modern story', as the critic in the *Aberdeen Press and Journal* put it, was therefore an astute choice on the part of Freißler, to give her work initial visibility in the German-speaking world.[77] As an experienced translator of Conrad, Freißler could easily have settled for one of her earlier (and considerably longer) works, such as *Heritage* (1919), *The Dragon in Shallow Waters* (1921) and *Grey Wethers* (1923). But in selecting this novella for translation, Freißler chose a piece that presented Sackville-West to a foreign audience in one of her most experimental literary moments. Although her novels have tended to be overlooked as easy reads rather than challenging modernist works, *Seducers in Ecuador* was a particularly striking and complex piece of prose. Unlike her other writing, which is clearly more mainstream in its pleasurable readability, it allied her with those artists and writers actively engaged in aesthetic experimentation. With its 'crisp' brevity it also arguably marketed her work better to an audience hitherto unfamiliar with Sackville-West's writing. For them, this translation was an appetising taster that prefigured the appearance of her best-seller *The Edwardians* (1930) with the S. Fischer Verlag as *Schloß Chevron* in 1931. By publishing the *Seducers in Ecuador* in German translation not as a free-standing novella, but as a contribution to a well-respected journal, Freißler helped to establish an image of Sackville-West in the minds of his German readers as an exciting 'emerging' writer, whose work also keyed into wider debates on the contribution of British thought and literature to European culture.

The contribution made by Freißler in 'rewriting' her work in a different language was subtle, but not inconsequential. His investment was both stylistic and structural. To understand the nature of Sackville-West's experiment was to appreciate her play with language – unusual collocations and juxtapositions that tested the possibilities and boundaries of the English language. Reproducing this in translation required a similar feel for what could be achieved in German, while navigating the rather different syntax that characterise this language. Working to the spatial

limitations of a contribution in the *Neue Rundschau*, Freißler was also tasked with making important decisions about how to reshape her work so that it had an appropriate length, while losing nothing of the aesthetic impact of the prose. Its republication in 1946 in book form and with the narrative unabridged – a co-translation by Freißler and Wagenseil for the Limes-Verlag in Wiesbaden – indicates the ongoing commitment that Sackville-West's translators showed to making this work visible in the post-war European literary landscape. The novella 'Verführer in Ecuador' was therefore an important stepping stone both for her as an author and for her translators in establishing her work in the German-speaking world.

I particularly want to thank Nicola Wilson for her close reading and insightful comments on an earlier version of this article.

[1] *The Diary of Virginia Woolf*, ed. by Anne Olivier Bell with Andrew McNeillie, 5 vols (London: Hogarth Press, 1977-1984), II, p. 313.

[2] Robert Cross and Ann Ravenscroft-Hulme, *Vita Sackville-West: A Bibliography* (Winchester: St Paul's Biographies, 1999), p. 30.

[3] Douglas Mao and Rebecca L. Walkowitz, 'The New Modernist Studies', *PMLA*, 123. 3 (2008), 737-748 (p. 742).

[4] Melba Cuddy-Keane, 'Global Modernisms', in *A Companion to Modernist Literature and Culture*, ed. by David Bradshaw and Kevin J. H. Dettmar (Malden: Blackwell, 2006), pp. 558-64 (p. 558).

[5] Laura Marcus, 'The European Dimensions of the Hogarth Press', in *The Reception of Virginia Woolf in Europe*, ed. by Mary Ann Caws and Nicola Luckhurst (London: Continuum, 2002), pp. 328-56 (p. 328).

[6] Sara Blair, 'Local Modernity, Global Modernism: Bloomsbury and the Places of the Literary', *ELH*, 71.3 (2004), 813-38 (p. 814).

[7] See in particular Mary Ann Caws and Sarah Bird Wright, *Bloomsbury and France: Art and Friends* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000). Their summary of French translations of the Bloomsbury group's work indicates

that up to 2000 only three of Vita's novels had appeared in French, and of those only two during Vita's lifetime, namely *The Edwardians* (trans. 1933) and *Pepita* (trans. 1939).

[8] Although Robert Cross and Ann Ravenscroft-Hulme's list of translations of Sackville-West's work is not complete and is nearly twenty years old, it confirms the impression given by Caws and Bird Wright that there have been fewer translations of Sackville-West's into French. German editions dominate, followed by French, Italian, Spanish and Portuguese renderings, with a few into the Scandinavian languages, Polish and even Japanese.

[9] See, for an excellent annotated bibliography, Peggy Wolf, *Sternenlieder und Grabgesänge: Kommentierte Bibliographie zu Vita Sackville-West* (Göttingen: Daphne, 2005).

[10] Colin Storer, *Britain and the Weimar Republic: The History of a Cultural Relationship* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2010), p. 3.

[11] Mary Nolan, *Visions of Modernity: American Business and the Modernization of Germany* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), p. 3.

[12] Petra Rau, *English Modernism, National Identity and the Germans, 1890-1950* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2009), p. 1.

[13] Rau, p. 1.

[14] Andreas Gipper and Dilek Dizdar, 'Einleitung: Übersetzung als Konstruktionselement nationaler Identität', in *Nationenbildung und Übersetzung*, ed. by Andreas Gipper and Dilek Dizdar (Berlin: Frank und Timme, 2015), pp. 7-16.

[15] Andreas Gipper and Dilek Dizdar, *Nationenbildung*, p. 9.

[16] Leonard Woolf, *Downhill All the Way: An Autobiography of the Years 1919 to 1939* (London: Hogarth Press, 1967), p. 158.

[17] Leonard Woolf, *Downhill All the Way*, p. 158.

[18] Vita Sackville-West, *Selected Writings*, ed. by Mary Ann Caws (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), p. 278.

[19] Vita Sackville-West, *Seducers in Ecuador and The Heir* (London: Virago, 1987), p. 1.

[20] Sackville-West, *Seducers in Ecuador*, p. 36.

[21] *The Letters of Virginia Woolf*, ed. by Nigel Nicolson and Joanne Trautmann, 6 vols (London: Hogarth Press, 1975-1980), III, p. 131.

[22] *Letters of Virginia Woolf*, III, p. 131.

[23] *Letters of Virginia Woolf*, III, p. 132.

[24] Anon., 'Seducers in Ecuador', *The Spectator*, 3 January 1925, p. 28.

[25] Hugh Walpole, 'V. Sackville-West', *The Bookman*, September 1930, p. 23.

[26] Victoria Glendinning, *Vita: The Life of Vita Sackville-West* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1983), p. 141.

[27] Anon., 'Foreign Notes', *The Saturday Review of Literature*, 7 February 1925, p. 512.

[28] Nicola Wilson, Elizabeth Willson Gordon, Alice Staveley, Helen Southworth, and Claire Battershill, 'The Hogarth Press, Digital Humanities, and Collaboration: Introducing the Modernist Archives Publishing Project (MAPP)', in *Virginia Woolf and the Common(wealth) Reader*, ed. by Helen Wussow and Mary-Ann Gillies (Clemson: Clemson University Digital Press, 2014), pp. 223-231 (p. 226).

[29] Leonard Woolf, *Downhill All the Way*, p. 80.

[30] Claire Battershill and Helen Southworth, 'Woolf, the Hogarth Press, and Global Print Culture', in *A Companion to Virginia Woolf*, ed. by Jessica Berman (Oxford: Blackwell, 2016), pp. 389-90.

[31] Vita Sackville-West to Leonard Woolf, 14 September 1924, 25 November 1924, University of Reading (UoR), Records of the Hogarth Press MS2750/424. All material from the Records of the Hogarth Press are quoted with permission of The Random House Group Limited. Thanks also go to Juliet Nicolson for permission to quote from Vita Sackville-West's writing.

[32] Leonard Woolf to Vita Sackville-West, 28 November 1924, UoR, MS2750/424.

[33] 'List for circulars', UoR, MS2750/424.

[34] Vita Sackville-West to Leonard Woolf, 16 January 1925, UoR, MS2750/424.

[35] Lady Victoria Sackville to Leonard Woolf, 3 February 1925, UoR, MS2750/424; Vita Sackville-West to Leonard Woolf, 25 November 1924, UoR, MS2750/424.

[36] Leonard Woolf to Lady Victoria Sackville, 19 January 1925, UoR, MS2750/424.

[37] Vita Sackville-West to Leonard Woolf, 20 November 1928, UoR, MS2750/424.

[38] Vita Sackville-West to Leonard Woolf, 20 November 1928, UoR, MS2750/424.

[39] Blau-Rot to the Hogarth Press, 28 December 1928, UoR, MS2750/424.

[40] Mark S. Morrison, *The Public Face of Modernism: Little Magazines, Audiences and Reception, 1905-1920* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2000), p. 6.

[41] Ann Ardis, 'Staging the Public Sphere: Magazine Dialogism and the Prosthetics of Authorship at the Turn of the Twentieth Century', in *Transatlantic Print Culture, 1880-1940: Emerging Media, Emerging Modernisms*, ed. by Ann Ardis and Patrick Collier (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), pp. 30-47 (p. 38).

[42] See in particular Christian Weikop's Introduction to the section on German-language magazines in *The Oxford Critical and Cultural History of Modernist Magazines*, ed. Peter Brooker and Andrew Thacker, 3 vols (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009-2013), III, pp. 693-708.

[43] Fritz Schlawe, *Literarische Zeitschriften 1910-1933* (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1973), p. 4.

[44] Samuel Saenger, 'Das vierzigste Jahr', *Die Neue Rundschau*, 40.1 (1929), 1-3.

[45] Samuel Saenger, 'Das vierzigste Jahr', *Die Neue Rundschau*, 40.1 (1929), 3.

[46] Wolfgang Grothe, 'Die Neue Rundschau des Verlages S. Fischer: Ein Beitrag zur Publizistik und Literaturgeschichte der Jahre von 1890 bis 1925', *Archiv für Geschichte des Buchwesens*, 4 (1963), cols. 809-996 (col. 907).

[47] Wolfgang Grothe, 'Die Neue Rundschau', 907.

[48] Falk Schwarz, 'Literarisches Zeitgespräch im Dritten Reich, dargestellt an der Zeitschrift "Neue Rundschau"', *Archiv für Geschichte des Buchwesens*, XII (1972), cols. 1290-98.

[49] Wolfgang Grothe, 'Zur gesellschaftlichen Struktur des Mitarbeiter- und Leserkreises von S. Fischers »Neuer Rundschau«', *Publizistik*, 3 (1961), 164-73 (p. 166).

[50] Wolfgang Grothe, 'Die Neue Rundschau', 967-87.

[51] Falk Schwarz, 'Literarisches Zeitgespräch', 1308-9.

[52] Wolfgang Grothe, 'Die Neue Rundschau', 946.

[53] *Almanach*, 1925, 287.

[54] Osbert Sitwell, 'Eiland England', *Die Neue Rundschau*, 35.2 (1924), 1195-97.

[55] Alfred Weber, 'Deutschland und die europäische Kulturkrise', *Die Neue Rundschau*, 35.1 (1924), 311-14.

[56] Robert Dell, 'England und Deutschland', *Die Neue Rundschau*, 35.2 (1924), 1089-97.

[57] Moritz Julius Bonn, 'Die Europäisierung Englands', *Die Neue Rundschau*, 40.1 (1929), 721-32.

[58] Leonard Woolf, *Downhill All the Way*, p. 9.

[59] Jörg Krappmann, 'Interkulturelle Einsicht als Bewältigung der Lebenskrise. Der mährische Conrad: Ernst Wolfgang Freissler', www.germanistika.upol.cz/uploads/media/Krappmann_Freissler_Junge_Triebe.pdf [accessed 16 February 2016].

[60] For more on Freißler and Conrad, see Anthony Fothergill, *Secret Sharers: Joseph Conrad's Cultural Reception in Germany* (Berlin: Lang, 2006).

[61] Grant Overton, 'The Lady of a Tradition: V. Sackville-West', *The Bookman*, June 1923, 416.

[62] Valerie D. Greenberg, *Literature and Sensibilities in the Weimar Era: Short Stories in the* Neue Rundschau (Maryland: Studia Humanitatis, 1982), p. 125.

[63] Sackville-West, *Seducers in Ecuador*, p. 1.

[64] Sackville-West, *Seducers in Ecuador*, p. 4.

[65] Jörg Krappmann, 'Interkulturelle Einsicht', p. 8.

[66] Jörg Krappmann, 'Interkulturelle Einsicht', p. 8.

[67] Sackville-West, *Seducers in Ecuador*, pp. 7, 18, 33.

[68] Sackville-West, *Seducers in Ecuador*, p. 2; Vita Sackville-West, 'Verführer in Ecuador', *Die Neue Rundschau*, 40.2 (1929), 313-45 (p. 314).

[69] Sackville-West, *Seducers in Ecuador*, p. 3.

[70] Sackville-West, *Seducers in Ecuador*, p. 8.

[71] Sackville-West, *Seducers in Ecuador*, p. 9.

[72] Sackville-West, *Seducers in Ecuador*, p. 12.

[73] Sackville-West, *Seducers in Ecuador*, p. 12.

[74] Sackville-West, *Seducers in Ecuador*, p. 20.

[75] Sackville-West, *Seducers in Ecuador*, p. 21.

[76] Sackville-West, *Seducers in Ecuador*, p. 20.

[77] Anon., Review of *Seducers in Ecuador*, *Aberdeen Press and Journal*, 17 November 1924, p. 3.