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Anexo I
 “Deutschen Brief”¹

9 Juli 1937

Liber Axel Kaun!

Besten Dank für Ihren Brief. Ich war gerade im Begriff, Ihnen zu schreiben, als er kam. Dann habe ich verreisen müssen, wie Ringelnatz' männlicher Briefmark, obgleich unter weniger leidenschaftlichen Umständen.

Das Beste ist, ich sage Ihnen sofort und ohne Umschweife, Ringelnatz ist meiner Ansicht nach nicht der Mühe wert. Sie werden sicherlich nicht mehr enttäuscht sein, dies von mir zu hören, als ich es gewesen bin, es feststellen zu müssen.

Ich habe die 3 Bände durchgelesen, 23 Gedichte ausgewählt und 2 von diesen als Probestücke übersetzt. Das wenige, was sie notwendigerweise dabei verloren haben, ist natürlich nur im Verhältnis mit dem zu schätzen, was sie eigentlich zu verlieren haben, und ich muss []en, dass ich diesen Verschlechterungskoeffizient, auch da, wo er am meisten Dichter ist, und am wenigsten Reimkuli, ganz gering gefunden habe.

Daraus ist gar nicht zu schliessen, dass ein übersetzter Ringelnatz weder Interesse noch Erfolg beim englischen Publikum finden würde. In dieser Beziehung aber bin ich vollkommen unfähig, ein Urteil zu fällen, da mir die Reaktionen des kleinen wie des grossen Publikums immer rätselhafter werden, und was noch schlimmer ist, unbedeutender. Denn ich komme vom naiven Gegensatz nicht los, zumindesten was die Literatur betrifft, dass eine Sache sich lohnt oder sich nicht lohnt. Und wenn wir unbedingt Geld verdienen müssen, machen wir es anderswo.

Ich zweifle nicht, dass Ringelnatz als Mensch von ganz ausserordentlichem Interesse war. Als Dichter aber scheint er Goethes Meinung gewesen zu sein: Lieber NICHTS zu schreiben, als nicht zu schreiben. Dem Uebersetzer aber hätte der Geheimrat selbst vielleicht gegönnt, sich dieses hohen Kakoethes unwürdig zu fühlen.

Ich würde mich freuen, Ihnen meinen Abscheu vor der Verswut Ringelnatz' genauer zu erklären, wenn Sie Lust haben, ihn zu verstehen. Vorläufig aber will ich Sie schonen. Vielleicht mögen Sie die Leichenrede ebenso wenig wie ich.

Gleicherweise könnte ich Ihnen eventuell die ausgewählten Gedichte anzeigen und die Probeübersetzungen schicken.

¹ Aqueles que podem vir a ser considerados “erros” de gramática e/ou sintaxe no alemão de Beckett, não foram nem corrigidos, nem marcados. TLSB, “German Translator’s Preface”, p. xliv.

“Es freut mich immer, einen Brief von Ihnen zu bekommen. Schreiben Sie also möglichst häufig und ausführlich. Wollen Sie unbedingt, dass ich Ihnen auf englisch das gleiche tue? Werden Sie beim Lesen meiner deutschen Briefe ebenso gelangweilt, wie ich beim Verfassen eines englischen? Es täte mir Leid, wenn Sie das Gefühl hätten, es handele sich etwa um einen Kontrakt, dem ich nicht nachkomme. Um Antwort wird gebeten.

Es wird mir tatsächlich immer schwieriger, ja sinnloser, ein offizielles Englisch zu schreiben. Und immer mehr meine Sprache vor, den man zerreißen muss, um an die hinterliegenden Dinge (oder das hinterliegende Nichts) zu kommen. Grammatik und Stil! Mir scheinen sie ebenso hilflos geworden zu sein wie ein Biedermeier Badeanzug oder die Unerschütterlichkeit eines Gentlemans. Eine Larve. Hoffentlich kommt die Zeit, sie ist ja Gott sei Dank in gewissen Kreisen schon da, wo die Sprache da am besten gebraucht wird, wo sie am tüchtigsten missgebraucht wird. Da wir sie so mit einem Male nicht ausschalten können, wollen wir wenigstens nichts versäumen, was zu deren Verruf beitragen mag. Ein Loch nach dem andern in ihr zu bohren, bis das Dahinterkauernde, sei es etwas oder nichts, durchzusickern anfängt – ich kann mir für den heutigen Schriftsteller kein höheres Ziel vorstellen.

Oder soll die Literatur auf jenem alten faulen von Musik und Malerei längst verlassenem Wege allein hinterbleiben. Steckt etwas lähmend heiliges in der Unnatur des Wortes, was zu den Elementen der anderen Künste nicht gehört? Gibt es irgendeinen Grund, warum jene fürchterlich willkürliche Materialität der Wortfläche nicht aufgelöst werden sollte, wie z.B. die von grossen schwarzen Pausen gefressene Tonfläche in der siebten Symphonie von Beethoven, so dass wir sie ganze Seiten durch nicht anders wahrnehmen können als etwa einen schwindelnden unergründliche Schlünde von Stillschweigen verknüpfenden Pfad von Lauten? Um Antwort wird gebeten.

Ich weiss, es gibt Leute, empfindsame und intelligente Leute, für die es an Stillschweigen gar nicht fehlt. Ich kann nicht umhin, anzunehmen, dass sie schwerhörig sind. Denn im Walde des Symbole, die keine sind, schweigen die Vögelein der Deutung, die keine ist, nie.

Selbstverständlich muss man sich vorläufig mit Wenigem begnügen. Zuerst kann es nur darauf ankommen, irgendwie eine Methode zu erfinden, um diese höhnische Haltung dem Worte gegenüber wörtlich darzustellen. In dieser Dissonanz von Mitteln und Gebrauch wird man schon vielleicht ein Geflüster der Endmusik oder des Allem zu Grunde liegenden Schweigens spüren können.

Mit einem solchen Programme hat meiner Ansicht nach die allerletzte Arbeit von Joyce gar nichts zu tun. Dort scheint es sich vielmehr um eine Apotheose des Wortes zu handeln. Es sei denn, Himmelfahrt und Höllensturz sind eins und dasselbe. Wie schön es

wäre, glauben zu können, es sei in der Tat so! Wir wollen uns aber vorläufig auf die Absicht beschränken.

Vielleicht liegen die Logographen von Gertrude Stein dem näher, was ich im Sinne habe. Das Sprachgewebe ist wenigstens porös geworden, wenn nur leider ganz zufälligerweise, und zwar als Folge eines etwa der Technik von Feininger ähnlichen Vorfahrens. Die unglückliche Dame (lebt sie noch?) ist ja ohne Zweifel immer noch in ihr Vehikel verliebt, wenn freilich nur wie in seine Ziffern ein Mathematiker, für den die Lösung des Problems von ganz sekundärem Interesse ist, ja ihm als Tod der Ziffern direkt schrecklich vorschweben muss. Diese Methode mit der von Joyce in Zusammenhang zu bringen, wie es die Mode ist, kommt mir genau so sinnlos vor wie der mich noch nicht bekannte Versuch den Nominalismus (im Sinne der Scholastiker) mit dem Realismus zu vergleichen. Auf dem Wege nach dieser für mich sehr wünschenswerten Literatur des Unworts hin, kann freilich irgendeine Form der nominalistischen Ironie ein notwendiges Stadium sein. Es genügt aber nicht, wenn das Spiel etwas von seinem heiligen Ernst verliert. Aufhören soll es. Machen wir also wie jener verrückte (?) Mathematiker, der auf jeder einzelnen Stufe des Kalküls ein neues Messprinzip anzuwenden pflegte. Eine Wörterstürmerei im Namen der Schönheit.

Inzwischen mache ich gar nichts. Nur von Zeit zu Zeit habe ich wie jetzt den Trost, mich so gegen eine fremde Sprache unwillkürlich vergehen zu dürfen, wie ich es mit Wissen und Willen gegen meine eigene machen möchte und – Deo juvante – werde.

Mit herzlichen Gruss,

Ihr

Soll ich Ihnen die Ringelnetz Bände zurückschicken?

Gibt es eine englische Uebersetzung von Trakl?“

Anexo II
“German Letter”

9 July 1937

Dear Axel Kaun,

“Many thanks for your letter. I was just about to write to you when it came. Then I had to go travelling rather like Ringelnatz’s male postage stamp, although under less passionate circumstances.

It is best I tell you right away and without further ado that in my opinion Ringelnatz is not worth the effort. You probably will not be more disappointed to hear this from me than I was in having to determine it.

I read through the 3 volumes, chose 23 poems and translated 2 of these as samples. The little that of necessity they lost in the process is of course only to be evaluated in relation to what they have to lose in the first place, and I must say that I found this co-efficient of deterioration quite insignificant even where he is most poet and least rhymester.

From this it is not to be assumed at all that a translated Ringelnatz would not find interest or success with the English public. In this respect, however, I am totally unable to make a judgement since responses of small as well as large audiences are becoming more and more mysterious to me and, what is worse, less significant. For I cannot get away from the naïve antithesis that, at least where literature is concerned, a thing is either worth it or not worth it. And if we absolutely must earn money, we do it elsewhere.

I do not doubt that Ringelnatz as a person was of rather exceptional interest. As poet, however, he seemed to have been of Goethe’s opinion: *better to write NOTHING than not to write*. However, perhaps, even the Geheimrat might have allowed the translator to feel himself unworthy of such high kakoethes.

I would be happy to explain to you in more detail my disdain for Ringelnatz’s verse obsession if you feel like going into it. However, for the time being I will spare you. Perhaps you like funeral orations as little as I do.

Likewise, I could perhaps indicate to you the chosen poems and send you the sample translations.

I am always delighted to receive a letter from you. Therefore do write as often and as extensively as possible. Do you absolutely want me to do the same for you in English? Do you get as bored reading my German letters as I composing one in English? I would be sorry if you had the feeling that perhaps this was a matter of contract which I am not fulfilling. An

answer is requested.

It is indeed getting more and more difficult, even pointless, for me to write in formal English. And more and more my language appears to me like a veil which one has to tear apart in order to get to those things (or the nothingness) lying behind it. Grammar and style! To me they seem to have become as irrelevant as Biedermeier bathing suit or the imperturbability of a gentleman. A mask. It is to be hoped the time will come, thank God, in some circles it already has, when language is best used where it is most efficiently abused. Since we cannot dismiss it all at once, at least we do not want to leave anything undone that may contribute to its disrepute. To drill one hole after another into it until that which lurks behind, be it something or nothing, starts seeping through – I cannot imagine a higher goal for today's writer.

Or is literature alone to be left behind on that old, foul road long ago abandoned by music and painting? Is there something paralytically sacred contained within the unnature of the word that does not belong to the elements of the other arts? Is there any reason why that terrifyingly arbitrary materiality of the word surface should not be dissolved, as for example the sound surface of Beethoven's Seventh Symphony is devoured by huge black pauses, so that for pages on end we cannot perceive it as other than a dizzying path of sounds connecting unfathomable chasms of silence? An answer is requested.

I know there are people, sensitive and intelligent people, for whom there is no lack of silence. I cannot help but assume that they are hard of hearing. For in the forest of symbols that are no symbols, the birds of interpretation, that is no interpretation, are never silent.

Of course, for the time being, one makes do with little. At first, it can only be a matter of somehow inventing a method of verbally demonstrating this scornful attitude vis-a-vis the word. In this dissonance of instrument and usage perhaps one will already be able to sense a whispering of the end-music or of the silence underlying all.

In my opinion, the most recent work of Joyce had nothing at all to do with such a programme. There it seems much more a matter of an apotheosis of the word. Unless Ascent into Heaven and Descent into Hell are one and the same. How nice it would be to be able to believe that in fact it were so. For the moment, however, we will limit ourselves to the intention.

Perhaps, Gertrude Stein's Logographs come closer to what I mean. The fabric of the language has at least become porous, if regrettably only quite by accident and, as it were, as a consequence of a procedure somewhat akin to the technique of Feininger. The unhappy lady (is she still alive?) is undoubtedly still in love with her vehicle, if only, however, as a mathematician is with his numbers; for him the solution of the problem is of very secondary interest, yes, as the death of numbers, it must seem to him indeed dreadful. To connect this method with that of Joyce, as is fashionable, appears to me as ludicrous as the attempt, as

yet unknown to me, to compare Nominalism (in the sense of the Scholastics) with Realism. On the road toward this, for me, very desirable literature of the non-word, some form of nominalistic irony can of course be a necessary phase. However, it does not suffice if the game loses some of its sacred solemnity. Let it cease altogether! Let's do as that crazy mathematician who used to apply a new principle of measurement at each individual step of the calculation. Word-storming in the name of beauty.

In the meantime I am doing nothing. Only from time to time do I have the consolation, as now, of being allowed to violate a foreign language as involuntarily as, with knowledge and intention, I would like to do against my own language, and – Deo juvante – shall do.

Cordially yours,

Shall I send you back the Ringelnatz volumes?

Is there an English translation of Trakl?"

Anexo III

If I told him: a completed portrait of Picasso

If I told him would he like it. Would he like it if I told him. / Would he like it would Napoleon would Napoleon would would he like it. / If Napoleon if I told him if I told him if Napoleon. Would he like it if I told him if I told him if Napoleon. Would he like it if Napoleon if Napoleon if I told him. If I told him if Napoleon if Napoleon if I told him. If I told him would he like it would he like it if I told him. / Now. / Not now. / And now. / Now. / Exactly as as kings. / Feeling full for it. / Exactitude as kings. / So to beseech you as full as for it. / Exactly or as kings. / Shutters shut and open so do queens. Shutters shut and shutters and so /shutters shut and shutters and so and so shutters and so shutters shut and so shutters shut and shutters and so. And so shutters shut and so and also. And also and so and so and also. / Exact resemblance. To exact resemblance the exact resemblance as exact as a resemblance, exactly as resembling, exactly resembling, exactly in resemblance exactly a resemblance, exactly and resemblance. For this is so. Because. / Now actively repeat at all, now actively repeat at all, now actively repeat at all. / Have hold and hear, actively repeat at all. / I judge judge. / As a resemblance to him. / Who comes first. Napoleon the first. / Who comes too coming coming too, who goes there, as they go they share, who shares all, all is as all as as yet or as yet. / Now to date now to date. Now and now and date and the date. / Who came first. Napoleon at first. Who came first Napoleon the first. Who came first, Napoleon first. / Presently. / Exactly do they do. / First exactly. / Exactly do they do too. / First exactly. / And first exactly. / Exactly do they do. / And first exactly and exactly. / And do they do. / At first exactly and first exactly and do they do. / The first exactly. / And do they do. / The first exactly. / At first exactly. / First as exactly. / As first as exactly. / Presently / As presently. / As as presently. / He he he he and he and he and and he and he and he and and as and as he and as he and he. He is and as he is, and as he is and he is, he is and as he and he and as he is and he and he and and he and he. / Can curls rob can curls quote, quotable. / As presently. / As exactitude. / As trains. / Has trains. / Has trains. / As trains. / As trains. / Presently. / Proportions. / Presently. / As proportions as presently. / Father and farther. / Was the king or room. / Farther and whether. / Was there was there was there what was there was there what was there was there there was there. / Whether and in there. / As even say so. / One. / I land. / Two. / I land. / Three. / The land. / Three. / The land. / Three. / The land. / Two. / I land. / Two. / I land. / One. / I land. / Two. / I land. / As a so. / They cannot. / A note. / They cannot. / A float. / They cannot. / They dote. / They cannot. / They as denote. / Miracles play. / Play fairly. / Play fairly well. / A well. / As well. / As or as presently. / Let me recite what history teaches. History teaches.

Gertrude Stein

Anexo IV

COMMENT DIRE	WHAT IS THE WORD
folie—	folly—
folie que de—	folly for to—
que de—	for to—
comment dire—	what is the word—
folie que de ce—	folly from this—
depuis—	all this—
folie depuis ce—	folly from all this—
donné—	this—
folie donné ce que de—	
vu—	
folie vu ce—	
ce—	
comment dire—	what is the word—
ceci—	this this—
ce ceci—	this this here—
cece-ci—	
tout ce ceci-ci—	all this this here—
folie donné tout ce—	folly given all this—
vu—	seeing—
folie vu tout ce ceci-ci que de—	folly seeing all this this here—
que de—	for to—
comment dire—	what is the word—
voir—	see—
entrevoir—	glimpse—
croire entrevoir—	seem to glimpse—
vouloir croire entrevoir—	need to seem to glimpse—
folie que de vouloir croire entrevoir quoi—	folly for to need to seem to glimpse—
quoi—	what—
comment dire—	what is the word—
et où—	and where—
que de vouloir croire entrevoir quoi où—	folly for to need to seem to glimpse what where—
où—	Where—
comment dire—	what is the word—
là—	there—
là-bas—	over there—
loin—	away over there—
loin là là-bas—	afar—
à peine—	
loin là là-bas à peine quoi—	afar away over there what—
quoi—	what—
comment dire—	what is the word—
vu tout ceci—	seeing all this—
tout ce ceci-ci—	all this this—
	all this this here—
folie que de voir quoi—	folly for to see what—
entrevoir—	glimpse—
croire entrevoir—	seem to glimpse—
vouloir croire entrevoir—	need to seem to glimpse—
loin là là-bas à peine quoi—	afaint afar away over there what—
folie que d'y vouloir croire entrevoir quoi—	folly for to need to seem to glimpse afaint afar away over there
	what—
quoi—	what—
comment dire—	what is the word—
comment dire	what is the word

Samuel Beckett