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How to Gain and Maintain Symbolic Capital:

Hans Magnus Enzensberger as an Example

Markus Joch

What makes a sociological approach, Pierre Bourdieu's field theory, interesting for literary scientists? Although *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste* – his study of the different lifestyles of social groups in France – is probably his best-known work, Bourdieu regarded *The Rules of Art: Genesis and Structure of the Literary Field* as his most important one. This book has been discussed over the last twenty years by scholars in France, Germany, Spain and Italy and also, occasionally, in the US, because it explains how writers gain respect in the literary world and what sets the inner logic of this world apart from the laws of economics. I will begin this essay with a short overview of the principles of field theory. Then I will examine the category of symbolic capital. As you know, symbolic capital means fame and prestige or just respect and recognition. But what is the advantage of describing terms we are so familiar with as a kind of capital? I have chosen Hans Magnus Enzensberger, a lyricist, essayist and translator born in Nuremberg in 1929 as an example. I conclude with two problem areas in theory of the literary field.

1. Basic concepts

Bourdieu's theory of the literary field is embedded in his model of society, which lifts the terms class and capital out of the sheerly economic constraints of their Marxist definition. Bourdieu sees class as an analytical model rather than a collective that could be mobilised, and with reference to Max Weber, he defines class as deriving from *several* social characteristics. A person's class faction is thus a combination of three different types of capital: economic capital (money, means of production, property), social capital (relatives, friends, contacts) and cultural capital (linguistic competence, education, title/qualifications, manners). The fourth type of capital is the one I referred to above as symbolic capital, more usually referred to as prestige, honour etc.

According to Bourdieu, the different social spheres in modern societies like politics, the sciences, the economy and art are relatively independent but not completely isolated. Although people who exercise a lot of power in one field may find it easier to influence another field, the legitimization criteria are different for each field. The literary field, for example, has two opposite poles objectifying two different types of capital: on the one hand, there is the subfield of *large-scale production* whose primary criterion is commercial success. The opposite pole is the subfield of *small-scale production*, exclusive to insiders, an autonomous pole, where recognition from other writers, respected critics and authorities like juries and prize

committees carry more weight than commercial success, which is regarded with distaste or at best suspicion. At this pole symbolic capital is more important than economic capital. These authors set their own standards of aesthetic legitimacy and refuse to subject themselves to the laws of the market. The small-scale production is a world in which the basic laws of economics are reversed: „The artist cannot triumph on the symbolic terrain except by losing on the economic terrain (at least in the short run), and vice versa (at least in the long run).“¹⁾ The small-scale production thus tends to produce long sellers rather than bestsellers.

Bourdieu examines what happens when a writer's attitude determined by his/her social background, the unity of thought, patterns of perception, and action, i. e. the *habitus*, meets upon a given situation in the literary world – the space of possibilities at the moment in which the author tries to find his or her place in it. Stylistic preferences cannot simply be assigned to his or her social origin, as belonging to the proletariat, the lower or upper middle classes. Preferences are rather the confluence of habitus and the literary world. As the conditions of the literary field are in permanent fluctuation, people with identical social backgrounds and similar habitus can easily come to occupy contrary positions in it. The literary field superimposes itself on the influences of social origin without fully neutralising them – Bourdieu calls this the refraction effect 2).

Whether consciously or not, the author of a literary text invariably relates to other authors, both previous and contemporary, as they all move in a very particular social cosmos in which *only that which is distinctive counts*, i.e. the difference to established themes, motives, narrative styles and so on. Field theory focuses on the struggle between established writers and young challengers as prompting the differences between the works themselves. Bourdieu therefore defines the social dimension of modern literature as a society within society: the society of writers. Why did he choose the term „literary field“ to describe this kind of society? Firstly, on account of the polar tension between commercially-oriented and autonomous literature. Secondly it illustrates his view that the literary world does not simply consist of a certain number of writers who act independently from one another but rather a complex web of lines of force, power and influence, attraction and repulsion. In the context of the increasing differentiation of society as a whole, the history of the literary field follows the general trend of increasing autonomy against forces outside the literary world, such as the church, the state, party politics and the market. It is therefore increasingly difficult to derive or predict the literary field's condition from any knowledge about the social, political and economic context beyond it.

The increasing autonomy goes hand in hand with an increasing awareness on the part of the writers about themselves, what has already been produced in their field in the past and their task of transcending it. The task of relational analysis is showing how much of the work expresses tradition as it is incorporated, even in its most radical negation, and how much goes beyond it. „Any interrogation arises from a tradition, from a practical or theoretical mastery of the *heritage* which is inscribed in the very structure of the field, as a *state of things*, dissimulated by its own evidence, which delimits the thinkable and the unthinkable and

which opens the space of possible questions and answers.“³⁾ The basic observation is, that the difference between old and new is often less radical than artistic myth of creation would have it, but that the smallest deviance from the canon may actually be the defining difference.

Bourdieu’s point of view has gained acceptance primarily because it corresponds to the image artists have of themselves. Countless works of classical modernism and the avant-garde are statements on the pressure to innovate. The token quotes and patchworks of postmodernism do not escape this logic either; they only pander to it in a more playful manner. But seeing literature as a system of deviations does not necessarily require a conscious will on the part of the writers to distinguish their work. Bourdieu frequently refers to a „sense of one’s place“⁴⁾ (a term coined by Erving Goffman) and uses terms like intuition and instinct – i.e. that the author or artist’s „inner compulsion“⁵⁾, or will to create must somehow combine with a feeling for the new and distinguishable in order to produce a work regarded as valuable.

Superficially, the system theory of literature as introduced by Niklas Luhmann seems to follow a similar line of argument to Bourdieu’s field theory. What field theory sees as the autonomization of literature and increasing self-reflection, system theory terms „self-reference“. Further, the two approaches agree that art and literature are distinct from other fields in that they are characterised by a greater pressure to innovate. In his later works, Luhmann favours the following combination of guiding differences (*Leitdifferenzen*) to describe the art world: beautiful/ugly, fitting/unfitting, well-made/badly done, interesting/boring, but ultimately: new/old⁶⁾. What system theoreticians refer to as functional differentiation, the decoupling of the art world from codes like good/bad in a moral and progressive/conservative in a political sense, is ultimately also addressed by Bourdieu in his portrait of 19th century authors like Baudelaire and Flaubert. Here he shows how they struggled with the church, overzealous public prosecutors – and even in some instances against left-wing radicals – for the freedom to select their subjects independently and choose the way in which they wanted to portray them.

But: While the Luhmann school plays down power issues in the system of the art world (as these issues are assigned to the subsystems of politics and the economy), and assumes that conflicts in all social systems only have a „parasitic existence“⁷⁾, the „bourdieusiens“ think the opposite. In their view, the literary world is dominated by power struggles. They see literature struggling against the forces of the market, party politics and journalism on the one hand. On the other, they see internal disputes within the field. The question of what is valuable or legitimate in literary terms is a subject of permanent controversy. When authors try to assert themselves and their agenda, they use all the capital they have at their disposal: the cultural capital acquired at home and at school as well as their economic capital. This means that avant-garde productions, whose currency is prestige and long-term renown rather than a fast buck, requires financial reserves as the work will only have few customers in the short run. Writers with a comfortable inheritance are therefore in the best position to afford such experiments⁸⁾.

2. How Hans Magnus Enzensberger has won and maintained his symbolic capital

Enzensberger, who has lived in Munich since 1980, has been accumulating his symbolic capital since the middle of the 1950's in two distinctly different roles: as a poet and as an essayist. In the latter role, he has always been able to maintain his visibility in the print media, whose reach is admittedly inferior to that of television, but which have made it possible for him to keep himself in the public eye among intellectuals (in the broadest sense of that term). The print run of the periodicals *Kursbuch* and *TransAtlantik*, which he founded himself in 1965 and 1980, respectively, reached a print run of 100,000 copies in their heyday. And the circulation of the quality newspapers for which he writes are also in six figures, and the numbers for *Der Spiegel* at times even reach seven figures. However, it must be taken into consideration that Enzensberger's collections of essays that have been issued by Suhrkamp, Germany's foremost publishing house, have for the most part *not* quite reached the bestseller threshold.

On the other hand, the poet Enzensberger tends to produce his works for other poets. The readership for his poetry consists of other (potential) poets and professional interpreters of poetry, approximately in equal measure, as well as for students. Compared to the essays, the sales of books of poetry are indeed small, the average number for a volume of poetry sold is 1,300 copies a year. This less popular genre is also subject to a different sales cycle. Enzensberger's books of poetry are not bestsellers, but longsellers, which means that they stay in Suhrkamp's *backlist* for a longer period than the volumes of essays. Enzensberger's constant alternation between a relatively large and relatively small readership is a suitable object for field theory. Bourdieu's approach takes note of „two markets between which one must be wary of establishing a clear boundary, since they are merely two poles, defined in and by their antagonistic relationship, of the same space“⁹⁾.

But just how does one go about measuring symbolic capital in the literary field? Along with an author having his/her works issued by a renowned publishing house, as well as being reviewed in prestige periodicals, literary prizes are the measuring-stick for an author's standing. The award of a literary prize is what Bourdieu refers to as „literary consecration“¹⁰⁾. In Enzensberger's six-decade career, he has won no less than 17 prizes, including one from Yugoslavia, one from Spain, and from Italy. Already in 1963, at the age of 33, he received the Georg-Büchner Prize, the most prestigious literary award in the German-speaking countries. Already by this point it has become clear that the literary prestige that goes along with such prizes, as well as the other success mentioned above, can be described as a sort of capital. Just as economic capital can be said to *accumulate*, the same can be said of symbolic capital. While it was the young *poet* who had been lionized shortly after the beginning of his career with the Büchner-Prize, the Ludwig-Börne Prize in 2002 was awarded primarily to the *essayist* Enzensberger. Having such a high standing in two genres adds up synergistically. In addition, when it was revealed in 1995 that Enzensberger is the top-earner among Germany's essayists, the honorarium for one of his essays in *Der Spiegel* earned him approximately 30,000

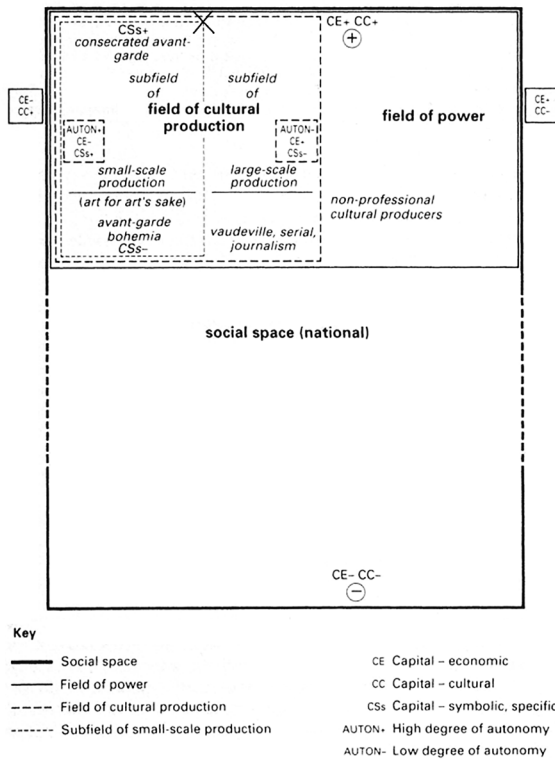


Figure: Three States of the Field (Pierre Bourdieu, *The Rules of Art. Genesis and Structure of the Literary Field*, Stanford, 1996, p.124)

Figure 3 The field of cultural production in the field of power and in social space

German Marks (15,000 Euros)¹¹. We can see that such a fact has to do with the point, that the *Spiegel* adorns itself with the reputation of a writer whose prestige within the exclusive small-scale production is beyond doubt. In this way, symbolic capital lends itself to being *converted* into economic capital. Conversely, the essayist's income supports the poet who spends decades pursuing his non-profit art. Furthermore, it can be observed how, since the middle of the 1960's, the author has *transferred* the literary recognition into the „field of power“ (Bourdieu), i. e. political influence, and has thus become an public intellectual. At that time, he interpreted this role as a spokesman for the left and saw himself as a counterweight against the German Federal Government. Such was the case in 1968, for example, when he came out as a spokesman against the „German Emergency Acts“.

Let us now take a short look at Bourdieu's model „field of cultural production“ (see the figure). Enzensberger's position, which I have marked with a cross, lies at the top of this field – and on the horizontal line in the center, since he enjoys both high symbolic and economic capital in equal measure. That is, since the beginning of the 1960's, he has been among the lucky few that the literary sociologist calls „the consecrated avant-garde“. It is now interesting that this writer has been able to maintain his dominant

position up to the present day. It is interesting because maintaining is not to be taken for granted. Field theory emphasizes that those authors who have shaped the epoch of their time are precisely the ones who will be sent into „retirement” and downgraded by the following generation of writers ¹²⁾. Not so Enzensberger, who at the tender age of 85 became the first winner of the Frank-Schirmacher Prize (2015), which has subsequently been awarded to much younger star authors, such as Jonathan Franzen and Michel Houellebecq.

My thesis is that his unusually rapid and astonishingly stable accumulation of symbolic capital is not only because of his uncontested skill as an artist. Together with that comes, that Enzensberger has above all repeatedly positioned himself as a provocative essayist – whether it is in the fact that he has broken with his own previously held standpoints, or whether it is also the fact that he has disowned political correctness. Both of these positions have pleased influential German literary critics and scholars of literature. Secondly, Enzensberger is an author of international standing. It’s not merely that his books have been translated into 29 languages, or that by 1999, 19 of his works have been rendered into Japanese ¹³⁾. Blessed with an extraordinary gift for foreign languages, he has earned a place for himself as a translator, serving to internationalize the literary life – having rendered works from Spanish, Italian, French, English, Hebrew, Swedish, Russian and Hungarian into German. Nothing impresses German literary critics more than cosmopolitanism ¹⁴⁾.

First, let us briefly look at how Enzensberger rose to fame. Cultural capital played a role for our author as he came from an educated family that was interested in the arts. His grandfather was a teacher, his father an engineer at Germany’s postal service, the Reichspost. The latter was a specialist in telecommunications and liked translating English literature in his spare time (more than a dozen novels, stories and essays). With this family background, it is not surprising that the oldest son, Hans Magnus, developed into an author with a relatively high technical affinity. For example in *Constituents of a Theory of the Media* (1970) he was interested in ways of turning radio and television from a medium of distribution into a medium of communication. Andreas Enzensberger also passed his interest in foreign languages on to his sons, as is evidenced by the fact that Hans Magnus’s younger brother, Christian Enzensberger, became a professor of English language and literature. The habitual influence at home included an educated middle-class contempt for the Nazis: Their provincialism must be avoided! This educational stance soon paid off: In 1946, when the war was over and the Americans had arrived, people with good English-speaking skills were in high demand, but they were very scarce in and around Nuremburg at the time. As a result, Hans Magnus Enzensberger, at the age of just 17, got a job as an interpreter, first for the Americans and then for the British. With the help of his British military friends, he was able to travel to England and Sweden three years later. In other words, he early turned his cultural capital into contacts, or social capital.

The most important social capital of Enzensberger in the mid-1950s, by then a literary debutant, was his friendship with the established writer Alfred Andersch, who was 15 years his senior. Andersch had made a name for himself as the author of the stories *The Cherries of Freedom* and *Flight to Afar* and was appointed

chief cultural editor of the south German radio station Süddeutscher Rundfunk in 1955. In the same year, he gave Enzensberger a job as assistant for his radio broadcasts. And it was thus none other than Andersch who enthusiastically reviewed Enzensberger's first volume of poetry, *verteidigung der wölfe* (*in defence of wolves*), in early 1958: „this author has written what we have not seen in Germany since Brecht: the big political poem“¹⁵). With this act of praise, Andersch's symbolic capital was passed on to the newcomer.

In fact, however, the laudatory comparison with Bertolt Brecht, the representative of *poésie engagée*, is rather off the mark. As were the positive reviews that saw in the young poet a successor to Gottfried Benn, the representative of *poésie pure*, *verteidigung der wölfe* actually distances itself from these two giants of poetry, who had both recently died in 1956. To be more precise, although the younger poet takes on some techniques of the two older writers such as non-rhyming or breaking the rhyme, irregular rhythms, hard transitions and word plays, at the same time, he sets himself apart from both of these conflicting authorities. In contrast to Brecht's political poetry, Enzensberger does not pit the evil ruling class against the „wisdom of the people“ but, despite his clear criticism for those in power, primarily expresses his disdain for the way those who are ruled consent to being ruled over: „Who hangs with pride the tin cross / in front of their rumbling bellybutton? / Who takes the tips, the silver coin, / the hush penny? There are / many that are stolen from, and few thieves; who / applauds them, who / pins on their badges, who / lusts for the lie?“¹⁶) Unlike Benn's cool and sometimes hermetic linguistic artistry which, as *poésie pure*, lets the subject retreat into the background behind the language and the process of creating poetry, Enzensberger puts the emphasis on clear diction and a focus on everyday life and everyday objects.

Why am I bothering sociologists with details of the history of German poetry? Because for the literary sociologist Bourdieu, the most distinctive and thus most effective positions in the literary field are those that are against the dominant literary alternative, in other words, against the currently dominant pair of opposites¹⁷). And this is precisely what the young Enzensberger did by discarding the dichotomy of *poésie engagée* vs. *poésie pure*, moving away from both dominant programmes and orientating himself instead on a third path towards the Chilean poet, Pablo Neruda¹⁸). It is from Neruda that he learns to make poetry about objects of everyday life, a *poésie impure*. The young German poet also takes on Neruda's art of listing things. „[...] no one / sees the cats starving behind the museum / sees the roses in the ash bin, sees an apple core / bobbing in the mud of the canal“¹⁹) – Enzensberger is skilled at verses like these because he translated Neruda's poetry into German. He also introduced Neruda to literary insiders in Germany with an essay published in 1955, which impressed his readers not least because of the foreign language of the young author, who was only in his mid-20s at the time.

The essay on Neruda and his volume of poetry *verteidigung der wölfe* serve as a prelude to Enzensberger's field strategic project of internationalising German-language poetry²⁰). A milestone here is his publication in 1960 of the anthology *Museum der modernen Poesie* (Museum of Modern Poetry), which includes poetry from 109 authors from 31 different countries, translated into German from 16 different

languages by 65 translators. Enzensberger's vision of a „global language of modern poetry“ is designed to be a provocation to national literature(s) and national literary studies: „The great thing about the lingua franca, which this book attempts to set out, is that [...] it liberates what is special from the bonds of national literature.“⁽²¹⁾ Understandably, Enzensberger, as the editor and author of many of the translations, gained a huge amount of prestige with this anthology. At this time, around 1960, the most advanced West German writers were competing with each other to catch up with the literary modernity from which they had been cut off during the twelve years of Nazi rule. Enzensberger was ahead in this race, particularly as for him, the internationalisation of German-language literature was not restricted only to European modernity, but also included authors from the South American continent.

One of the reasons why the poetry of Enzensberger attracted so much attention is that he had already made a name for himself as an essayist before he published his first volume of poetry. He became well-known overnight in March 1957 with his article *Die Sprache des „Spiegel“* (The language of the *Spiegel*). This was a highly provocative text in which the then 27-year-old author dared to dismiss a news magazine regarded by most of the liberal left of the Adenauer period as a leading political light as politically overrated, anti-intellectual and linguistically mediocre. The text was written as a radio broadcast and was later printed in the news magazine itself with the author's consent as proof of its liberal sovereignty. With this text, Enzensberger developed a new model of authorship because in Germany it was the first media criticism to appear in the media.

If we want to understand how Enzensberger was able to maintain the symbolic capital he gained early on over many decades, we can simply compare the eulogies held on him around 1960 with those from around 2010. In a certain way the tributes have not really changed, have only grown more fervent, along the lines of the „most cosmopolitan, German intellectual of the twentieth century“⁽²²⁾. He has received many such tributes both within and beyond Germany. What has changed, however, is the praise of the basic intellectual habitus of the author. While, around 1960, cultural supplements underline his boldness, by 2010, it is his flexibility that is being praised, the „superbly unpredictable one“⁽²³⁾, who has escaped the rigidity of ideological dogma. This is mainly because Enzensberger has indeed changed his point of view many times. In 1970, he was the left-leaning son of an engineer who envisioned a democratisation of the electronic mass media because „in electronic technology there is no fundamental dichotomy between the sender and the receiver“⁽²⁴⁾. In 2000, the same author says that the internet exemplifies the downside of a utopia come true. The World Wide Web has fulfilled his wish that every receiver can also be a sender, but unfortunately the result is „overwhelming banality. 99.999% of all contributions are only of interest to their respective receiver, if at all, and even that is being generous“⁽²⁵⁾. Back in 1970, Enzensberger believed that there was a real opportunity to establish a socialist Federal Republic of Germany. By 1998, however, he regarded even the social democratic tax policy as too left-wing and too inhibiting of productivity (also in Germany, not only in Sweden)⁽²⁶⁾. Around 1968, Enzensberger castigated US imperialism in Vietnam and towards Cuba, while

in 1991 and 2003 he supported the military interventions of the US in Iraq. He argued that the protests of the German peace movement had unconsciously anti-Semitic motives, providing much scope for controversy.

As my readers can imagine, the changes in his opinions were not liked by Germany's left-wing intellectuals²⁷⁾, but all the more so by liberal-conservatives. In praising Enzensberger's „flexibility“, this faction in the literary field is, in fact, applauding his political position²⁸⁾. The fact that this contributes to the author's current symbolic capital brings up a problem in Bourdieu's model of the literary field. Why?

3. How autonomous is the literary field really?

On the one hand, Enzensberger's success story confirms the autonomy of the literary field. Judging by the number of literature prizes he has received and the eulogistic biographic portraits that are published on his milestone birthdays, he is the most renowned writer in Germany even though he has not written a bestseller once, during sixty years of publication. That proves the independence of symbolic capital from economic capital. On the other hand, he has also always been judged according to political criteria, at least in his work as an essayist. Until around 1980, it was largely the left-wing that sang his praises, after that the liberal-conservatives, two camps which obviously do exist in the literary field, namely on the pages of the literary magazines. This also becomes clear in that the admirers of the later, *formerly* left-wing, Enzensberger generally reject the novels of the truly social democratic writer Günter Grass as inferior „literature of conviction“ – while, in turn, admirers of Grass discredit Enzensberger as being a turncoat. This casts doubt on the autonomy from political evaluation criteria attributed to the literary field by Bourdieu.

Although Bourdieu himself merely attributes a *relative* autonomy²⁹⁾ to the literary field, the only risk to its autonomy that he identifies is the part of literary criticism that is positioned on the right-hand side in his model of the *field of cultural production* (see figure). In other words, from journalists who attempt to enforce the standards of large-scale production on literature, who interpret commercial success as an indication of relevance, if not of quality, and who subject literature to economic criteria.

„Producers attached to the major cultural bureaucracies (newspapers, radio, television) are increasingly forced to accept and adopt norms and constraints linked to the requirements of the market and, especially, to pressure exerted more or less strongly and directly by advertisers; [...]. One could ask whether the division into two markets characteristic of the fields of cultural production since the middle of the nineteenth century, with on one side the narrow field of producers for producers, and on the other side the field of mass production and ‚industrial literature‘, is not now threatening to disappear, since the logic of commercial production tends more and more to assert itself over avantgarde production (notably, in the case of literature, through the constraints of the book market).“³⁰⁾

There is undoubtedly such a trend and threat. However, Bourdieu's model has two inherent disadvantages. *Firstly, the model cannot explain how it is possible for an author to be commercially successful and enjoy prestige among other writers at the same time. Secondly, Bourdieu's field theory ignores the fact that even literary critics who hold small scale production in high regard are swayed by political evaluation criteria, at least in the sub-fields of essays and novels.* The theory therefore does not cover a second instance of heteronomy, alongside the pressure of commercialisation.

Politicisation is hardly a feature of the German literary field alone. What about the political neutrality of the Swedish Academy responsible for awarding the Nobel Prize in Literature? It is strange that Enzensberger has never been awarded this prize, not only because he was first nominated for this award 52 years ago (by Wolfgang Baumgart, then professor of theatre studies at Freie Universität Berlin). He has not even been a candidate for the award in recent years even though he has since contributed even further to the internationalisation of literature. His main work, *Der Untergang der Titanic* (The Sinking of the Titanic, 1978) is about losing faith in socialism during a one-year stay in Cuba. This epic poem is formally oriented both on the works of the US poet Williams Carlos Williams and on Dante Alighieri's *Divina Commedia*. It can hardly be described as too strongly national literature. A collection of Enzensberger's translations from nine different languages (not only European but also Aztec) published in 1999, *Geisterstimmen* (Spooky Voices), was met with high critical acclaim. Above all, Enzensberger exercised a long overdue self-criticism of his *Museum der modernen Poesie* for being „ignorantly Eurocentric“. „That is why the Chinese, the Arabs, the Indians, the Japanese [...] are missing from this book. The idea of world literature was therefore limited in a way that today, in this post-colonial era, seems rather strange“³¹).

Enzensberger has expressed more clearly than any other German author of his generation that the internationalisation of German literature has by far not reached a state of globalisation, and that every inclusion of foreign literature comes hand in hand with a degree of exclusion. We could term this reflected internationalisation. The fact that the Swedish Academy has still not distinguished the self-critical cosmopolitan, but instead Günter Grass and Heinrich Böll, two German novelists who have spent their lives just writing about Danzig and Cologne, their home towns, does feed the suspicion that the traditionally social-democratically inclined Nobel prize committee prefers to honour social-democratically minded authors rather than a politically unpredictable one like Enzensberger. Evidently, the Academy is so put off by Enzensberger's abandonment of the left, and above all his position on the Iraq war, that it gives less weight to his achievements as a cultural mediator.

As this may sound like speculation or insinuation, let us look more closely at the reasons one may suspect political antipathy is involved here. Enzensberger's essay *Hitlers Wiedergänger* (Hitler's Revenant, 1991), in which he provided a justification for the first Iraq war, was published in no less than 14 foreign newspapers, including Sweden, after it was first published in *Der Spiegel*. The bellicist stance taken by Enzensberger in his essay must already have seemed outrageous to the Academy. As far as I am aware, none

of the Nobel laureates in literature of the last three decades supported the (first or second) war with Iraq. Enzensberger's rationale for his dissonant position is even more sensitive as it violated discursive taboos. He questioned the uniqueness of Adolf Hitler as a figure and described Saddam Hussein as a successor, seeing both as an „enemy of mankind“³²⁾. Above all, Enzensberger was the first German writer to question the singularity of the Nazi mentality. He thought one could see resemblances of it in the collective mentality of this Middle Eastern people: „The Germans were the Iraqis of 1938-1945“³³⁾. The common factor which Enzensberger believes to have identified is the fanatical readiness for self-sacrifice with which the people followed their leader, the resentment against the West and raging anti-Semitism. Just under three decades ago, Enzensberger thus glaringly deviated from the left-liberal consensus in Europe that the monstrosity of Germany's crimes during the National Socialist era prohibits any comparison with other examples of state terror, and the fact that he reaffirmed his bellicist position in 2003 certainly did not reduce the number of his opponents.

From the specific perspective of *Swedish* social democrats, Enzensberger was guilty of a second „sin“ somewhat earlier in his career. In 1982, Enzensberger wrote an extended report on Sweden for the German weekly newspaper *Die Zeit*. This was then translated for *Dagens Nyheter*, Stockholm's largest daily newspaper, by Madeleine Gustavsson, one of the country's most renowned authors. The readers were confronted with a German author who basically had nothing but criticism for the social democratic hegemony of their country. Why? Because, according to Enzensberger, this form of social democracy only means more state. He argued that not only had the country's debt reached grotesque levels, but that the tax authority was an „institution that in most other countries would long have gone up in flames if it had placed such impudent, confiscatory demands on its citizens as in Sweden“³⁴⁾. In Enzensberger's eyes, the public authorities were insolent and bloated with moronic red tape; the only aspect in which Sweden was recording growth was in the number of its civil servants, a collective that was reproducing „like rabbits“³⁵⁾. He said that solidarity and public welfare, the much-lauded advantages of the Swedish social state, had been achieved at the cost of a paternalism towards its citizens that was well-meant but horribly intrusive. Enzensberger sensed the „mouldy smell of an omnipresent, soft but relentless pedagogy“³⁶⁾. The fact that he rejected the Swedish style of politics because it threatened to smother the initiative of its citizens; that he declared the basic social democratic approach as doomed and only succeeding in boring the country's youth; and that the person who came off best in his report was a rather vulgar businessman who took no pains to hide the pleasure he got from his wealth („his vitality and his courage were unquestionable“³⁷⁾) – none of this would have gone down well with the paper's left-leaning readership. Parts of *Schwedischer Herbst* (Swedish Autumn) read like an early neoliberal manifesto.

This is not to say that Enzensberger was not awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature only for political reasons. A look at the literary genres of the 50 Nobel laureates in literature from 1967 to 2016 shows that the distribution is unfavourable for our author: novelists were selected thirty times, poets eleven times, the

combination of novelist and playwright three times, playwrights twice, a poet/novelist once, a reporter once, and a songwriter once (Bob Dylan). The combination of poet and essayist, the category in which Hans Magnus Enzensberger falls, was also only selected once in the personage of Mexican Octavio Paz (1990). The facts suggest that Enzensberger's choice of genres alone means that the odds are stacked against him receiving a Nobel Prize. If, on top of this, the political stance of the essayist is unpopular, then he has practically no chance of winning – no matter how much he has been translated or has translated himself. It is difficult to claim that political criteria play no role whatsoever for the Swedish academy as it would then be a mystery why Enzensberger vanished from the circle of Stockholm candidates after 1991 even though he is still, to this day, one of the most prominent authors on the international stage.

Of course, his views on the Iraq wars can well be regarded as disagreeable, as too his constant attacks on the welfare state. However, a field theory analysis, in other words, an analysis that is interested in power issues, has than at least to acknowledge that for the Nobel prize committee, the internationally most important instance of literary consecration, internationalisation is of secondary importance. Restrictions imposed on literary autonomy should not just be blamed on evil journalists. And the non-polemical manner of the academy, that is the *unspoken* exclusion of Enzensberger from the circle of Nobel prize candidates, shows that *literary sociologists should not only analyse the explicit and thus immediately visible conflicts in the literary field (like Bourdieu did) but also the hidden, silent ones.*

On the other hand, our example also reveals the greatest advantage of field theory (at least I hope so). Only when we view Enzensberger's career through the perspective of field theory do we see that the instances of power in the German literary field award symbolic capital according to different criteria than the Swedish academy. While political flexibility and internationalization are held in high esteem in Germany, these „virtues“ are regarded more critically and given less weight by the Swedish academy. Field theory draws our attention to the unique logic of national literary fields and makes us less susceptible to globalization myths. The result we have identified speaks against the existence of globally valid standards. Incidentally, one should not confuse the fact that German literary critics value internationalization so highly with an internationalization of German literature. An editor of the renowned *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* in 2000 very convincingly argued that, in fact, the opposite is the case. In a piece on an anthology in honour of Enzensberger, he wrote: „The fact that so many authors focus on Enzensberger's cosmopolitanism does not cast him in a poor light, it casts a poor light on the state of the rest of German contemporary literature. It almost seems as if Enzensberger is the only renowned German author who can move with any degree of ease between Havana and the Oslo Fjord“³⁸).

Notes:

1) Pierre Bourdieu, *The Rules of Art. Genesis and Structure of the Literary Field*, translated by Susan Emanuel, Stanford,

- 1996, p. 83. (abbreviation: RA)
- 2) RA, p. 220.
 - 3) RA, p. 243.
 - 4) Pierre Bourdieu, *Rede und Antwort*, Frankfurt/Main, 1992, p. 141.
 - 5) Cf. Pierre Bourdieu, *Zur Soziologie der symbolischen Formen*, Frankfurt/Main, 1970, p. 83.
 - 6) Cf. Niklas Luhmann, *Die Kunst der Gesellschaft*, Frankfurt/Main, 1995, pp. 301-327.
 - 7) Niklas Luhmann, *Soziale Systeme. Grundriss einer allgemeinen Theorie*, Frankfurt/Main, 1984, p. 533
 - 8) Cf. RA, pp. 83-85.
 - 9) RA, p. 120.
 - 10) Cf. RA, pp. 362-364.
 - 11) Cf. Hans Magnus Enzensberger, *Zu große Fragen. Interviews und Gespräche 2005-1970*, Frankfurt/Main, 2006, p. 118.
 - 12) Cf. RA, p. 157.
 - 13) Cf. Rainer Wieland (ed.), *Der Zorn altert, die Ironie ist unsterblich. Über Hans Magnus Enzensberger*, Frankfurt/Main, 1999, pp. 277-278.
 - 14) Cf. for example the deferential portrayal by Alexander Smoltczyk, *Der Fahrplaner der Lüfte*, in *Der Spiegel*, 51, 1998, pp. 214-216.
 - 15) Alfred Andersch, *I (in Worten: ein) zorniger junger Mann* [1958], in Reinhold Grimm (ed.): *Hans Magnus Enzensberger* Frankfurt/Main, 1984, p. 59-63, at p. 62.
 - 16) Hans Magnus Enzensberger, *Verteidigung der Wölfe gegen die Lämmer*, in *verteidigung der wölfe*, Frankfurt/Main, 1957, p. 68
 - 17) Cf. RA, p. 95: „Flaubert calls into question the very fundamentals of the current way of thinking, that is to say, the common principles of vision and division that, at any one moment, ground the consensus about the common meaning of the world: poetry against prose, the poetic against the prosaic, lyricism against vulgarity, conception against execution, idea against writing, subject against technique, and so on: he revokes the limits and the incompatibilities that ground the perceptual and communicative order on the prohibited that is the sacrilege of the mixture of genres or the confusion of orders, prose applied to the poetic and especially poetry applied to the prosaic.”
 - 18) Cf. the very interesting study by Claus Telge, „Brüderliche Egoisten“, *Die Gedichtübersetzungen aus dem Spanischen von Erich Arendt und Hans Magnus Enzensberger*, Heidelberg, 2017, pp. 175-184.
 - 19) Hans Magnus Enzensberger, *Tragödie*, in *verteidigung der wölfe*, Frankfurt/Main, 1957, p. 20.
 - 20) Cf. Ludwig Fischer, *Der fliegende Robert. Zu Hans Magnus Enzensbergers Ambitionen und Kapriolen*, in Christine Künzel, Jörg Schönert (ed.), *Autorinszenierungen: Autorschaft und literarisches Werk im Kontext der Medien*, Würzburg, 2007, pp. 145-176, at p. 160.
 - 21) Hans Magnus Enzensberger (ed.), *Museum der modernen Poesie*, Frankfurt/Main, 1960, p. 13.
 - 22) Florian Illies, *Keiner von uns*, in *Die Zeit*, 05.11.2009

- 23) Felicitas von Lovenberg, *Überschaum und Maß*, in *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 12.11.2009.
- 24) Hans Magnus Enzensberger, *Baukasten zu einer Theorie der Medien* [1970], in *Palaver. Politische Überlegungen (1967-1973)*, Frankfurt/Main, 1974, pp. 91-129, at p. 93.
- 25) Hans Magnus Enzensberger, *Das digitale Evangelium* [2000] in *Nomaden im Regal. Essays*, Frankfurt/Main, 2003, pp. 106-129, at p. 117
- 26) Cf. Hans Magnus Enzensberger, *Über die Gutmütigkeit* [1998], in *Nomaden im Regal. Essays*, Frankfurt/Main, 2003, pp. 50-60.
- 27) Cf. Werner Rügemer, *Von der moralischen Überdüngung des Mobs*, in *Konkret*, 2, 1999, p. 32.
- 28) Cf. *pars pro toto* Eckhard Fuhr: Börne-Preis für Hans Magnus Enzensberger, in *Die Welt*, 03.06.2002; Frank Schirmacher, *Verteidiger der Wölfe*, in *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 13.11.1989.
- 29) Cf. *RA*, pp. 220-221: „The degree of autonomy of the field (and thereby, the state of relations of force established there) varies considerably according to periods and national traditions.”
- 30) *RA*, p. 345.
- 31) Hans Magnus Enzensberger: *Nachbemerkung zu einer Neuauflage*, in *Museum der modernen Poesie* [1960], Frankfurt/Main, 2002, pp. 785-787, at p. 786-787.
- 32) Hans Magnus Enzensberger, *Hitlers Wiedergänger* [1991], in *Zickzack*, Frankfurt/Main, 1997, pp. 79-88, at pp. 80-81.
- 33) *Ibid.*, p. 81.
- 34) Hans Magnus Enzensberger, *Schwedischer Herbst* [1982], in *Ach Europa!*, Frankfurt/Main, 1987, pp. 9-49, at pp. 40-41.
- 35) *Ibid.*, p. 25.
- 36) *Ibid.*, p. 16.
- 37) *Ibid.*, p. 17.
- 38) Christoph Bartmann, *Der Hase, der das Rennen macht*, in *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 31.3.2000.

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