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## Canonisation and Renaming Retranslating Russian Book Titles into Dutch

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*Keywords: retranslations, title, ideology, canonisation*

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## Canonisation and Renaming

### Retranslating Russian Book Titles into Dutch

#### Abstract

*This article examines how translators, editors and publishers handle the titles from Russian literary works in Dutch retranslations. Since a title constitutes a distinct component of the paratext and lies outside the main body of the literary text, it is reasonable to expect specific rules governing the translation and retranslation of titles. This study explicitly focuses on the adaptation of titles in the context of retranslation, with a distinction drawn between canonical and non-canonical works. Each title is examined to determine which of the ten identified title functions are prioritised and how different translations may foreground different functions. Specifically, this paper considers whether the titles of canonical works are more rigorously “protected” against adaptation and examines the extent to which new titles offer a more literal rendering of the source text. Additionally, this article explores the potential role of ideology in this process, particularly in relation to the handling of politically sensitive literary works.*

#### Introduction

A central, yet elusive concern within scholarly analysis of literary translations revolves around the pursuit of “equivalence” between the source and target texts. Translations that deviate significantly from the source text are often viewed with some scepticism, as examining the differences between the original and its translation often reveals instances of manipulation, adaptation, or indeed, outright censorship. One component of a literary text where the expectation of “semantic equivalence” is generally considered less stringent than for the rest of the literary work is the title. As noted by Maurizio Viezzi (2011: 193), this component has historically been “rather neglected” within translation studies, even though an analysis of the translation strategy applied to the title can reveal much about the intentions of the translator, editor or publisher of a translated literary work, as well as provide insight into the intended purpose of the translation within the target culture. From this perspective, the translated title may also be viewed as both instrumental and dialogical in nature.

In this article, we investigate to what extent different causes of manipulation influence literary translation, with a particular focus on translations from Russian into Dutch. We compiled a corpus of Dutch titles for translated and retranslated Russian literary works from 1789 to 2020, identifying instances where retranslators, editors or publishers changed the titles compared to previous translations. Our aim is to explore the possible rationale underlying these modifications.

The case study reveals how (at least) two circumstances play a relevant role in the process, albeit to a different degree and not necessarily in a complementary way. On the one hand, the potential canonical status of the literary work in both the source and target cultures may influence translators' choices, as altering the title of a work becomes challenging once it has attained a certain standing and associated market position for the publishing house. On the other hand, ideological considerations may also be at play, particularly during the Cold War, when competing pro- and anti-communist publishers (and everything in between these extremes) vied for the attention of the prospective readers and readily employed marketing "strategies" to create appealing titles.

### **Book Titles and their Functions**

Titles are among the most prominent elements of a literary work's paratext and, as such, warrant separate examination from the main text. This is why, from the 1950s onwards, the "minor discipline" of "modern title science" (GENETTE 1988: 692) was developed and coined "titrologie". Following Hoek (1973), Genette aptly emphasises that a title is "an artifact created for reception or commentary" (1988: 693), an understanding which this article will take into account. However, we will not engage with the title's specificity within the source language; instead, our focus will be on the role it assumes within the target language and culture.

Titles merit distinct consideration in translation studies as they effectively function as "names" and should be approached accordingly. In principle, a "name" exists outside the "body" of a literary text, with its translation following a distinct set of conventions. Titles, as Nord (1995: 280-281) argues, "have to be considered as texts" and not merely as any text, but rather as "*prototypical* texts" with a straightforward syntactic-semantic structure. They "do not present any features which cannot be found in other texts as well – either regarding their textuality, or with respect to their structures, functions or conventionality. Therefore, titles can be considered a kind of model source-text" (281), allowing their translation to be studied independently from the main text, as they can be treated as a distinct genre (VIEZZI 2011: 185).

One of the earliest attempts to categorise the functions of titles was made by Nord, who identified distinctive, metatextual, phatic, informative (or referential), expressive and appellative functions (NORD 1995: 264). This list was further expanded by Viezzi, who proposed a set of ten features, comprising three essential features required in every title, and seven optional features that may or may not be present (VIEZZI 2011: 185-186).

According to Viezzi the **three essential functions** are the following:

- *Naming* (each cultural product has a name);
- *Phatic* (contact has to be established with the potential reader);
- *Informatory* (informing the public about the existence of such a product).

The **seven optional functions** are:

- *Distinctive* (to distinguish the product from other similar works);

- *Descriptive* (providing particular information to the public about content, genre etc.);
- *Expressive* (giving away the author's position about a theme);
- *Suggestive* (allowing the reader to interpret the work correctly);
- *Seductive* (meant to draw in the reader);
- *Intertextual* (referring to other cultural products);
- *Poetic* (adding poetic effect to the title).

These are the title functions that feature in this article to distinguish between the different translation strategies applied in Dutch translation with a view to emphasising, or indeed obscuring, certain elements that are present in the original literary work's title.

### **Translation and Retranslation of Book Titles**

In his comparison of 20th and 21st century fiction titles and their translations in Western contexts, Maurizio Viezzi noticed that “there is often a lack of semantic equivalence between a title and its translation” (2011: 183), highlighting the value of detailed analysis of translated (and retranslated) titles across cultures. The title of a translated literary work is not always determined by the translator but is frequently shaped by the editor and publisher, introducing an additional dimension to the study of translated titles. Given cultural variations in values and norms, literally translated titles may appear unappealing to the target audience, often prompting translators, editors and publishers to choose a non-literal translation strategy.

Indeed, titles of translated works reflect hybrid authorship, where the true author of the title can sometimes only be determined through the paratext of the translation – such as when the translator explicitly comments on the approach taken, including the title. A notable case in this regard is Dutch literary translator Hans Boland, who holds distinct views on translation strategies and readily adopts a polemical stance on certain translation decisions, as demonstrated in his essay *Zeer Russisch zeer. Over Dostojevski's Duivels* (2008), where he discusses and justifies his Dutch translation of Dostoevskii's<sup>1</sup> *Demons*. Here, we encounter a translator with a pronounced personal stance on translation strategy, encompassing – and perhaps especially – title choices. Once a translator achieves a certain level of prominence, they may begin to assert their personal signature on their work, a phenomenon that will be further explored in this chapter.

In cases where the editor or publisher is not proficient in the source language (as is likely in the case study presented in this chapter, given the relative unfamiliarity of Russian among the majority of Dutch native speakers), they are often unable to fully grasp the nuances of the original title. Consequently, they must rely on the “translator's loyalty” (NORD 1995: 282) to convey the intended meaning of the source text.

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<sup>1</sup> In this chapter Russian names will be transliterated according to the Library of Congress system (ALA-LC), but without the diacritical marks above the letters.

Semantic equivalence, therefore, holds a less central role in title translation; in fact, as titles can perform up to ten distinct functions, translators must carefully balance which functions to prioritise. Title translation is inherently a “target-oriented” activity, best approached from the perspective of the “Skopos” theory, which emphasises a “function-oriented approach”. Thus, the potential impact on the target audience generally outweighs strict adherence to equivalence or accuracy. Within the framework of “functional translation”, it is essential that “the target title has to be in keeping with target-cultural norms and conventions with regard to form, syntax, textual design, and function markers”, while the translator simultaneously “should strive to make functional strategies compatible with the principle of loyalty towards the sender’s intentions and the recipients’ expectations” (NORD 1995: 270). Elements that resonate with one (source) audience may not necessarily translate effectively for another (target) audience. A title translated literally may convey an entirely different message to the target audience, potentially triggering unintended – intertextual – associations.

When retranslating a literary work – and hence reconsidering its title – the translator must consider an additional factor: not only should “translemic equivalence” with the source title be evaluated, but the existing title within the target culture must also be taken into account. It is up to the retranslator to either endorse or reject the choice made by the previous translator(s). This decision extends beyond mere personal preference; if we assume that retranslations are typically produced with a generational interval (approximately 25 years), the cultural context of the target audience will likely have shifted since the previous translation. This evolution of context may warrant the re-accentuation of aspects previously absent or underappreciated in the target culture. As Kris Peeters notes earlier in this journal issue, this temporal gap necessitates that the concepts of “closeness” and “novelty” be re-interpreted for each new cultural context.

Each of the ten functions titles can serve may be reconsidered in the process of re-accentuation. However, in the specific context of this case study (translations from Russian into Dutch predominantly during the 20th century) an additional factor is at play: ideology. Ideology not only influenced the selection of literary works for translation but also partly determined how these translations were executed. Given the importance of a compelling title as a marketing tool, ideology likely impacted the degree of “faithfulness” in title translations. This article examines the frequency with which retranslated Russian literary works in Dutch received new titles, which title functions shifted as a result of adaptation, and whether distinctions can be drawn between canonical and non-canonical works. The hypothesis is that altering the title of a literary work becomes less appropriate or desirable once a canonical work – typically among the most frequently retranslated – attains a certain level of recognition in the target culture.

## **Methodology**

For this case study, we will focus exclusively on the titles of novels (excluding poetry, fairy tales, short stories and similar genres) that were retranslated from Russian into Dutch between 1789 and 2020.

The first limitation, focusing on novels, is due to the fact that stories and poems are often published within collections, with only one overarching title rather than individual titles for each work. Moreover, poetry (re)translators generally have greater interpretative freedom, which significantly affects title choices. By limiting the corpus to novels, we confine ourselves to a one-to-one comparison and avoid the substantial discrepancies that may arise in poetry translations.

The timeframe of 1789-2020 is determined by the existing database of literary translations from Russian into Dutch. Emmanuel Waegemans and Cees Willemsen first catalogued all book-form translations from the earliest translation in 1789 to 1985; Waegemans subsequently extended this coverage to 2015 in a second volume. These data have been consolidated into an online database<sup>2</sup>, which we will use in its most recent version, updated to 2020, thereby establishing the corpus boundary.

To challenge our hypothesis whether canonical works are treated differently in translation compared to literary works by lesser-known authors, we will first try to establish which Russian authors hold “canonical” status in the Dutch target culture. As a relatively objective marker of a Russian literary work’s status in Dutch translation, we will reference the “Russian Library” [“De Russische bibliotheek”] series. Published since 1953 by the Amsterdam-based “van Oorschot” publishing house, this series represents high-quality Dutch translations of Russian classics from the 19th and 20th centuries. While not an official “canon”, it is arguably the most reliable means of distinguishing between canonical “must-read” works and lesser-known Russian literary works in Dutch translation.

In particular, we will examine how many of these literary works were retranslated between 1789 and 2020, and when retranslations exist, how often their titles differed from earlier translations. For literary works with subtitles in the source text, we will consider only the main title. The expectation is that the fame of canonical authors and their works (sometimes also in languages and across cultures beyond the target one) compels most (re)translators to maintain a certain “loyalty” to the original title; altering it could risk a loss of recognisability, thereby reducing the title’s promotional value for ordinary readers. Conversely, more prominent and experienced (re)translators may seek to leave their own mark by adopting an innovative title.

The retranslated titles will be categorised into five groups: (1) titles that remain unchanged in retranslation, (2) titles that are “foreignised” (i.e., rendered more literally than in previous translations), (3) titles that are “domesticated” (differs further from a “literal” translation than prior versions), (4) titles that are adapted but without a clear

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<sup>2</sup> <http://www.benerus.be/cms/wp-content/uploads/BIBLIOGRAFIE-2020.pdf>

“foreignising” or “domesticating” tendency, and (5) titles that are changed multiple times throughout the retranslation process with different effects.

In the final phase, we will examine the prominent function(s) of these translated titles, tracing any shifts in emphasis from one function to another across retranslations. In determining the function, we will focus solely on the target text titles, which must align with the standards and expectations of the target culture. In other words, any shift in function will be assessed based on the target audience’s perspective, disregarding the role the source text played, or continues to play, within the source culture.

## Discussion

The database spanning 1789-2020 records 109 retranslated works, no fewer than 73 of which were reissued with a new title. This means that only 36 titles (or 33%) were retained in the retranslation process, highlighting the importance of title choice within the broader publication process. The corpus of 73 literary works with modified titles in translation are conveniently divided into two nearly equal subgroups, which provides statistical support for the quantitative findings of this case study. Specifically, the title of a work by a “canonical” author was altered in 36 instances, while a “non-canonical” work received a new title in 37 instances, allowing for the identification of certain trends and “norms” within each subgroup.

### *Works by Canonical Authors*

Of the 23 “canonical” authors (see the previous section for our selection criteria) included in the “Russian Library”, 11 feature in the corpus of retranslations with a modified title – M. Bulgakov, A. Chekhov, F. Dostoevskii, N. Gogol’, I. Goncharov, N. Leskov, B. Pasternak, A. Pushkin, M. Saltykov, L. N. Tolstoi and I. Turgenev. A total of 36 literary works show traces of adaptation of the title, with 19 cases of “foreignisation”, 6 cases of “domestication”, 10 cases exhibiting other types of adaptation and 1 case of changing translation strategies where the initial foreignisation approach was subsequently replaced by a domesticating approach.

### *Foreignisation or Restoring the Closeness to the Russian Title*

This first and largest category of translations for the subgroup of canonical authors is characterised by a common trend: the first translation was often rendered more appealing by enhancing the seductive function of the title, incorporating popularising modifications during the transition process from source to target language. In subsequent retranslations, some of these titles are partially “restored” to their “original” form.

One of the most pronounced cases of manipulation in translation is observed in the Dutch rendering of the title of Fëdor Dostoevskii’s *Crime and Punishment* [*Prestuplenie i nakazanie*]. The novel’s first translation into Dutch was done in 1885, at a time when Dostoevskii was not yet considered a canonical author in Europe and when the

Dutch cultural market lacked adequately trained literary translators capable of translating directly from Russian. Under these circumstances, the lion's share of literary translations from Russian were conducted indirectly, using intermediary translations from French or German (see Boulogne 2011 for a detailed translation history of Dostoevskii's works into Dutch). For *Crime and Punishment*, the initial Dutch translation was derived from German, retaining the title's conceptual framework as presented in German – *Schuld und Sühne* [*Schuld en boete*]. However, this was a rather unorthodox adaptation of Dostoevskii's Russian title, since the German version implies significantly different notions of *Guilt and Atonement*, imparting a more condemning and moralizing tone than Dostoevskii intended. In fact, Dostoevskii was not addressing “guilt” per se but rather conducting a more “clinical” exploration of the process of solving a “crime” without ascribing responsibility. The first retranslation, in 1895, partially restored the original meaning by focusing on *A Crime* [*Een misdaad*], though Dostoevskii's full title was only faithfully restored in 1946. By this time, he had achieved considerable renown within Dutch-speaking countries, and the misleading title could no longer be justified to an audience increasingly familiar with the classics of Russian literature through accessible translations into French and German, as well as through literary criticism that referenced Russian titles, thereby cultivating an expectation for a “correct” title in Dutch.

A comparable process of tempering the overtly seductive function of the first translated title can be observed in Lev Tolstoi's *Resurrection* [*Voskresen'e*]. The first Dutch translation in 1903 rendered it as *Resurrection from Hell* [*De opstanding der hel*], thereby introducing a conceptual embellishment intended to heighten intrigue. This exaggeration, however, was revised as early as 1909 when Tolstoi's original title was restored through a literal translation [*Opstanding*].

A third example comes from a period when Dutch readers were not yet significantly familiar with Dostoevskii and Tolstoi. As a result, translators often employed expressive and persuasive titles to capture readers' interest. In 1902, for instance, Tolstoi's *Two Old Men* [*Dva starika*] was translated as *Two Pilgrims* [*De twee pelgrims*], a title that provided additional clarity by specifying the protagonists' roles as pilgrims, thus appealing to a potentially unfamiliar audience. This intervention persisted until the retranslation of 1979, which finally presented the title in its original form in Dutch *Twee oude mannen*, thereby restoring Tolstoi's intended concept of the “two old men”.

#### *Domestication of Canonical Titles*

Contrary to what might be expected given the canonical reputation of the authors in this subgroup, the corpus includes six instances where the retranslated title is less literal than in its earlier version. Apparently, this was mainly done to enhance the descriptive function of the title, especially when the original title was deemed insufficiently informative for Dutch readers. A case in point is the retranslation of Dostoevskii's *The Player* [*Igrok*]. Initially translated literally in 1929 as *De speler* (the Dutch equivalent of “The Player”), the title was revised in 2008 to *The Gambler* [*De gokker*]. This intervention removed the ambiguity of *speler* in Dutch, where “to play” can be interpreted in different ways (with

“gambling” being only a secondary meaning). The revised title thus clarifies the novel’s theme but severs the connection with a literary title that had already established a degree of recognition within Dutch literary culture.

A less straightforward choice was made in 2003 when Anton Chekhov’s well-known *Uncle Vania* [*Diadia Vania*] was adapted to the more descriptive and suggestive *Uncle: scenes from life in the country* [*Nonkel: scènes uit het leven op het land*]. This adaptation is significantly less recognisable for theatre audiences or readers familiar with Chekhov’s oeuvre. One possible rationale is that this translation was explicitly crafted for stage performance rather than as a “faithful” literary translation. As demonstrated by Aaltonen (2003), theatre translation operates slightly differently from other genres, as a theatre plays may be translated in various radically different ways depending on the target audience. Stage translations allow for a greater degree of “artistic freedom”, including the option to diverge from the established, recognizable references in Chekhov’s original. This is particularly relevant in cases of free adaptation, where the playwright signals through the title that the audience should not expect a faithful rendition of the original text on stage. This (re)translation may therefore exemplify such an adaptation.

#### *Competing Interpretations*

A third category of retranslations resists straightforward classification. Here we are dealing with retranslators who adapt the titles of already canonical works for particular, individual reasons, resulting in choices that do not align clearly with either foreignising or domesticating approach. This approach is often taken by translators who have already established a certain level of renown and can therefore “afford” greater innovation than novice translators might.

A number of those decisions can be understood as attempts to remove elements that might feel “aged” or “dated” to contemporary readers, often by updating words or phrases that may now seem old-fashioned. For instance, when retranslator Arthur Langeveld decided in 2018 to simplify the long-standing yet formal title *Gebroeders Karamazov* (the Dutch equivalent of *Brothers Karamazov* or *Brat’ia Karamazovy* by Dostoevskii, first translated in this form in 1913) to *Broers Karamazov*, he justified this adaptation by pointing to contemporary Dutch usage, in which “gebroeders” has an old-fashioned resonance not present in “broers”. Both “gebroeders” and “broers” are actually correct and literal translations of the Russian original; however, they differ in their level of formality within Dutch. A comparable shift occurred with Dostoevskii’s *Player* in the previous section, where the retranslator deliberately moved “away” from a literal rendering. In this instance, however, the retranslator’s intervention is more subtle, focusing on nuance rather than departure from the original meaning.

Potentially ambiguous concepts and terms in Russian often give rise to divergent translations into Dutch. A prime example of such a term is Dostoevskii’s use of the Russian word *Besy* as the title of his novel about the Russian nihilists in the 19th century, a term open to multiple interpretations and translations. Since 1920, the traditional (and presumably also most “canonical”) Dutch translation has been *Evil ghosts* [*Boze geesten*].

However, in 1950, this title was retranslated as *Demons* [*Demonen*], a choice which preserved the one-word structure of the original title, unlike the earlier translation. In 2008, however, retranslator Hans Boland rejected both previous renderings and introduced a new title, *Devils* [*Duivels*], which he defended in an accompanying essay. These translations can hardly be classified as clear cases of foreignisation or domestication; rather, they reflect the retranslators' personal tastes and preferences, and perhaps the desire to leave a distinct mark on translation history. Future reception analysis will reveal whether one of those titles resonates more strongly with the public. For the less informed reader, the coexistence of these three different titles may, however, lead to some confusion.

The title of a Tolstoi novella, *Family happiness* [*Semeinoe schast'e*], underwent particularly intriguing transformations as it was translated into Dutch several times, each in a fundamentally different manner. This moralistic story, which contrasts Tolstoi's ideal of true love with the superficiality or vanity ["sueta" in Russian] of society, was first translated into Dutch in 1886. At that time, the title was rendered as *Katia*, named after the main character, but with minimal descriptive value. As was typical of that era, the translation was done through an intermediate French translation, which also bore this adapted title. Shortly thereafter, in 1903, the novella was retranslated twice, probably by retranslators unaware of each other's work. The novella seems to have enjoyed considerable popularity in the West at the beginning of the 20th century, as evidenced by the close succession of these retranslations. One retranslation was titled *The Novel of a Young Woman* [*De roman van eene jonge vrouw*], which, though not literal, better fulfilled the descriptive function than the first translation. The title of the second retranslation took on a more suggestive tone, rendered as *Happiness in the Household* [*Geluk in 't huishouden*]. Adding further complexity, a third retranslation appeared the following year (1904) under yet another title – *Marital Happiness* [*Huwelijksgeluk*], which was closer to the source title but still not a literal translation. It is possible that readers of that period perceived "family" and "marriage" as closely interrelated concepts, making the retranslator's intervention seem less radical than it might today. Given that these translations were produced almost simultaneously, it is difficult to conclude with certainty that they were intended as re-accentuations of competing translations. The retranslators likely did not even know of each other's efforts.

### ***Ideological Influence on Translation of Non-canonical Literary Titles***

The non-canonical part of the corpus includes a wide range of authors who have not (yet) been regarded as significant enough to merit inclusion in the canon of Russian literature, yet, whose works were considered sufficiently interesting and valuable to warrant retranslation into Dutch. While Dostoevskii, Tolstoi and Chekhov were (and remain) considered as "essential reading", consistently present in book stores and regularly retranslated (following the adage that "each generation deserves its own Dostoevskii"), authors in this second category are translated and retranslated primarily because publishers perceive their literary output as an opportunity – cultural, and more

often, financial. These authors fall into four distinct groups, and the choice of translation strategy for the titles largely depends on the group to which they belong. The first two groups of authors gained particular popularity in translation and are broadly representative of “lighter” literary genres, i.e., satirical novels and children’s literature. The other two groups occupy a radically different role in the book market, consisting of works about World War II and more politically-oriented works that fall under the general umbrella of “ideological literature”.

In both categories, these literary works were appreciated for their intrinsic value on the Dutch literary market; however, retranslations were often undertaken – despite the non-canonical status of the works – since the existing translations were deemed too “defective” to simply republish. At the same time, retranslation provided publishing houses with an opportunity to reframe the literary work by giving it a new title, crucially, to boost the marketability of the new edition by promoting it as “new”, improved, and less “defective” translation. Multiple motives for retranslation have been identified before, including the release of a new edition or interpretation of the source text, deficiencies in prior (direct or indirect) translations, institutional or ideological shifts in the target culture, the translator’s own preferences or subjectivity, evolving translation norms in response to cultural change, or commercial rivalry within the publishing market (see PEETERS & VAN POUCKE 2023 for a detailed discussion). In this case, the latter motivation seems to play a major role in the decision to retranslate.

#### *Restoring the Original Russian Title*

As with the more canonical Russian authors, many works in the early years of Dutch literary translation received adapted titles that were freely interpreted, often with an enhanced descriptive or seductive function. In this section we observe a predominance of “foreignising” approaches in the retranslations of titles, with 24 of the 37 retranslated titles (or 65%) moving towards a more literal rendering of the source title in comparison with previous translations.

The best-known and most frequently translated author in this category is Maksim Gor’kii, who undoubtedly belongs to the group of ideological writers. In the early phase of his translation history, when he was still relatively unknown to Dutch audiences, adapted titles clearly served commercial goals. For instance, his 1902 play *On the Bottom* [*Na dne*], about the dire living conditions of homeless people in pre-revolutionary Russia spending the night in a night shelter, was translated as *Sleeping Place* [*Slaapstêe*], emphasising the descriptive function of a title. In the 2001 retranslation, however, the Russian title was restored as *Op de bodem*. Similarly, Gor’kii’s *Life of a Useless Man* [*Zhizn’ nenuzhnogo cheloveka*] was first rendered in 1912 as the more intriguing *The Police Spy* [*De politie-spion*], before being literally retranslated [*Het leven van een nutteloos mens*] in 1937 by an overtly “communist” publishing house.

When dealing with non-canonical authors, publishing houses often took significant liberties with titles, particularly in the first half of the 20th century. A notable example is Il’f and Petrov’s *The Golden Calf* [*Zolotoi telënok*], translated in 1933 as *A Millionaire*

in *Soviet Russia* [*Een millionnair in Sovjet-Rusland*], a title that evidently aimed to enhance the work's commercial appeal. The literal source title was eventually restored in the 1994 retranslation. A hybrid solution was employed in the case of Kuprin's *The Pit* [*Iama*], which first appeared in Dutch under the enticing title *The Brothel of Anna Markovna* [*Het bordeel van Anna Marcovna*] (without a specified date). The 1970 retranslation retained this seductive element while also referencing the original: *The Pit. Novel of a Russian Brothel* [*De kuil. Roman van een Russisch bordeel*].

The last example in this section is Simonov's war novel *Days and Nights* [*Dni i nochi*], which was published in Dutch in 1946 under the more explicit title: *Days and Nights in Stalingrad* [*Dagen en nachten in Stalingrad*]. For readers in the immediate post-World War II period, the addition "Stalingrad" – a city frequently mentioned in the preceding years – likely struck a familiar chord, enhancing both the descriptive and seductive functions of the title. In the 1980 retranslation, however, the Stalingrad reference was omitted, as the commercial significance of the city's name had likely diminished four decades after the war.

#### *Traces of Domestication*

Compared with canonical works, domestication of non-canonical works is significantly less common. This may indicate that once a non-canonical literary work has been translated under a title that more or less faithfully reflects the Russian title, this title is seen as established and unlikely to warrant further revision.

The most notable instance of domestication dates back to 1917, when translation norms were still loosely defined vague in Dutch literary culture, allowing a publisher to transform the original title of Artsybashev's novel *Worker Shevyriov* [*Rabochii Shevyrëv*] into *Avenger of Misery* [*Een wreker der ellende*]. This change markedly enhanced the descriptive and seductive functions of the title, while also foregrounding its ideological value by hinting at the novel's content. The fact that this, too, was a communist publisher may explain the choice of an adapted title.

In later years, such clear cases of domestication in titles are almost non-existent, except for one example where the title's poetic function played a key role in altering the title in retranslation. The title of Chukovskii's children's novel *Doctor Aibolit* [*Doktor Aibolit*] includes a playful pun, and Dutch translators have evidently put effort into creating an inventive name for the doctor in Dutch. In Russian the entirely fictional name "Aibolit" implies "Ouch, it hurts", which spurred translators to devise their own original renderings of the name, and hence the title. The first translator opted for the closest possible equivalent, *Dokter Ajtoepijn*, in 1955, which is a very close equivalent of "ouch, it hurts". In 1976, the work was retranslated under the title *Dokter Wattenpijn*, with the even more expressive connotation of "it hurts a lot". However, between those two translations, a first retranslation appeared in 1971 with a softened, even opposite, connotation, as the retranslator rendered the title as *Doctor Doeniepijn* or "it doesn't hurt". Given that this translation was published by a communist publishing house, the question may be asked whether this choice was ideologically motivated. Released in the midst of the Cold War, when each side of the ideological divide strove to project a

positive image to the Other, this choice may have aimed to present the Soviet Union in a favourable light to the Dutch audience. Thus, the Russian doctor in the story would be associated with the alleviation of pain, which could be interpreted as an example of ideological adaptation.

### *Two Special Cases*

The corpus of retranslated titles also contains two specific cases that do not clearly fall into the categories of foreignisation or domestication. The first case is another example of the distribution of Russian war literature in Dutch translation. Leonov's *The Capture of Velikoshumsk* [*Vziatie Velikoshumska*] would have been unfamiliar to Dutch readers, as the place name in the title was virtually unknown to them, which explains the choice of the first translator to rename the novel *The Hour of Retribution* [*Het uur der vergelding*] in 1947, thus enhancing the seductive function of the title. The retranslation by a communist publisher in 1968 retained a similarly evocative quality, reducing the title to the name of a Soviet tank *T34-203*, though any potential ambiguity was mitigated by the inclusion of an image of the tank on the cover, clarifying the link to WW II and indicating the novel's genre. Here, once again, we see the communist publisher's attempt to communicate a central theme from Soviet ideology to Dutch readers through both text and image.

Descriptive and intertextual functions are central in the second case. Solov'ëv's *Troublemaker* [*Vozmutitel' spokoistviia*] was translated into Dutch twice, with publishers clearly opting for eye-catching titles in each instance. In 1948, the prospective reader was drawn in by a reference to a well-known character from Dutch (or Flemish) culture in the first part of the (lengthy and now obsolete) title: *Uilenspiegel Disturbs the Party. The Adventures of Troublemaker Hodzha Nasreddin, in the Noble City of Bokhara* [*Uilenspiegel stoort het feest. De avonturen van de Rustverstoorder Hodzja Nasreddin, in de edele stad Bochara*]. By presenting the Russian protagonist as analogous to the Flemish character Uilenspiegel, the title's seductive function was significantly enhanced. The 1958 retranslation avoided intertextual references, instead opting for a title that informed readers of the book's nature: *Adventures in Bokhara. The Adventures of Troublemaker Hodzha Nasreddin* [*Avonturen in Bochara. De avonturen van de rustverstoorder Hodzja Nasreddin*].

### **Conclusions**

This case study reveals that translators, editors and publishers employed a wide range of strategies for titling retranslated works. In only a third of cases did the retranslators retain the titles chosen by previous translators, indicating that the adaptation of titles in retranslation was a common practice throughout the 20th century and warrants more systematic study.

Contrary to expectations regarding canonical and non-canonical sub-corpora, titles of canonical works appear no more protected from modification than those of non-canonical ones. Considering that the group of canonical authors is smaller than the non-

canonical group, it is striking that the titles of their works were nonetheless frequently changed in retranslation, and not solely for the purpose of foreignisation, i.e., “restoring” the Russian title.

However, a temporal shift is evident in the treatment of canonical works that is absent in the non-canonical sub-corpus. During the initial phase of translation – when these now canonical authors had not yet attained that status – there was a strong emphasis on the work’s market appeal, and the title’s seductive function prevailed. Over the course of the 20th century many of these “distorted” titles were adjusted to more “closely” reflect the original, and these titles often attained canonical status in the Dutch target culture. Recently, however, there appears to be a renewed tendency to question these familiar titles and to prioritise the informative function of a literary title, replacing ambiguous titles with more concrete ones while removing any signs of age from well-established titles.

The diversity of the non-canonical sub-corpus also means that the reasons for changing titles are more diverse. However, in the majority of cases, there is an apparent desire to “restore” titles that were modified to enhance their appeal via the seductive function. In light of evolving translation norms in Dutch culture throughout the 20th century, there is an evident increase in respect for the source text, including the title, which has led to several cases of foreignisation within the corpus.

Conversely, there are also cases where the retranslator’s choices do not align with this pattern and cannot be fully explained by the ten title functions, listed earlier in this article. Politics and ideology offer possible explanations for these cases. The Cold War, which dominated much of the 20th century, fostered an assertive translation policy on both sides of the ideological divide, strongly influencing the works in our study, as the two cultures involved in this research were on opposing sides of the conflict.

The corpus contains several title choices that cannot be explained purely on the basis of the aforementioned functions. One might even question whether ideologically motivated changes might still be considered specific instances of the “appellative function”, targeting readers inclined towards ideologically coloured literature, or whether they instead represent an eleventh function, the “ideological” function, aimed at directing the potential reader of the translated work towards a certain ideological perspective.

Indeed, a substantial proportion of Russian literature translated into Dutch during the 20th century belonged to one of three groups: (1) canonical works, valued across the ideological spectrum and generally seen as above politics, (2) works by dissidents and opponents of the Soviet regime mainly published by right-wing press, and (3) “Socialist realist” works that aimed to promote the Soviet system and were actively disseminated by Moscow-backed publishing houses. According to the (limited) data from this study, works in the third group were most frequently published under adapted titles, with changes typically of an ideological nature.

To sum up, the analysis indicates that titles of canonical works are, indeed, somewhat better protected from manipulation in translation, and that ideologically motivated publishers have often tended to adapt titles to suit their own purposes. However, these

trends are case-specific and other factors come into play, such as the personality of the translator, whose reputation may at times encourage them to create a distinctive “signature” through their title choices, as observed in this corpus. A unique case arises when a work that is not yet canonical is initially given a creative, non-literal title in translation, which then “sticks” in the target culture but later requires adaptation once the source text gains recognition in the target culture, potentially entering the canon of World Literature, only to be retranslated thereafter.

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