



## **Before the ‘Nooteboom Effect’ - Dutch Literature at the Suhrkamp Publishing House**

Vóór het Nooteboom-effect. Nederlandse literatuur in de uitgeverij Suhrkamp

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**Abstract:** The present article analyses factors related to the functioning of the publishing field, which have contributed to the relatively important place of Dutch literature on the German book market. The reconstruction of decision-making with regard to translations of Dutch literature spans a period from the early 1960s until 1993, when the Netherlands and Flanders were the guests of honour at the International Book Fair in Frankfurt am Main. The data for the study have been drawn from the publishing archives of the Suhrkamp Verlag, which were purchased by the German Literature Archive (Deutsches Literaturarchiv) in Marbach am Neckar. The Suhrkamp archive data provide an insight into the *manufacture of the translation* of Dutch literature and, in a broader methodological perspective, offer a unique laboratory environment perfectly suited for the study of the microsociology of literary transfer. In this environment, it is possible to reconstruct the selection, review and acceptance/rejection processes that have taken place within a relatively small team. Moreover, marketing strategies for aesthetic commodities may also be analysed.

**Keywords:** Sociology of Literary Translation, Publishing Field, German Book Market, Suhrkamp Verlag, sociologie van literaire vertalingen, productie van literatuur, de Duitse boekenmarkt, Suhrkamp Verlag, het literaire veld

## 1.

Germany occupies a central position in the macrostructure of the global literature translation market. This is mostly due to the role of German in mediating between ‘semiperipheral’ and ‘peripheral’ languages.<sup>1</sup> The Frankfurt Book Fair is among the market’s most important annual events, with translations into German often giving authors belonging to smaller national literatures a pathway to recognition on the global market and stimulating further translations of their work into other languages. After WWII, the share of literary translations on the German book market ranged between 8 and 13% of all publishing output.<sup>2</sup> For 2012, 67.6% of 11,564 literature translations published in Germany were from English, 10.2% from French, 5.8% from Japanese, 2.7% from Italian, 2.3% from Swedish, 1.8% from Dutch and 1.5% from Spanish. Translations from literatures such as Russian, Norwegian and Danish ranged between 0.5-1% of the total book market.<sup>3</sup> Taking into account the ‘hypercentral’<sup>4</sup> position of the English language in both the global and German book markets, we may observe that Dutch literature, produced in a relatively small linguistic area, has received a surprisingly large amount of attention. In addition, the data for 1960-2013, published regularly in an annual journal prepared by the Association of German Booksellers (Börsenverein des Deutschen Buchhandels), confirms that the importance of Dutch literature in the German market for literary translations has remained fairly stable for the last sixty years. Throughout this period, its share has ranged from 1.7 to 3.8% of all the titles translated into German, which ranks it between the fourth and eighth place in the ‘Top 20’ ranking of source languages.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> J. Heilbron, ‘Towards a Sociology of Translation. Book Translations as Cultural World-System’, *European Journal of Social Theory*, 42 (1999), 434-35. This paper has been written thanks to research grants (Suhrkamp-Stipendium and Fellowship Marbach-Weimar-Wolffenbüttel) from the German Literary Archive (Deutsches Literaturarchiv) in Marbach am Neckar. The data analysed here was obtained during my archival research in the German Literary Archive in Marbach am Neckar in February, July and August 2013. At this point, I would like to express my gratitude to Anna Kinder, who supervises research into the Suhrkamp Archives, and to Claudia Gratz, Iris Hoffmann, Elza Weber and Martina Stecker. All translations are mine unless indicated otherwise.

<sup>2</sup> N. Bachleitner and M. Wolf, ‘Einleitung: Zur soziologischen Erforschung der literarischen Übersetzung im deutschsprachigen Raum’, in *Streifzüge im translatorischen Feld. Zur Soziologie der literarischen Übersetzung im deutschsprachigen Raum*, ed. by N. Bachleitner, M. Wolf (Wien: Lit Verlag, 2010), p. 15.

<sup>3</sup> *Buch und Buchhandel in Zahlen* (Frankfurt am Main: Börsenverein des Deutschen Buchhandels, 2013), pp. 95, 97.

<sup>4</sup> Heilbron claims that the transnational distribution of literary translations may be conceived of as a four-level structure. English is the initial medium for almost a half of all translations. Thanks to this, in the asymmetrical system of the general global cultural transfer English occupies the hypercentral position. The next two languages, German and French, are placed in the central position, each sharing approximately 10% of the entire global translation market. There is also a group of around eight languages whose share in the literary transfer ranges from 1 to 3%: these languages are referred to as semiperipheral. All remaining languages are peripheral. These include Chinese, Arabic and Japanese, which means that the number of first language users is not a factor determining a language’s ‘centrality’ or ‘peripherality’ in the ‘international economy of translations’ (Johan Heilbron, ‘Structure and Dynamic of the World System of Translation’, UNESCO International Symposium “Translation and Cultural Mediation”, 22-23 February 2010, p. 2, <http://portal.unesco.org/culture/en/files/40619/12684038723Heilbron.pdf/Heilbron.pdf> [accessed 19 March 2014]).

<sup>5</sup> In 2012, the *Top 20 List of Languages of Origin for Translations into German* featured the following languages: English (67.6%), French (10.2%), Japanese (5.8%), Italian (2.7%), Swedish (2.3%), Dutch (1.8%), Spanish (1.5%), Russian (1%), Norwegian and Danish (both 0.7%), Latin (0.4%), Polish, Hebrew, Finnish, Turkish, Portuguese (all 0.3%), Arabic, Hungarian, Czech, Greek (all 0.2%). This data is based on *Buch und Buchhandel in Zahlen 2013*, p. 97.

The present essay analyses factors related to the functioning of the publishing field, which have contributed to the relatively important place of Dutch literature on the German book market. The data for the study have been drawn from the publishing archives of the Suhrkamp publishing house (Suhrkamp Verlag), which were purchased by the German Literature Archive (Deutsches Literaturarchiv) in Marbach. The unique value of the material is twofold. First of all, Suhrkamp has played and still plays a prominent part in the transfer of Dutch literature to the German market. Suhrkamp occasionally published Dutch and Flemish authors in the 1950s (Paul van Ostaïjen, Antoon Coolen), although over the next two decades only twelve books were published (by Jacques Hamelink, Ivo Michiels, Paul de Wispelaere, Lodewijk de Boer, Lucebert and Felix Timmermans, among others). Another twelve books were published later in the 1980s, including works by authors such as Thomas Rosenboom, Renate Rubinstein and Suhrkamp's topmost translated Dutch writer, Cees Nootboom.<sup>6</sup> Second, researching a publishing archive enables a reconstruction of the logic and structure of communication and decision-making processes that were initiated or terminated by the individual actors in the publishing field. The Suhrkamp archive data provide insight into the production of the translation<sup>7</sup> of Dutch literature, and, in a broader methodological perspective, offer a unique laboratory environment perfectly suited for the study of the microsociology of literary transfer. In this environment, it is possible to reconstruct the selection, review and acceptance/rejection processes which have taken place within a relatively small team. Moreover, marketing strategies for aesthetic commodities may also be analysed.

The reconstruction of decision-making with regard to translations of Dutch literature covers a span from the early 1960s to the year 1993, when the Netherlands and Flanders were the guests of honour at the International Book Fair in Frankfurt am Main. This event undoubtedly boosted the production of translations from Dutch on the German book market.<sup>8</sup> In a 1993 paper, Herbert van Uffelen connected the rapidly growing interest of publishers and readers in Dutch literature to the so-called 'Nootboom Effect'. When his *Berlijnse notities* (1991, *Berliner Notizen*) appeared in a German translation, Cees Nootboom, who had initially enjoyed only limited success in the Netherlands, immediately became synonymous with Dutch literature among German readers. Thanks to the 'Nootboom Effect', interest in Dutch literature in Germany increased sharply after 1991.<sup>9</sup> Although the importance of these events cannot be denied, I want to propose here that the decision-making processes regarding the production of translations were already extremely intriguing in the decades preceding it. The major research questions I would like to pose here are: what strategies and social practices

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<sup>6</sup> Data based on *Die Bibliographie des Suhrkamp Verlages 1950-2000*, ed. by W. Jeske (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 2002) and the internal documentation of Suhrkamp Verlag prepared for Siegfried Unseld in April 1992 ('Niederländische Literatur im Suhrkamp und Insel Verlag', 27 April 1992, Siegfried Unseld Archiv, henceforth as SUA: 01VL/Allgemeine Korrespondenz/Stiftung für die Produktion und Übersetzung Niederländischer Literatur, Deutsches Literaturarchiv, Marbach am Neckar henceforth as DLA).

<sup>7</sup> H. Buzelin, "Translations "in the Making"", in *Constructing a Sociology of Translation*, ed. by M. Wolf and A. Fukari (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 2007), p. 141.

<sup>8</sup> See S. van Voorst, 'Over de drempel. Nederlandse literatuur in Duitse vertaling 1990-1997', in *Object: Nederlandse literatuur in het buitenland. Methode: onbekend. Vormen van onderzoek naar de receptie van literatuur uit het Nederlandse taalgebied*, ed. by P. Broomans, S. Linn, M. Vogel, S. van Voorst and A. Bay (Groningen: Barkhuis, 2006), pp. 111-22.

<sup>9</sup> H. van Uffelen, 'Cees Nootboom en het succes van de Nederlandse literatuur in het Duitse taalgebied. Het 'Nootboom-effect'', in *Literatuur*, 10 (1993), 256.

influenced the dissemination of Dutch literature in the German literary industry? What was the workflow of these strategies and processes inside the team of people who constituted a large prestigious publishing house? And which actors, components and conditions played a central role?

## 2.

This way of presenting the problem reveals a gap between the methodological postulates of the sociology of translation and actual research practice. Despite a multiplicity of voices emphasising the need to investigate research on literary translation from the perspective of the actors involved (by Daniel Simeoni, Johan Heilbron, Gisèle Sapiro and Andrew Chesterman, among others),<sup>10</sup> analyses of the archives of publishing houses are rarely conducted. Empirical studies of the process of translation production are first and foremost hindered by its 'private status' guarded by publishers. For this reason, accessing data is, in most cases, impossible.<sup>11</sup>

The few existing studies into data drawn from the archives of publishing houses show that our knowledge of the translation production process in a commercial publishing house, starting from the point of text selection and copyright negotiation and ending with marketing of the final product, remains limited. An interesting aspect of these studies involves the analytical perspective, which facilitates insights into practices that have thus far not received consistent attention from scholars, who have mostly used ready-made traditional categories. H el ene Buzelin proposed a new kind of analysis of the decision-making process in the publishing house and was the first researcher to suggest applying Bruno Latour's ethnomethodology to translation research. The pioneering ethnographic insight into the practice of knowledge production and the processes of technical and scientific innovations described by him as 'science in action' has failed to take root as an inspiration for the sociology of translation. This is even more surprising given that the term 'translation', understood as 'a relation that does not transport causality but induces two mediators into coexisting',<sup>12</sup> constitutes the core of actor-network theory (ANT). Buzelin believes that the potential of actor-network theory (ANT) may be helpful in taking another step in the direction proposed by Bourdieu and his followers within translation studies. Latour's perspective allows the sociology of translation to be directed towards process-based approaches, which makes possible a reconfiguration of research into how translation production is analysed. This may in turn allow for more accurate identification of the mediators involved, as well as opening up to analysis new spheres of action that may

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<sup>10</sup> A. Chesterman, 'Bridge Concepts in Translation Sociology', in *Constructing a Sociology of Translation*, pp. 171-83; G. Sapiro, 'Editorial Policy and Translation', in *Handbook of Translation Studies*, vol. 3, ed. by Y. Gambier and L. van Doorslaer (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 2012), p. 32; J. Heilbron and G. Sapiro, 'Outline for a Sociology of Translation. Current Issues and Future Prospects', in *Constructing a Sociology of Translation*, pp. 93-107; D. Simeoni, 'Translating and Studying Translation: The View from the Agent', *Meta*, XL 3 (1995), 445-60.

<sup>11</sup> H. Buzelin, 'Translations "in the Making"', p. 142. Hedwig Nosbers, in her monograph devoted to the reception of Polish literature in the Federal Republic of Germany, also touches upon the issues of a complete lack of access to data from publishing houses. These are often viewed as 'confidential material', while there is also reluctance on the side of publishers and editors to share it with researchers (H. Nosbers, *Polnische Literatur in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland 1945/1949 bis 1990. Buchwissenschaftliche Aspekte* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 1999), p. 9.

<sup>12</sup> B. Latour, *Reassembling the Social. An Introduction to Actor-Network-Theory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), p. 107.

affect or decide about the publication of a given translation.<sup>13</sup> ANT, as used in translation research, does not impose a specific analytic model, but rather offers a way of thinking about the decision-making mechanisms within the organisation structure of a given publishing house. This perspective is based on an ontological agnosticism, which requires abandoning intuitive explanatory macromodels. The latter models have also been part and parcel of studies into the reception of Dutch literature in the German language area.

Herbert Van Uffelen, in a publication which has been central to the area, i.e. *Moderne niederländische Literatur im deutschen Sprachraum 1830-1990*, provides a range of links between the stages of reception, which he has identified and explained through some rather vague and intuitively captured economic and ideological reasons.<sup>14</sup> Van Uffelen's work, as it does not cover any data on the core of the *Literaturbetrieb*, such as the selection and literary production mechanisms of individual publishers, cannot help but focus on the published titles and completed projects undertaken by cultural intermediaries. As much as I am following here Buzelin's ethnomethodology in the area of research into the production of translations, I do not deny the significance of the causal influence of components such as 'market', 'political context' or 'cultural policy'.<sup>15</sup> What I want to emphasise, however, is the need to follow carefully the connections among individual actors without limiting their scope and heterogeneity. The departure from reductionism as a perspective depicting complex phenomena by means of simple cause and effect models, which is typical for ANT, is likely to be a rewarding approach in the analysis of data drawn from the archives of a publishing house. I propose that the convenient shortcut interpretation proposed by the existing literature, which explains the nature of Dutch-German literary transfer by means of 'changes in the book market' ('Wandlung des Buchmarktes'), the 'principal novel orientation of the German language area to freeing literature' ('grundsätzlichen Neuorientierung innerhalb der deutschen literarischen Landschaft auf das Ausland'), 'regained trust' ('gewonnenes Vertrauen'),<sup>16</sup> or socio-political transformations leading to growth or a decrease in interest for given literature, should be replaced with a more intricate, time-intensive and painstaking means of working through archival materials. This may shed additional light on the individual connections and networks among the actors involved.

The ethnographic perspective I have adopted to analyse the connections among the individual actors in the publishing field calls for a brief presentation of the structure of the investigated archive. The Siegfried Unseld Archive (SUA), purchased in 2009 by the German Literary Archive, covers the period 1945-2002. It includes material from four publishers: Suhrkamp Verlag, Insel Verlag, Jüdischer Verlag and Deutscher Klassiker Verlag, temporarily divided into 11 sections: 01. Management of the Publishing House, 02. Administration and Personnel, 03. Editorship, 04. Production, 05. Distribution, 06. Advertising, 07. Press, 08. Copyrights and licencing, 09. Marketing, 10. Lectures, 11. Accountancy and Finances. A separate part of the SUA covers an archive dedicated to its founder, Peter Suhrkamp, spanning the period from the creation of the publishing house out of a division of S. Fischer Verlag, to the

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<sup>13</sup> H. Buzelin, 'Unexpected Allies: How Latour's Network Theory Could Complement Bourdieusian Analysis in Translation Studies', *The Translator*, 11 (2005), 215.

<sup>14</sup> H. van Uffelen, *Moderne niederländische Literatur im deutschen Sprachraum 1830-1990* (Münster: Zentrum für Niederlande-Studien, 1993), pp. 443-47.

<sup>15</sup> Idem.

<sup>16</sup> Idem, pp. 430, 443, 446.

beginning of Siegfried Unseld's management in 1959.

In the course of my research into the production of Dutch literature translations, I analysed the correspondence relating to the Management of the Publishing House (01) and the Editorial Team (03). In the latter, the so-called 'Notes' (Notizen) and 'Siegfried Unseld's Travel Reports' (Reiseberichte Dr. Siegfried Unselds) are of utmost importance. The 'Notes', which are brief logs made for the publisher or by the publisher, constitute an annual index of the publishing house's work. Their contents offer some insights into the titles, authors and events of some significance for the management. As for the 'Reports', these are extensive circulars, addressed to editors, who were obliged to confirm by means of a signature that they had become acquainted with the contents thereof. The major aim of such papers was to state clearly what the management expected of the editorial team. Apart from the 'Notes' and 'Reports', the correspondence regarding management, moreover, involves so-called 'general correspondence' (allgemeine Korrespondenz) as well as an 'Author Volume' (Autorenkonvolute). The former includes the correspondence of the publisher and correspondence transmitted to the publisher by its employers, and covers exchanges with writers, translators, journalists, critics, politicians, booksellers, agents, etc. The 'Author List' contains publisher letters and selected correspondence between the employers and authors of some importance for the publishing house. Its selective nature needs to be borne in mind in the course of my analysis. Finally, the 'Editorial Correspondence' remains the most important source of knowledge on the production of translations. Apart from authors, it also covers translators, publishers, agents, private intermediaries and external counsellors.

### 3.

Having presented the basics of the Suhrkamp archive, let us now proceed to the data on Dutch literature. In the 1960s, two relatively independent editorial teams selected texts for translation. Karl Markus Michel and Walter Böhlich were responsible for the first of them; in the other team, Günther Busch, head of the 'Edition Suhrkamp' series, made publishing decisions autonomously. This 'publishing house within a publishing house' ('Verlag im Verlag'), as Siegfried Unseld has described it,<sup>17</sup> was created in May 1963. In 1957, Michel and Böhlich started collaborating with the Internationaal Literatuur Bureau, an author agency from Hilversum, headed by Heinrich Kohn. This cooperation was to last for the next twelve years. In 1965, Günther Busch took over the correspondence of Suhrkamp with Kohn, and this continued until 1971. The Internationaal Literatuur Bureau recommended to Suhrkamp, though to little avail, mainly contemporary Dutch and Flemish authors: Louis Paul Boon, Hugo Claus, Rudolf Geel, Marnix Gijsen, Manuel van Loggem, Harry Mulisch, Cees Nooteboom, Sybren Polet, Hugo Raes, Jos Ruting, Bert Schierbeek or Jacoba van Velde.

The case of Hugo Claus illustrates well the reasons for rejecting the texts recommended by the Dutch literary agency. Kohn forwarded the French translation of Claus's *De koele minnaar* (1956) to Suhrkamp in October 1957. Kohn repeatedly inquired over the next four years about the translation of *De hondsdagen* (1952), *De verwondering* (1962), and *Omtrent Deedee* (1963). Siegfried Unseld asked Judith Polak to give an opinion on the proposed titles and she

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<sup>17</sup> Undated memo by Siegfried Unseld from 1967, SUA: Suhrkamp/01VL/Notizen, DLA.

presented her views on the three novels by the Flemish author. Despite the already well-established position of Claus on the Dutch book market as well as internationally (thirteen translations were published before 1964), *De koele minnaar* received a negative opinion as it lacked 'humour and grotesque, the two intrinsic features of the contemporary literature from the Netherlands [sic]'.<sup>18</sup> The second novel, *De hondsdagen*, was 'incomparably better', according to Judith Polak, while the third novel, *De verwondering*, was Faulknerian in character – it was 'well-written, interesting and gripping'.<sup>19</sup> The correspondence between Judith Polak and Suhrkamp did ultimately not influence the decision to publish any of the books, probably due to the rather amateurish nature of her commentary.

Roughly at the same time, the two editorial teams also reviewed Claus's work. Karl Markus Michel and Walter Böhlich asked Hugo Dyserinck, a Belgian comparatist and lecturer at the University of Groningen, for a review. Dyserinck strongly supported the translation of *Omtrent Deedee*, a novel which, in his opinion, contained the traditional motifs of Flemish literature, well-known to the German reader, but which at the same time creatively played with and transformed the literary tradition. The Flemish province served as 'the backstage of the extraordinarily modern psychological analysis' and the protagonists was transformed into characters who were not only 'far removed from any form of provincialism', but could also 'stand up to comparison with the chief contemporary literary creations known internationally'.<sup>20</sup> Thanks to Claus, the German reader (and, through the medium of German, also readers in other European countries) was to learn that Flanders could be viewed as a novelistic space that was totally different from that presented in the works of Felix Timmermans, familiar to German readers. In his reviews of *De verwondering*, Dyserinck underlines the high literary calibre of the novel, which he described as Claus's 'greatest achievement so far' ('die bisher größte Leistung Claus'). Yet, in a four-page long justification, Dyserinck argues against publication due to its strong local character, which he claims would be entirely obscure to a German reader. In his opinion, the specifically Flemish nature of fascism presented by the book would have required too many footnotes and explanations.<sup>21</sup> Although Michel and Böhlich were ready to publish both of the novels reviewed by Dyserinck,<sup>22</sup> the decision not to publish them was made by Günther Busch. His say, as the head of 'Edition Suhrkamp', had a decisive impact on the programme of contemporary works published by Suhrkamp.

In order to present a full picture of the decision-making processes concerning the production of translations from Dutch at Suhrkamp in the 1960s, the correspondence with the

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<sup>18</sup> Judith Polak to Siegfried Unseld, 3 January 1961, SUA: Suhrkamp/03Lektorate, DLA ('Mangel am Humor und am Grotesken, zwei Merkmale der zeitgenössischen holländischen Literatur').

<sup>19</sup> Judith Polak to Karl Markus Michel, 10 August 1964; Judith Polak to Siegfried Unseld, 2 July 1964, SUA: Suhrkamp/03Lektorate, DLA ('gut geschrieben, interessant und fesselnd').

<sup>20</sup> Hugo Dyserinck, 'Gutachten: Hugo Claus, Omtrent Deedee', 25 September 1963, SUA: Suhrkamp/03Lektorate, DLA ('Bei Claus kommt hinzu, dass das flämische Milieu (übrigens in einer weniger provinzialistisch anmutenden Gewandung als bei den früheren Autoren) nur als Kulisse für eine äusserst moderne psychologische Analyse verwendet wird, wobei dann die Hauptpersonen (...) nicht nur alles andere als provinziell sind sondern ihresgleichen durchaus in anderen Spitzenleistungen der internationalen Gegenwartsliteratur finden.')

<sup>21</sup> Hugo Dyserinck, 'Gutachten: Hugo Claus, De verwondering', 29 September 1963, SUA: Suhrkamp/03Lektorate, DLA.

<sup>22</sup> Karl Markus Michel to Hein Kohn, 14 September 1964, SUA: Suhrkamp/03Lektorate, DLA.

Foundation for the Support of Translations from Dutch (Stichting ter Bevordering van de Vertaling van Nederlands Letterkundig Werk) is of significance. The Foundation was created in the Netherlands in 1954 and has also been financially supported by the Belgian government since 1960. Although the operation of the Foundation, until its final dissolution in 1989, constituted the first attempt to professionalise and institutionalise Dutch and Flemish cultural policies, its achievements have usually been rather negatively evaluated.<sup>23</sup> Its limited financial means, the selection of titles, which was usually determined by personal preferences and random relationships as well as the position of individual authors in the Dutch literary system (disregarding, by the same token, the circumstances of the issues of reception and the German book market), and, finally, the rather dubious quality of translations were, as some claim, the main reasons behind the very limited gains in popularity achieved by Dutch literature in the global literary system.

Contact between Suhrkamp and the Foundation was initiated by the poet, writer and translator Hans Magnus Enzensberger, who had worked on the anthology *Museum der modernen Poesie* (1960) and planned to include in it the work of a Flemish author, Paul van Ostaijen. Apart from this, Enzensberger also conceived a separate German edition of van Ostaijen's poems and prose works was also conceived. In relation to these plans, Enzensberger corresponded with the head of the Foundation, J.J. Oversteegen, and the owner of the copyrights for the work of van Ostaijen, Gerrit Borgers, who was a museum custodian in the Dutch Literary Museum and Documentation Centre (Nederlands Letterkundig Museum en Documentatiecentrum). Karl Markus Michel and Walter Böhlich took Enzensberger's plan further in subsequent publishing correspondence. For the next four years they both sought in vain to obtain the copyrights for van Ostaijen's poems (with the contract finalised in May 1965)<sup>24</sup> and his prose works (due to the alleged unavailability of copies in the antiquarian market, the copyright was only purchased in 1966).<sup>25</sup> Copyright issues and inadequate assistance on the side of the Foundation were also an obstacle in 1965 to the publication of the works of Willem Frederik Hermans, one of the central figures and the *enfant terrible* of Dutch literature.

Despite meetings between the Foundation's representative and Suhrkamp editors, both during the Frankfurt Book Fair and in Suhrkamp headquarters (it is significant to note that Siegfried Unseld was never present at these meetings), the Foundation's only substantial support was limited to the *exposés* presented in the correspondence. These covered contemporary writers from the Dutch language circle. Their informational content was encyclopaedic in nature: it contained lists of titles and overlapped with the English promotional

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<sup>23</sup> S. van Voorst, "Het goede litteraire werk uit Nederland". De Bibliotheca Neerlandica en het vertaalbeleid van de Stichting voor Vertalingen 1954-1966', *Internationale Neerlandistiek*, 1 (2013), 43.

<sup>24</sup> Paul van Ostaijen's *Poesie*, translated by Klaus Reichert, was published in 1966. Its publication followed not only painstaking preparations to obtain the copyrights, but also negotiations concerning the selection of a translator. J.J. Oversteegen recommended Johannes Piron as a suitable candidate. Enzensberger, however, held a grudge against Piron in connection with the anthology *Muscheln der Tieflande* (München: Langen/Müller, 1957), in which Van Ostaijen was not included. Moreover, Oversteegen thought Piron's tastes were too conservative (Hans Magnus Enzensberger to Gerrit Borgers, 24 February 1961, SUA: Suhrkamp/03Lektorate, DLA). Gerrit Borgers was against Klaus Reichert, who was selected later, but favoured Ludwig Kunz instead. In his contract with Suhrkamp, Borgers obliged the publisher to consult him for acceptance of the complete translation (Gerrit Borgers to Suhrkamp, 26 January 1966, SUA: Suhrkamp/03Lektorate, DLA).

<sup>25</sup> *Grotesken*, translated by Gerda Dyserinck-Siecke with a commentary by Hugo Dyserinck, was published in 1967.

brochure *Writing in Holland and Flanders*,<sup>26</sup> published by the Foundation since 1955. It was not until 1969 that Suhrkamp received translation samples from the Foundation for the first time (of works by Gerrit Krol, Dick Hillenius and Karel van het Reve). These, however, were turned down as they were deemed unsuitable for the Suhrkamp programme.

#### 4.

In order to gain an understanding of the dynamics of the production of translations from Dutch by Suhrkamp in the years 1964-1979, it is important to analyse the correspondence between Günther Busch and the translator and propagator of Dutch literature from Belgium, Georg Hermanowski. During WWII, Hermanowski (1918-1993) was stationed in Belgium and, after the end of the war, he studied Dutch literature in the German department at the University of Bonn. In the first post-war decades, Hermanowski was among the most prominent and most active actors involved in Flemish-German cultural transfer. Until the late 1960s, he translated forty novels written by Flemish authors, which constitutes a substantial share of the 12% of all the 355 Dutch and Flemish titles published in Germany in the years 1945-1969.<sup>27</sup> Hermanowski's impressive achievement is usually subject to serious reservations concerning the ideological nature of the transfer he promoted. His position was to distance himself from the broad notion of 'Dutch literature' and support a consistent division into Dutch and Flemish literatures. In the latter, he saw 'the synthesis of mysticism and the affirmation of life' ('die Synthese von Mystik und Lebensfreude'), a 'call for freedom and sovereignty' ('der Freiheitsdrang und der Ruf nach Selbstbestimmung') and 'its deep ancestral faith' ('die Verwurzelung im Väterglauben').<sup>28</sup> In the framework of his 'conservative' translation programme, he rejected without further thought, as Van Uffelen states, contemporary Flemish authors such as Hugo Claus, Louis Paul Boon, Hubert Lampo or Marnix Gijsen, whom he described as 'cynical' ('Zyniker'), 'realists of trivial reality' ('Realisten der banalen Wirklichkeit') and 'pessimists and doomsayers' ('Schwarzseher und Schwarzmalen').<sup>29</sup>

An analysis of the correspondence between Hermanowski and Busch, which continued for fifteen years, casts some doubt on the evaluation presented above. The public image of Hermanowski as a one-man agency functioning as a reviewer of Dutch literature and promoting traditional Flemish prose of a folk character, stands in stark contrast with Hermanowski as a literary intermediary, who offered commercial services to one of the most important German publishers. It is worth noticing that his occasionally negative evaluation of 'avant-garde' writers was at no stage of the correspondence determined by ethical or ideological considerations, but was most likely guided by literary and market circumstances. The latter was of decisive importance to Hermanowski. Such was also the previously mentioned case of Hugo Claus.

The surviving correspondence supports the claim that Busch, having no prior knowledge of

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<sup>26</sup> Joost de Wit to Walter Böhlich, 27 April 1965, SUA: Suhrkamp/03Lektorate, DLA.

<sup>27</sup> H. van Uffelen, *Moderne niederländische Literatur*, p. 426.

<sup>28</sup> G. Hermanowski, *Die Stimme des schwarzen Löwen. Geschichte des flämischen Romans* (München: Starnberg, 1961), p. 15.

<sup>29</sup> H. van Uffelen, *Moderne niederländische Literatur*, p. 419. See D. de Vin, 'Hermanowski en Vlaanderen. "Vlaamse" literatuur in Duitse vertaling na de Tweede Wereldoorlog', *Ons Erfdeel* 2 (1979), 197-205.

the existing reviews by Polak and Dyserinck, asked Hermanowski to evaluate Claus's novel *Omtrent Deedee*.<sup>30</sup> The negative review in 1964 did not originate in the anticlerical contents of the work, but in its closed and overly 'Flemish' character. Because of this, the caricature of types would have only been transparent to an insider readership.<sup>31</sup> In the same year, Hermanowski also reviewed a translation of *De verwondering* and recommended it for publication while suggesting that a great number of copies could be purchased through the National Literary Fund by the Belgian Ministry of Culture. He also expressed his doubt as to the purpose of translating the volume of short stories *De zwarte keizer* (1958) due to the uneven literary value of the individual texts.<sup>32</sup> His enthusiastic review of *De verwondering* put into question the thesis that Hermanowski rejected Claus without further thought<sup>33</sup> but it still did not convince Busch, who on his own took the decision to withdraw the Flemish writer from the 'Edition Suhrkamp' programme.<sup>34</sup> Similarly, Busch later on rejected recommendations encouraging the translations of Claus's work from Jürgen Hillner (who in August 1966 sent in an extensive piece of a translation of *De verwondering*) and the plans to publish some poetry by Claus (Ludwig Kunz in January 1970 strived, in vain, to promote the translation of *Een huis dat tussen nacht en morgen staat*).<sup>35</sup> Differences of opinion, an insufficient information flow between the individual editorial teams, and the autonomous position of Busch led to delays in the first edition of *De verwondering* in German translation (by Udo Birkholz), which only appeared in print in 1979. An East German publisher, Volk und Welt, published it while Roland Links, in an editorial review presented to the Ministry of Culture of the German Democratic Republic, underlined the deep links of Claus's prose to the 'stunningly rich tradition of European literature' ('in einer erschreckend reichen Tradition der europäischen Literatur').<sup>36</sup>

In the course of his cooperation with Busch, Hermanowski presented seventeen extensive *exposés*, concerning mainly Flemish authors. Based on these, four projects were finalised: two parts of an avant-garde prose cycle by Ivo Michiels, a novel by Paul de Wispelaere, and a volume of short stories by a Dutch poet and writer, Jacques Hamelink.<sup>37</sup> This rather modest

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<sup>30</sup> Another case, that of the novel *Een eiland worden* (1963) by Paul de Wispelaere, must have been very similar. The novel was recommended to the editors Michel and Böhlich in September 1963, while in June 1964 Busch, mentioning the scarcity of qualified editors, asked Hermanowski to review the novel and prepare translation samples. The event constitutes one of the traces of parallel, mutually independent (and by the same token ineffective) actions of the actors of the literary field, which took place in two editorial teams.

<sup>31</sup> Georg Hermanowski to Günther Busch, 20 June 1964, SUA: Suhrkamp/03Lektorate, DLA.

<sup>32</sup> Georg Hermanowski to Günther Busch, 19 October 1964, SUA: Suhrkamp/03Lektorate, DLA.

<sup>33</sup> H. van Uffelen, *Moderne niederländische Literatur*, p. 449.

<sup>34</sup> Günther Busch to Georg Hermanowski, 26 October 1964, SUA: Suhrkamp/03Lektorate, DLA.

<sup>35</sup> Jürgen Hillner to Günther Busch, 16 July 1966; Ludwig Kunz to Günther Busch, 26 November 1969, 2 January 1970, SUA: Suhrkamp/03Lektorate, DLA. Hillner also recommended the translation of *De kapellekensbaan* by Louis Paul Boon; advanced translation work was, however, terminated after Siegfried Unseld personally intervened. (Günther Busch to Hein Kohn, 15 January 1968, SUA: Suhrkamp/03Lektorate, DLA).

<sup>36</sup> Roland Links, 'Verlagsgutachten: Hugo Claus, Die Verwunderung', June 1978, DR1/2116, Bundesarchiv, Berlin. The initial stock of 3,000 copies was eventually increased to 8,000 copies.

<sup>37</sup> I. Michiels, *Das Buch Alpha*, trans. by G. Hermanowski (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1965); I. Michiels, *Orchis Militaris*, trans. By G. Hermanowski (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1969); P. de Wispelaere, *So hat es begonnen*, trans. By G. Hermanowski (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1966); J. Hamelink, *Horror vacui*, trans. By J. Hillner (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1967). The short stories in the German volume *Horror vacui* come from the collection

outcome calls for some explanations. It is crucial to indicate at this point that Hermanowski was Suhrkamp's first professional adviser in the field of Dutch literature. Although the picture of Flemish literature as 'traditional' and 'Catholic' is confirmed by both his popular publications and translations, it is important to bear in mind that it was also conditioned by the readership. Hermanowski estimated that the traditional Dutch novel enjoyed the interest of as many as 6,000 regular readers. It was not until 1964, within the frameworks of his 'Flemish Editorship' that thirty volumes were produced, each of which sold over 7,000 copies.<sup>38</sup> As an adviser to Suhrkamp, Hermanowski adjusted flexibly to the publisher's profile. The specific features of individual series and Suhrkamp's interest in avant-garde literature determined his choice of titles. As a regular visitor to the annual Book Fair in Antwerp, he reserved the translation rights and made regular reports on the latest publications. His direct connections to the cultural attaché of the Embassy of the Kingdom of Belgium facilitated the purchase of published stock by the Belgian Ministry of Culture. Through Hermanowski, Günther Busch made contact with the writer Ivo Michiels. Thanks to his cooperation with Suhrkamp, Michiels sold the translation copyrights for the *Book of Alpha* into Polish, Italian, English, and Scandinavian languages. He was also regularly invited to the Frankfurt International Book Fair and was employed as a literary adviser himself.<sup>39</sup>

A question that remains unanswered is why the fifteen-year-long cooperation between Hermanowski and Busch did not translate into greater popularisation or market and media success for the Dutch authors published by Suhrkamp?<sup>40</sup> The answer to this question is complex. First and foremost, the position of the editor of the 'Edition Suhrkamp' series, Günther Busch, which he held between 1963 and 1979, was independent of the main publisher, Siegfried Unseld. He had a separate fund at his disposal, the distribution of which did not require management approval. His extraordinary autonomy also resulted in a lack of information flow about the selection process, with manuscripts frequently not being distributed outside the editorial team. Secondly, the elitist character of the series, which aimed at shaping readers' sensitivity to new literary, philosophical and social phenomena, was an important factor. Although the series did not represent the individual national literatures, the available data make it possible to indicate some preferences. In total, 951 titles were published when Busch was chief editor of the series. As many as 616 of these were scientific texts. Among the 335 literary texts, translations only accounted for about 30%; 21 titles were translated from

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*Het plantaardig bewind* and *Horror vacui* and were selected by the translator, Jürgen Hillner, in cooperation with the author.

<sup>38</sup> Georg Hermanowski to Günther Busch, 25 October 1964, SUA: Suhrkamp/03Lektorate, DLA.

<sup>39</sup> Correspondence between Günther Busch and Ivo Michiels, 7 December 1964 - 24 October 1969, SUA: Suhrkamp/03Lektorate, DLA. The literary agency, Geisenheyner und Crone, based in Stuttgart, was responsible for the sale of copyrights for the translation of Michiels's prose to countries in Eastern and Central Europe. The agency mainly dealt as an intermediary in the copyrights trade of the works of Eastern European writers to the German language area (Ernst W. Geisenheyner, 25 August 1967, SUA: Suhrkamp/03Lektorate, DLA). It is important to observe that the basis for the Polish translation of both works by Michiels (*Księża Alfa* [*The Book of Alpha*], *Orchis Militaris*, trans. By A.M. Linke. Warszawa: PIW, 1973) was a German translation by Hermanowski.

<sup>40</sup> In January 1974 both novels by Ivo Michiels, the novel by Paul de Wispelaere, and Paul van Ostaijen's prose volume *Grotesken* published by Busch in 1967 were listed on the low sale title index prepared for the publisher. The list covered the titles for which the amount of unsold copies returned to the publisher was higher than the number of the sold copies (Siegfried Unseld to Gisela Mörlner, 4 January 1974, SUA: Suhrkamp/01VL/Notizen, DLA).

English, 13 from Polish, 12 from French, 11 from Czech, and 6 from Serbo-Croat and Dutch, among other languages.<sup>41</sup>

Both factors described above, i.e. the independent and strong position of Busch in the structure of the publishing house and his clear preference for large national literatures and literatures from Eastern and Central Europe, at least partially explain the poor position of Dutch literature in Suhrkamp's publication catalogue in the 1970s. As I have mentioned above, in the mid-1960s Busch took over the decisive share of the correspondence concerning Dutch literature, which previously had been conducted by other editors. His initial interest in authors from Flanders and the Netherlands had diminished since the early 1970s, when he started to cooperate intensely with writers from Poland and Czechoslovakia. The switch in priorities is reflected in his correspondence with Georg Hermanowski. This exchange of letters, initiated in June 1964, slowly dies down in 1969 and becomes only incidental in 1972. Although Hermanowski, who remained the only external adviser to Suhrkamp on Dutch literature throughout the 1970s, did from time to time propose some books for translation but Busch consistently rejected these as they did not fit the contemporary profile of the 'Edition Suhrkamp' series. In May 1977, Hermanowski drew Busch's attention to media interest in the continuation of the first two parts of the tetralogy by Ivo Michiels, published in 1965 and 1968 by Suhrkamp. The Munich Freies Theater approached him with a request for a translation of the drama *Samuel, o Samuel* (1973), which constituted an addendum to *Exit* (1971), the third part of the 'Alpha Cycle', while at the same time the ARD network sought to obtain the right to make it into a film. Hermanowski's proposal included a common German edition of *Exit* and *Dixi(t)*, to be completed by Michiels in 1978.<sup>42</sup> In October 1978, Hermanowski had already received the manuscript of *Dixi(t)* and Busch ordered the translation of both parts of the tetralogy. The translations were completed in April 1979. Hermanowski emphasised the importance of the immediate publication of this 'most important piece of Flemish prose of the second half of the twentieth century' ('die wichtigste flämische Prosadichtung aus der zweiten Hälfte des XX. Jahrhunderts').<sup>43</sup> In April 1979, the correspondence between Busch and Hermanowski stopped. Busch left Suhrkamp Verlag in 1980 and the 'Edition Suhrkamp's 'Neue Folge' (New Series) started that same year. Ultimately, the completed translation of the 'Alpha Cycle' was never published.

## 5.

The years 1979-1980 brought at the same time a breakthrough in terms of the process for producing Dutch translations at Suhrkamp: decisions became centralised. It is important to underline that, except for very few exceptions (including a personal connection between Unseld and Lucebert which started in 1973), Flemish and Dutch authors were outside of Siegfried Unseld's interests. The year 1979 when Norbert Elias, an author regularly published by Suhrkamp and whose opinions Unseld was likely to take into account, asked Unseld to publish a novel by Renate Rubinstein *Niets te verliezen en toch bang* (1978) was a turning point. Elias

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<sup>41</sup> Raimund Fellingner to Siegfried Unseld, 28 April 1993, SUA: Suhrkamp/01VL/Notizen, DLA.

<sup>42</sup> Georg Hermanowski to Günther Busch, 17 May 1977, SUA: Suhrkamp/03Lektorate, DLA.

<sup>43</sup> Georg Hermanowski to Günther Busch, 19 April 1979, SUA: Suhrkamp/03Lektorate, DLA.

believed that Rubinstein deserved the same degree of international recognition enjoyed by Susan Sonntag, and he asked for the text to be edited in such a way as to secure the best possible sales.<sup>44</sup> In this particular case, Unseld resorted to an unusual solution: not only did he ask Elias, the sociologist, to write an introduction to Rubinstein's work, but he also abandoned his initial idea to publish the Dutch writer outside the series in a cheap pocket edition. Finally, he placed an author completely unknown to the German readership in the 'New Series' ('Neue Folge') of the prestigious 'Edition Suhrkamp'. A stock of 10,000 copies was promoted by an extensive and exceptional advertising campaign among booksellers and in the press.<sup>45</sup> This mediation by Elias not only opened up the possibility of publishing more of Rubinstein's work by Suhrkamp,<sup>46</sup> but for Unseld in the early 1980s it also constituted a connection to Dutch literature, which he had so far been unfamiliar with. Through their cooperation with Suhrkamp, writers such as Jakobus Martinus Arend Biesheuvel or Maarten 't Hart were introduced to the publisher. From that moment on, Unseld's contacts with the Netherlands became regular and brought specific recommendations to the editorial board (represented since 1980 by, among others, Raimund Fellingner, whose expertise in the Dutch publishing market was unprecedented) on each occasion. Dutch authors gradually became a priority at the Suhrkamp publishing house. At Unseld's and Fellingner's incentive, Suhrkamp started to cooperate with a Munich-based Dutch literary scholar, Carel ter Haar, who not only recommended and reviewed the individual texts, but also adjusted them to the profiles of the specific publishing series. Moreover, in the early 1990s, Suhrkamp established a stable connection to a translator, Helga van Beuningen, which resolved the difficulties the publishing house had previously faced with translations.

It is important to indicate at this point that the involvement of Norbert Elias and Renate Rubinstein also played a crucial part in the success achieved by Cees Nooteboom on the German book market. Nooteboom was 'discovered' for Suhrkamp back in August 1964, when a literary agency headed by Hein Kohn recommended, in vain, his first novel, *De ridder is gestorven*.<sup>47</sup> Despite Kohn's suggestion that the copyright for the French translation of the book was a promising sign for the book's success on the German book market, the editor, Karl Markus Michel, rejected Nooteboom's novel.<sup>48</sup> Twenty years later, the editor Elisabeth Borchers read the translation of *Rituelen*<sup>49</sup> published by Volk und Welt.<sup>50</sup> The internal publishing review

<sup>44</sup> Norbert Elias to Siegfried Unseld, 10 January 1979, SUA: Suhrkamp/01VL/Autorenkonvolute/Elias, Norbert, DLA.

<sup>45</sup> Siegfried Unseld to Renate Rubinstein, 12 September 1979, 7 July 1980, SUA: Suhrkamp/01VL/Autorenkonvolute/Rubinstein, Renate, DLA.

<sup>46</sup> R. Rubinstein, *Immer verliebt*, trans. by R. E. Feilschenfeldt (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1986); R. Rubinstein, *Sterben kann man immer noch*, trans. by H. van Beuningen (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1987); R. Rubinstein, *Mein besseres Ich*, trans. by H. van Beuningen (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1993).

<sup>47</sup> Hein Kohn to Walter Böhlich, 21 August 1964, SUA: Suhrkamp/03Lektorate, DLA.

<sup>48</sup> Karl Markus Michel to Hein Kohn, 13 September 1964, SUA: Suhrkamp/03Lektorate, DLA.

<sup>49</sup> Cees Nooteboom, *Rituale*, trans. by Hans Herrfurth (Berlin: Volk und Welt, 1984).

<sup>50</sup> Volk und Welt, one of the largest belle-lettre's publishers in the GDR, received the so-called all-German copyright ('gesamtdeutsche Rechte') from the publisher De Arbeiderspers for the translation of *Rituelen* (Elisabeth Borchers to Arbeiderspers, 3 December 1984, SUA: Suhrkamp/03Lektorate, DLA). This meant that the East Berlin-based publisher had at their disposal not only the copyright for the translation, but also for the publication of *Rituelen* in both German states. This was exceptional as East German publishers, because of currency limitations and restricted contacts with western publishers, rarely had at their disposal all-German copyrights for works of authors coming from capitalist countries (cf. H. Petersen, 'Über Faulkner und die Erschließung der amerikanischen Literatur', in *Fenster zur Welt*).

by Volk und Welt, which Borchers had access to, underlined not only the analysis of ‘the spiritual spheres of a Dutch middle-class being in the process of constant decay’ (‘die geistigen Sphären der von einem unaufhaltsamen Zersetzungsprozess befallenen niederländischen Oberschicht’), which can be read as an almost standard rhetorical move directed at the censor, who reviewed all the books published in the GDR, but also the ‘artistic density’ (‘künstlerische Dichte’) of the text, and its unusually sound structure were pointed out.<sup>51</sup> It is important to emphasise that to Borchers, who consulted the American reviews of the novel, these were of crucial significance for the publication of *Rituellen* by Suhrkamp.<sup>52</sup> Borchers suggested in November 1984 that the translation prepared in the GDR should be used, and the text be included in the main programme in autumn 1985.<sup>53</sup>

Three other works by Nootboom - *In Nederland (In den niederländischen Bergen, 1987)*, *Een lied van schijn en wezen (Ein Lied von Schein und Sein, 1989)* and *Mokusei!* (1990) were published despite the editorial board’s negative evaluations (the editor, Elisabeth Borchers, was negative in particular about the works *Mokusei!* and *In Nederland*),<sup>54</sup> thanks to the insistence

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*Eine Geschichte des DDR-Verlages Volk & Welt*, ed. by S. Barck, S. Lokatis (Berlin: Ch. Links Verlag, 2003), pp. 175-76). Curiously, Soviet authors shared a similar predicament, and the copyrights would generally be ‘divided’ between the GDR and FRG (M. Müller, ‘Die Ökonomin - Erfindungsreichtum gefragt’, in *Fenster zur Welt*, p. 324). The privilege enjoyed by Volk und Welt in Nootboom’s case was undoubtedly related to the above-mentioned lack of interest on the side of German publishers for his earlier publications. It is important to bear in mind that the translation of *Philip en de anderen (Das Paradies ist nebenan, 1963)*, published by Diederichs Verlag, was only an isolated attempt at introducing this author to the West German book market. Apart from that, the East German publishing houses Volk und Welt and Aufbau published translations of Louis Paul Boon and Hugo Claus (including titles that had previously been rejected by Suhrkamp) in the 1970s, Heere Heeresma’s short stories and a range of anthologies devoted to contemporary Dutch literature (see H. van Uffelen, *Moderne niederländische Literatur*, p. 445). Ultimately, Suhrkamp did not have much difficulty in obtaining a license to publish *Rituellen*, as this type of trade was the main source of hard currency for East German publishers. It should be added that following Suhrkamp’s decision to take over the translation of *Rituellen*, De Arbeiderspers publishing house ceased to award all-German rights to publishers from the GDR (Elisabeth Borchers, 14 May 1985, SUA: Suhrkamp/03Lektorate, DLA).

<sup>51</sup> Udo Birkholz, ‘Verlagsgutachten: Cees Nootboom, Rituale’, July 1983, DR1/2383a, Bundesarchiv, Berlin. In the GDR, any book considered for publication had to be evaluated based on the reviews, initially from publishing houses, and then from Hauptverwaltung Verlage und Buchhandel des Kulturministeriums (HV). Since 1960, HV required an internal publishing review (‘internes Verlagsgutachten’) and an external review (‘qualifiziertes wissenschaftliches Außengutachten’) prior to publication. Documentation concerning the evaluation and approval process pertaining to individual titles since 1965, and also to works which were due to appear in 1991, is available in the form of scans on the webpage of Bundesarchiv Berlin-Lichterfelde (DR-1). The ‘Online-Findbuch’ enables immediate access to all the publishing houses’ internal reviews, while external reports (due to copyright protection) are available for perusal in the Bundesarchiv reading room. The documentation constitutes a still under-researched resource on translation production and the reception of individual national literatures in the GDR.

<sup>52</sup> Elisabeth Borchers to Arbeiderspers, 3 December 1984, SUA: Suhrkamp/03Lektorate, DLA.

<sup>53</sup> Elisabeth Borchers to Siegfried Unseld, 1 November 1984, SUA: Suhrkamp/03Lektorate/Elisabeth Borchers, DLA. It is important to mention that the poor quality of the translation demanded a range of far-reaching corrections prior to publication by Suhrkamp, while the German text leaned on with the French edition of the novel due to a lack of qualified translators.

<sup>54</sup> Elisabeth Borchers to Cees Nootboom, 29 November 1985, SUA: Suhrkamp/01VL/Autorenkonvolute/Nootboom, Cees, DLA; Elisabeth Borchers to Siegfried Unseld, 26 March 1987, SUA: Suhrkamp/03Lektorate, DLA. It is worth noting that Borchers’ negative evaluation of *Mokusei!* must have been influenced by a note she received the day before from Jürgen Dormagen, a Suhrkamp editor, who strongly advised against publishing it in ‘Bibliothek Suhrkamp’ on account of its compositional weaknesses (Jürgen Dormagen to Elisabeth Borchers, 29 November 1985, SUA: Suhrkamp/03Lektorate, DLA). Both reviews were based on the manuscript of an amateur translation compiled for Nootboom’s visit to Germany. When Borchers received another translation of *Mokusei!* in February 1990 by Helga van

of the main publisher. Unseld met Nootboom in person in June 1987 in Amsterdam at a party organised to celebrate Elias's award of *Commandeur in de Orde van Oranje-Nassau*.<sup>55</sup> From then Unseld remained in touch with Nootboom and, despite the highly unsatisfactory results of the sales of the four books published so far,<sup>56</sup> Unseld took great care in arranging media coverage of Nootboom's visits to Germany, initiating reprints of individual titles and demanding that his employers grant the author special status. At the same time, it should be noted that Nootboom not only skillfully promoted his own works, but also served as a literary intermediary, recommending to Suhrkamp texts written by Dutch authors (Thomas Rosenboom and A.F.Th. van der Heijden were described during this period by the editors as 'the apples of Nootboom's eye' ('Schützlinge'), and they indeed enjoyed this special status).<sup>57</sup>

The issue of the extraordinary status and value assigned to Nootboom and other Dutch writers published by Suhrkamp in the 1980s is very significant. Siegfried Unseld called Nootboom one of the 'most important European prose writers' ('einen der größten europäischen Prosaschreiber'),<sup>58</sup> and did not link his work to plans for presenting Dutch literature as a separate group of texts (contrary to the present situation where Dutch literature is presented as one of Suhrkamp's 'Länderschwerpunkte'). Also, other Dutch authors who were published at that time by Suhrkamp did not feature as 'Dutch' writers.<sup>59</sup> This *modus operandi* changed shortly before preparations for the International Book Fair in Frankfurt in 1993, where Flanders and the Netherlands were invited as guests of honour. Unseld called on the Dutch foundation Stichting Frankfurter Buchmesse with the idea of a collective presentation of the offer of the Klett, Hanser and Suhrkamp publishers in the area of Dutch literature. What Van Uffelen has described as a 'successful operation' ('gelungene Operation') by three publishers,<sup>60</sup> was in fact a *post factum* marketing strategy, which relied on the individual popularity and

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Beuningen, she withdrew all objections about the work and emphasised the importance of cooperating with competent translators of Dutch literature, whose participation in the process of manuscript selection was absolutely essential (Elisabeth Borchers to Cees Nootboom, 21 February 1990, SUA: Suhrkamp/03Lektorate, DLA).

<sup>55</sup> Siegfried Unseld, 'Reisebericht. Amsterdam', 21-23 June 1987, SUA: Suhrkamp/03Lektorate, DLA.

<sup>56</sup> Gottfried Honnefelder to Siegfried Unseld, 10 December 1991, SUA: Suhrkamp/01VL/Autorenkonvolute/Nootboom, Cees, DLA.

<sup>57</sup> Raimund Fellingner to Siegfried Unseld and Joachim Unseld, 14 November 1988, SUA: Suhrkamp/03Lektorate, DLA.

<sup>58</sup> Siegfried Unseld, 'Reisebericht. Menorca', 31 July-2 August 1993, SUA: Suhrkamp/01Autorenkonvolute/Nootboom, Cees, DLA.

<sup>59</sup> Right from the beginning of their cooperation, Unseld had categorised Nootboom's work as 'European Literature' (it was Unseld who made the title of Nootboom's programmatic lecture, delivered on 3 November 1989 in the main headquarters of Deutsche Bank, sound as 'European Literature'). Nootboom's novel *Ein Lied von Schein und Sein* was published by Suhrkamp in 1989 and was proof, according to the publisher, of 'Central European Fate'. Its author was considered one of the pillars of the prospective, though never actually completed project of a 'European Library', which was to include novels of the Dutch prose writer Simon Vestdijk (Siegfried Unseld to Cees Nootboom, 20 May 1988; Siegfried Unseld, 16 October 1990, SUA: Suhrkamp/01Autorenkonvolute/Cees Nootboom, DLA). Another sign of the 'denationalised' perception of Flemish and Dutch authors in the German book market was the essay written by Hermann Wallman, under the telling title 'There is No Such Thing as Dutch Literature': 'Why should I be interested in Dutch literature just because it happens to come from Belgium or the Netherlands? A writer wants to find his own answers, which has nothing to do with arrogance but everything with discipline and technique. He doesn't represent a country, let alone a government, but rather his own particular qualities' (<http://www.letterenfonds.nl/en/essay/7/there-is-no-such-thing-as-dutch-literature>, date of access 17 June 2014).

<sup>60</sup> H. van Uffelen, *Moderne niederländische Literatur*, p. 446.

names of certain authors. These had been consistently built in the second half of the 1980s as part of promoting literature from Flanders and the Netherlands.

The 'denationalisation' of Dutch authors was at the same time also determined by an external, backstage factor. Since the early 1980s Suhrkamp had been struggling with the political and image success of the 'Polnische Bibliothek'. Unfortunately, this success did not lead to the desired market outcome. In this context, the management correspondence reveals alarming information about the sales of individual titles and marketing proposals for solving the problem.<sup>61</sup> Interestingly enough, in the same correspondence, 'Polnische Bibliothek' features as a negative reference point for the promotion of other 'smaller' national literatures. At a conference devoted to the reception of Dutch literature in the German book market, held in March 1989 in Stuttgart, the head of the Suhrkamp editorial team warned against presenting Dutch and Flemish authors as belonging to the 'ghetto of a Dutch library' ('Getto einer niederländischen Bibliothek').<sup>62</sup>

## 6.

As the above essay has shown, an analysis of translation production based on the Suhrkamp archive provides significant information on the dynamics of the functioning of the (semi)peripheral national literatures in the German book market. A chronologically structured analysis of the processes regarding both the published and rejected books involves a significant awareness of the levels at which the processes of interaction and negotiation happen and are recorded. Through an analysis of editorial correspondence and its juxtaposition with other layers of the archive, we have been able to gain insights into when actors interested in achieving a specific goal managed to win the support of other actors. This is exactly the core of what Latour refers to as 'translation'. Following Michel Callon, Latour distinguishes three clearly demarcated stages. In the first stage, the actors search for connecting points between each other, among themselves and the identities and interests of other actors, at the same time working towards strengthening their mutual relations. At the second stage, the actors seek acceptance from other actors for their own interests, while at the third stage, they have won it through mutual obligation.<sup>63</sup>

In the light of the publisher's correspondence concerning Dutch literature, the ongoing connections between Dutch/Flemish and German actors in the publishing field had not developed for a long time beyond stages 1 and 2 of Latour's translation, understood as a process of mutual interaction. Insufficient assistance from literary advisers, translators and institutions responsible for cultural policies resulted in a conflict between Suhrkamp's best interest and the recommendations which only took into account the hierarchy and specificity of the Dutch book market (the connections between the editorial team and the Foundation for the Support of

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<sup>61</sup> In 1991, for example, the sales of thirty out of thirty-nine published titles did not exceed eighty copies (Christoph Groffy, undated memo of 1991, SUA: Suhrkamp/01VL/Notizen, DLA).

<sup>62</sup> Raimund Fellinger to Siegfried Unseld, 'Reisebericht Fachtagung "Unbeschreiblich Niederländisch. Die Rezeption 'kleinerer' europäischen Literaturen auf dem deutschsprachigen Buchmarkt am Beispiel der Niederlande", vom 3. bis 5. März 1989 im Waldhotel Degerloch, Stuttgart', 7 March 1989, SUA: Suhrkamp/01VL/Notizen, DLA.

<sup>63</sup> B. Latour, *Die Hoffnung der Pandora: Untersuchungen zur Wirklichkeit* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2002), p. 381.

Dutch Literature between 1960 and 1970 are a good illustration of the problem). The relative autonomy of the editorial teams proved to be a hindrance to extending Dutch literature transfer further. The lack of coordination in the book selection process and the very specific criteria of choice (as in the case of the editors of the 'Edition Suhrkamp' series by Günther Busch) led to abandoning many projects before consulting the management or other editorial teams.

With reference to the stages proposed by Latour, we could assume that since the beginning of the 1980s, individual actors in the publishing field have not only found mutual acceptance for their individual projects, but have also taken on an obligation to carry these out. The 'translation' process is completed on four complementary levels. Firstly, the abovementioned centralisation of decisions results in a uniform policy by Siegfried Unseld concerning Dutch literature. Secondly, a significant change took place in the nature of cooperation between the editorial team and the external advisers and translators. Thirdly, the nature of the relationships between the publishing house and Dutch institutions supervising cultural transfer changed as well. In the period preceding the 1993 Frankfurt Book Fair, these institutions had been flexible and provided uncomplicated access to financial support for the translation costs and marketing of individual titles.<sup>64</sup> Finally, Dutch publishers actively represented their own authors, engaging in activities typical of literary agents. To sum up, the 1980s did in fact bring about a specific breakthrough, although its analysis from the 'internal' perspective of the publishing house does not quite lead to the conclusions presented in the reception studies of Dutch literature in Germany. The analysis of translation production based on available archival data thus constitutes an important addition to the history of literary transfer.

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<sup>64</sup> The Foundation for the Support of Dutch Literature Translations (Stichting ter Bevordering van de Vertaling van Nederlands Letterkundig Werk) was dissolved in 1989 and was replaced by two separate national organisations. Since 1991 the Dutch Literary Production and Translation Fund (Nederlands Literair Productie- en Vertalingenfonds) has been responsible for promoting literature from the Netherlands while in Belgium cultural policy regarding the initiation and support of translations from Dutch lay in the hands of the Art Department of the Ministry of Culture and the Flemish Union. At present, the responsibility for promoting Dutch literature lies with the Flemish Literature Fund (Vlaams Fonds voor de Letteren), on the Flemish side. The Dutch Foundation for Literature (Nederlands Letterenfonds) represents authors from the Netherlands. Both organisations work together to present Dutch literature at the Frankfurt Book Fair in 2016, the year in which Flanders and the Netherlands will again feature as guests of honour.

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