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Skopos and Spijkerschift: (Re)presenting 'otherness' in the paratexts of books written by 'Dutch writers of non-Dutch descent'

Towards the end of the twentieth century, a new literary category emerged in the Netherlands, and it was given the somewhat unwieldy title, 'Dutch writers of non-Dutch descent' (Willemsen, 2000, p. 68). These writers were regarded the pride of Rick van der Ploeg, the Dutch Minister of Culture between 1998 and 2002 (Willemsen, 2000, p. 83). Van der Ploeg worked to promote the cultural involvement of citizens of non-Dutch descent in Dutch society. Authors categorised into this bracket have been described as, "Migrant writers against their will, unhappily trapped between foreign-ness and Dutch-ness for the sake of the Dutch cultural well-being." (Willemsen, 2000, p. 83) These authors fulfil a particular role in Dutch society and it is apparent that they are labelled and perceived in a specific way in the Netherlands.

This raises the question as to what happens when we translate their works into English? If one of the key features of a book written by a 'Dutch writer of non-Dutch descent' when it is published in the Netherlands is the cultural origins of its author, or at least the fact the author *is* a 'Dutch writer of non-Dutch descent', what impact does this have on its translation and, more precisely, the ways in which the translated book is packaged in the target culture?

Skopos theory claims that translation strategies are determined by the purpose of a text. If texts serve different purposes in source and target cultures, what differences can be observed when we look at the source text and its translation? Within the context of Dutch migrant literature in translation, I wish to discuss *skopos* theory and to investigate how it affects paratexts, an area of study which I believe has often been overlooked in translation studies.

I am going to use the novel *Spijkerschrift,* written by the Dutch-Iranian author Kader Abdolah and its English translation, *My Father's Notebook*, translated by Susan Massotty, as the basis for this investigation. This is not only an interesting book in its own right, in which Abdolah cleverly juxtaposes the narrator's attempts to settle in the Netherlands with Iran's history of oppression, but it is also a key example from the literary category of 'Dutch authors of non-Dutch descent'. It was awarded the E. du Perron Prize in 2000, an annual prize set up in 1986 for persons who dare to critically question social circumstances and help to transcend cultural boundaries and divisions in the Netherlands (Minnaard, 2013, p. 100). The aim of the award is to encourage critical reflection on the multicultural transformations taking place in Dutch society, and the fact that Abdolah's novel was awarded this prize highlights the importance of the purpose, or *skopos*, of the text in the source culture (Minnaard, 2013, p. 100).

Before I go on to discuss the various paratextual features of *Spijkerschrift* and *My Father's Notebook*, it is firstly important to take a closer look at *skopos* theory itself. *Skopos* theory was developed in Germany in the late 1970s, and it reflected a general shift from linguistic and formal translation theories that primarily focused on the source text, to a notion of translation that was more functionally and socio-culturally oriented (Du, 2012, p. 2190). The term *skopos* derives from the Greek, meaning 'purpose' and was coined by Katharina Reiss and Hans Vermeer in their influential book published in 1984 entitled *Grundlegung einer allgemeine Translationstheorie* (Groundwork for a general theory of translation) (Bassnett, 2014, pp. 83-84). With her book, *Translation as a Purposeful Activity: Functionalist Approaches Explained*, Christiane Nord pulled together the strands of functional approaches and made *skopos* theory more widely available to English-speaking

readers (Nord, 1997). Whilst previous theories had mainly focused on the concepts of equivalence or faithfulness to the source text as ways of assessing whether or not a translation was successful, *skopos* theory moved away from the source text, shifting the focus of translation from the 'retrospective' on to the 'prospective'. In this approach, the target audience is central (Nord, 1997, p. 123). *Skopos* theory maintains that every action has a purpose, and as translation is an action, it must also have a purpose. It is this particular purpose that defines the translation strategies used. A translator does not offer more or less information than a source text producer; a translator offers different information in a different way (Reiss and Vermeer, 2013 [1984], p. 114).

The following quote from Vermeer sums up his views regarding *skopos* theory rather well:

> Translate/interpret/speak/write in a way that enables your text/translation to function in the situation in which it is used and with the people who want to use it and precisely in the way they want it to function.
>
> (Vermeer, cited and transl. by Nord, 1997, p. 29)

I believe that Vermeer's statement urging us to translate/interpret/speak/write in a target-oriented manner could also be applied to the way in which we present, reinforce and accompany a book in its source and target cultures. Genette refers to these accompanying productions as the work's paratext, explaining that these features, such as the author's name, preface, title and illustrations, act as a 'vestibule' offering the world at large the chance to either step inside or turn back (Genette, 1997 [1987] pp. 1-2).
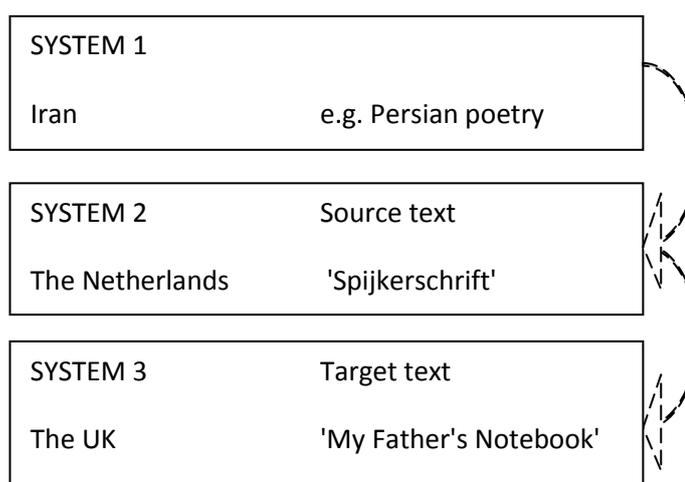
Whilst paratexts are often viewed separately from texts themselves, they are crucial as they form a frame for the main text, and can change the reception of a text or its interpretation by the public. As Philippe Lejeune put it, paratexts are "a fringe of the printed text which in reality controls one's whole reading of the text." (Lejeuene, 1975 in Genette, 1997 [1987] p. 2). Despite the importance of paratexts in determining our reading experiences (assuming the paratext has, at least, encouraged us to pick up the book in the first place), relatively few studies in the field of translation studies have focused on paratexts, and not much at all has been written about paratextual elements from the perspective of *skopos* theory (Furukawa, 2013).[1] In my analysis of Kader Abdolah's *Spijkerschrift,* I aim to bring the two fields together by comparing a number of paratextual features from the source and target texts within the framework of *skopos* theory.

Having provided some background to *skopos* theory, I wish to now turn to Kader Abdolah's novel *Spijkerschrift*, written in 2000, which I will discuss in parallel with its English translation, *My Father's Notebook*, published in 2006 and translated by Susan Massotty. Kader Abdolah is a Dutch-Iranian author who studied in Tehran, where he became involved in the left-wing movement opposing the Shah and Khomeini regimes (Dunphy and Emig, 2010, p. 95). He fled to the Netherlands as a political refuge in 1988, where, at the age of 33, he started learning Dutch. Five years later, his first collection of short stories was published. He describes his own writing as a new Dutch literary movement, or a type of new literature, written by immigrants (Van Rooij and Hann, 2006, p. 4).

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[1] Christiane Nord is one exception to this rule, having written one book and several articles about the translation of titles and headings, such as 'Translation und Paratranslation', published in the German journal *Lebende Sprachen* in 2012.

I wish to look at how *Spijkerschrift* has been packaged for the Dutch market and then compare it with the English product. According to Lambert, translation is a cultural import/export activity or movement between two literary systems (Lambert, 1995, pp. 97-98). However, when we discuss books written by 'Dutch writers of non-Dutch descent', three literary systems can be involved: in the case of Kader Abdolah's *Spijkerschrift*, system 1 is the Iranian system (from where the author and a number of Persian quotations/poems etc. incorporated into the text originate), system 2 is the Dutch system (from where the source text and a number of Dutch literary references originate) and system 3 is the British system (where we find the English translation). I have displayed the interaction of these three systems in a diagram below:

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┌─────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│  SYSTEM 1                                     │
│                                               │
│  Iran                    e.g. Persian poetry  │
└─────────────────────────────────────────────┘

┌─────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│  SYSTEM 2                Source text          │
│                                               │
│  The Netherlands          'Spijkerschrift'    │
└─────────────────────────────────────────────┘

┌─────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│  SYSTEM 3                Target text          │
│                                               │
│  The UK                  'My Father's Notebook'│
└─────────────────────────────────────────────┘
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The arrows show the influence of system 1 on system 2, and of system 2 on system 3. I decided to use a dotted arrow as the information is not transmitted directly in its original form; instead it is an offer of information for the new system to receive as appropriate. In order to investigate the intricacies of the cultural import/export activities or movements in terms of the *skopos* theory explained above, I will now turn to a number of paratextual features.

The most striking difference between the source and target texts is, perhaps, the title. The Dutch title *Spijkerschrift* (cuneiform) is presented on the cover, and the title page also presents its subtitle, *Notities van Aga Akbar (Aga Akbar's Notes).* The English title is *My Father's Notebook,* and the English version does not have a subtitle. Before we discuss the differences here, it is necessary to provide some background to the book. It is the story of the deaf-mute Aga Akbar, told from the perspective of his son, Ishmael, who has found his dead father's notebook, written in cuneiform script. Through the notebook, Ishmael uncovers the story of his own past, but also the history of Iran. What is interesting is that the last chapter of the novel has the same title as the title of the book in Dutch, which has been translated more literally in English as *The Cuneiform Notebook: Aga Akbar's Notes.* This therefore raises the question as to why the title of the book has been changed at all.

The Dutch title *Spijkerschrift*, along with its subtitle, *Notities van Aga Akbar* is likely to sound more exotic to the Dutch reader than *My Father's Notebook* does to the English reader. This is as a result of the unusual word used to describe cuneiform script as well as the use of the more 'foreign-sounding' name *Aga Akbar*. The fact that it has been changed to something more familiar in the English version could be viewed as a type of domestication. This is the strategy of making a text closely conform to the target culture, which is often seen as opposing the notion of foreignization, in which the emphasis is placed on linguistic, stylistic and cultural differences in the source text in order to make the target text "strange and estranging in the receiving culture" (Venuti, 2008 [1995], p. 263). If anything, the source text is, in itself, foreignizing due the use of the Iranian name and the interplay of the three systems outlined above (influences from system 1). By rendering *Spijkerschrift: Notities van Aga Akbar* as *My Father's Notebook*, a domesticating strategy has been

applied in the English translation, and the use of such a strategy can be explained by *skopos* theory, as it maintains that what counts is how successfully a text can function in the target culture. We must assume that the title has been changed in order to allow the target text to function more effectively in the target culture. This leads us on the questions as to why the book was given the title *My Father's Notebook* in English and how exactly the book serves a different purpose in the target culture.

The translated title, *My Father's Notebook,* brings to mind Barack Obama's successful and similarly titled memoir, *Dreams from My Father: A Story of Race and Inheritance*, first published in 1995. Whilst Obama's book can be classed as a memoir and Abdolah's book a novel, the similarities between the two books are striking, perhaps even more so when we consider the rest of the text on the cover of *My Father's Notebook*, which states, *The unforgettable story of a father, his son and the country they love*. Themes of race and inheritance are key to both books, and it is possible that *My Father's Notebook* was specifically chosen as a translation of *Spijkerschrift: Notities van Aga Akbar* in order to allow the reader to connect with these themes, which are important topical points of discussion in both target and source cultures. The English title is more personal than the original, and its use of a universal theme (father-son relationships) may have been chosen to attract a wider readership in the UK, as the more literal translation, *Cuneiform: Aga Akbar's Notes,* may have been considered too unfamiliar or technical to appeal to British readers. In any case, the English title is more familiar and personal to an English-speaking audience, and this is also reflected in the cover images of the two texts, as we can see below:
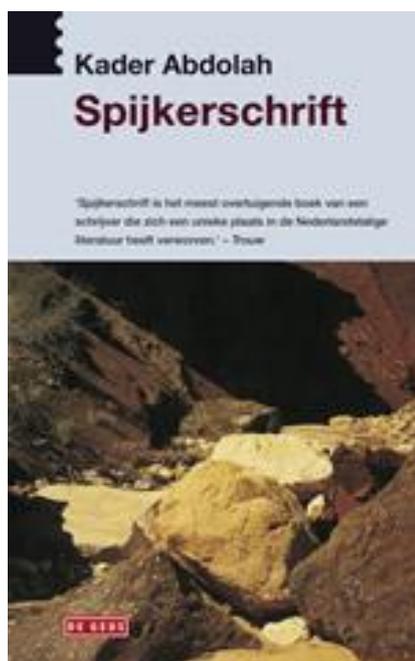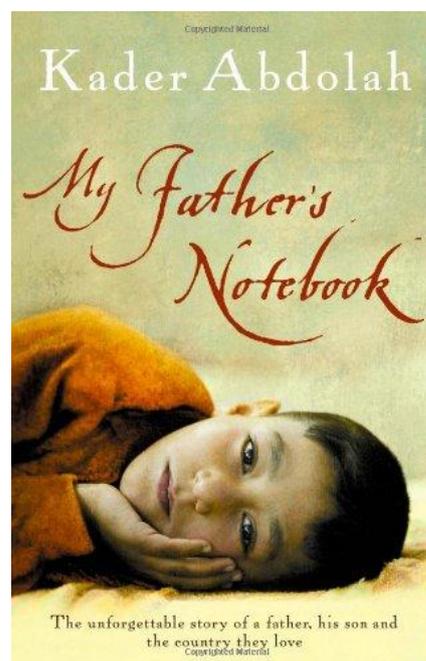
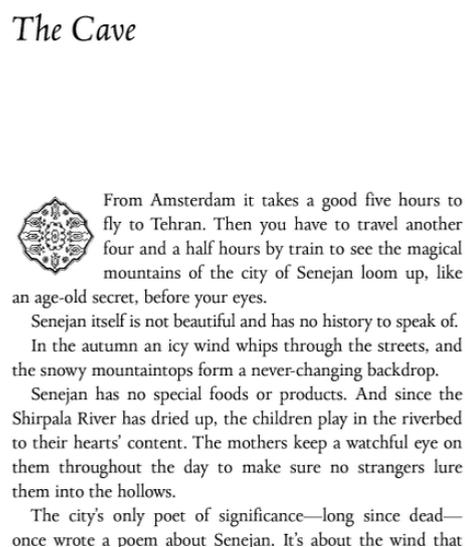Figure 1: Original edition (2007)   Figure 2: English edition (2006)

From the figures above, it is clear that the cover designs tie in with the choice of title, with the Dutch version opting for an image of the cave relating to the one containing cuneiform script on Saffron Mountain featured in the story. In contrast, the English picture ties in with the more personal theme described above. However, it is certainly not the case that the paratext of the British translation ignores the 'exotic' nature of the author's origins or the fact that parts of the book are set in Iran. The boy featured in the cover image in figure 2 appears to have Eastern origins and in fact, the paratext of the English translation (functioning in system 3) places a much greater emphasis on system 1 (Iran), whilst almost entirely ignoring system 2 (The Netherlands). The choice of font here is a case in point. As we can see, all of the text on the Dutch cover is in a neutral font, whereas the English cover uses a more exotic

font. By doing so, the emphasis is placed on the exotic, Eastern setting of (parts of) the book.

Another paratextual difference becomes apparent when we look at the design of the first page of each chapter in the source and target versions of the text:

Grot

The Cave

Vanuit Amsterdam doe je er wel vijf uur over voordat je met een vliegtuig in Teheran bent. Daarna moet je nog vier en een half uur treinen tot je de magische bergen van de stad Senedjan, als een eeuwenoud geheim, ziet opdoemen.

Senedjan zelf is geen mooie stad en heeft nauwelijks geschiedenis.

In de herfst waait er een gure wind en de besneeuwde bergtoppen vormen er het eeuwige decor.

De stad heeft geen specialiteiten, geen bijzondere producten. En de oude rivier Shirpala ligt droog, zodat de kinderen heerlijk in de bedding kunnen spelen. De moeders houden de hele dag in de gaten of hun kinderen niet door vreemdelingen naar een van de kuilen op de bodem worden gelokt.

De enige inmiddels al lang geleden overleden dichter van betekenis heeft ooit iets over zijn Senedjan geschreven. Het gaat over de wind die het

From Amsterdam it takes a good five hours to fly to Tehran. Then you have to travel another four and a half hours by train to see the magical mountains of the city of Senejan loom up, like an age-old secret, before your eyes.

Senejan itself is not beautiful and has no history to speak of.

In the autumn an icy wind whips through the streets, and the snowy mountaintops form a never-changing backdrop.

Senejan has no special foods or products. And since the Shirpala River has dried up, the children play in the riverbed to their hearts' content. The mothers keep a watchful eye on them throughout the day to make sure no strangers lure them into the hollows.

The city's only poet of significance—long since dead—once wrote a poem about Senejan. It's about the wind that
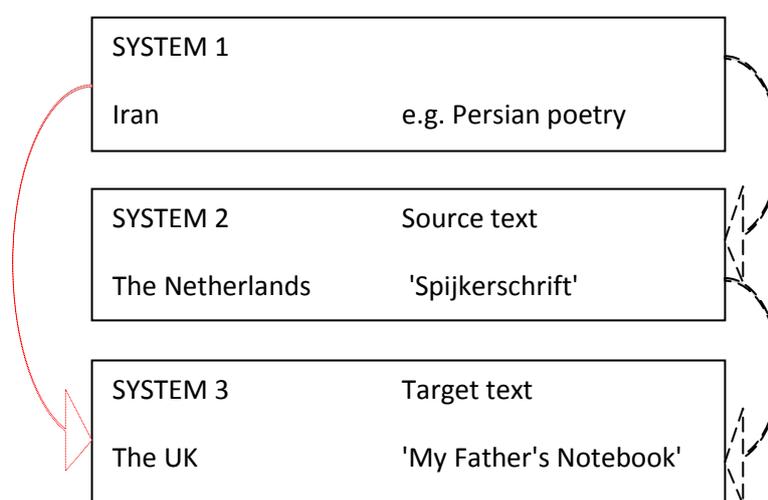
Figure 3: Dutch edition, p. 11   *Figure 4: English edition, p.5*

The images above display an extract from the first page of the chapter *Grot* (The Cave) in Dutch and English, and in the English translation (figure 4) we can see that an illustration reminiscent of the design on a Persian rug has been added. This is not present at any point of the Dutch version, but is included at the beginning of every chapter in the English translation. Whilst this symbol is not an entirely irrelevant addition (since Aga Akbar is a carpet-mender), I believe that it functions as a type of domestication. The cultural 'otherness' of the Iranian setting is not manifested in its own terms, but instead in the terms of the target culture, namely a British concept of 'otherness'.

I therefore believe that the diagram I constructed above should be altered in order to reflect the fact that system 3 contains elements from system 1 that are not present in system 2. The red arrow that I have added below shows the way in which system 1 is also able to influence system 3 directly, that is to say without first passing through system 2. In fact, this is not a direct influence at all, which is why the line is still dotted; it is the construct of system 1 in the culture of system 3 as opposed to the actual culture that is being transferred.

| SYSTEM 1 | |
| Iran | e.g. Persian poetry |

| SYSTEM 2 | Source text |
| The Netherlands | 'Spijkerschrift' |

| SYSTEM 3 | Target text |
| The UK | 'My Father's Notebook' |

Venuti states that British and American cultures have long been dominated by domesticating theories and that by inscribing foreign texts with a partial interpretation, partial to English-language values, the differences that translation is called on to convey are either reduced, or excluded altogether (Venuti, 2008 [1995], p. 16).

The Dutch edition was a success without including these more 'exotic' features relating to Iran, which makes us question why it was deemed appropriate to add them in the target text. To give a simple answer, I believe that this is due to the fact

that the source text and the target text serve different purposes in each cultural setting. When we consider the Dutch cultural landscape in which the book was published, perhaps it is intentional that the exotic themes were not captured by means of the cover, font or the symbols at the beginning of each chapter in the Dutch version. Intellectuals of non-Dutch descent are often considered spokespeople for or mediators between two divergent cultural realms. Perhaps by *not* emphasising the 'exotic' nature of the setting of the book, Dutch readers (and Dutch society as a whole) would be more capable of viewing Abdolah as a 'Dutch writer' and the text as belonging to a new Dutch literary movement, or a new literature, written by immigrants (Abdolah, cited by Van Rooij and Hann, 2006, p. 4).

This is especially interesting when we look at the rest of the text on the front and back cover of the Dutch book. There is a quote from Dutch newspaper *Trouw* directly underneath the title on the front cover of the Dutch version, which states, "*Spijkerschrift is het meest overtuigende boek van een schrijver die een unieke plaats in de Nederlandstalige literatuur heeft verworven*" (*Spijkerschrift* is the most convincing book by an author who has acquired a unique position in Dutch-language literature). Here, it is clear that the emphasis is placed on the fact that the book *belongs* to Dutch-language literature, and that Kader Abdolah's unique position — as a mediator between the two cultures — is paramount.

It is also striking that the back cover features a quote from NRC Handelsblad, "*Een eerbetoon aan Slauerhoff en Bloem, aan Hafez, Taher en Khayyam, aan Max Haverlaar en De rozentuin en de Koran.*" (An homage to Slauerhoff and Bloem, to Hafez, Taher and Khayyam, to Max Havelaar and The Rose Garden and the Koran). This quote emphasises the importance of Abdolah's origins on his writing, but the

reader is informed that not only is he paying homage to Persian poets, Persian masters and Islam (system 1), he is also paying homage to Dutch poets and novelists (from system 2), and these key Dutch figures mentioned in the quotation would immediately be familiar to the Dutch reader. It is, in fact, the merging of the two systems, including interwoven quotations from Persian and Dutch literature which, to me, is the novel's most striking feature for the Dutch audience. The function, or *skopos*, of the source text is therefore intrinsically linked with issues concerning the multicultural nature of Dutch society, which has been the topic of ongoing debate in the Netherlands for a number of years.

At this point it is worth considering the role of 'Dutch authors of non-Dutch descent' in the Netherlands. Concerns about the success of multiculturalism were brought to the forefront of public attention by Paul Scheffer's publication 'Het multiculturele drama' [*The Multicultural Drama*] in the *NRC Handelsblad* in 2000 (Louwerse, 2007, pp. 23-24.) In this publication, Scheffer argued that it was necessary to halt the formation of an ethnic underclass made up of immigrants, and he stressed the importance of immigrants adapting to the principles of liberal democracy (Louwerse, 2007, pp. 23-24).

It is therefore hardly surprising that the contributions made by individuals of non-Dutch descent to the Dutch cultural climate have been welcomed with open arms and that the paratexts of books written by such individuals therefore place a special emphasis on this feature. Intellectuals of non-Dutch descent are often considered spokespeople for or mediators between two divergent cultural realms. According to Willemsen, such authors, "relieve Dutch society of a many-sided complex. They make 'high culture' multicultural, and thus realise the long awaited truer reflection of

society." (Willemsen, 2000, pp. 68-69). I believe that this is exactly what is being championed by Abdolah's work in the source culture, and that the *skopos* of the text is to reflect the multicultural society in the Netherlands. This is why the paratext of the Dutch text places its focus on the way Abdolah blends Dutch and Persian references, styles, quotations and imagery in his novel, focusing on his unique position between the two cultures, and the fact that he is a Dutch writer.

In contrast, when we look at the front and back covers of the English version, not a single reference is made to the fact that the original book was written in Dutch, and the typical English reader would not be likely to jump to this conclusion either, given the author's name. Kader Abdolah moved to the Netherlands in 1988, started learning Dutch and had already published three novels by the time Spijkerschrift was published in 2000. Whilst the back cover of the English version does state, "Translated by Susan Massotty", one would be far more likely to believe that Kader Abdolah had originally written the book in Persian than in Dutch. The first quotation on the back of the English version reads, "Simply told...it shows a nation lurching into a hostile modern world and what that does to an age-old thing like the bond between a father and his son" (Big Issue). Again here, we can see how the emphasis is being placed on system 1 (Iran) and the universality of the father-son bond as opposed to system 2 (the Netherlands).

At this point I would like to return to *skopos* theory. I have already mentioned that the purpose of the text is different in each culture. The main purpose of the source text is to bring together two cultures, helping to make 'high culture' multicultural, and Abdolah's whole oeuvre is a perfect example of this. However, whilst an English reader would certainly be able to relate to the same themes of migration and the

interweaving of cultures, the target text does not serve this function to the same extent. In the English version, *My Father's Notebook*, is presented as an emotional story, and I believe that it therefore serves a more expressive function, whilst also still serving an informative and entertaining function.

Whilst I have, up until now, focused only on the paratextual features on the front and back covers of the book, it is interesting to also compare the inner pages of the source and target texts. The English book has an additional page in which it provides information about Kader Abdolah as well as the translator, Susan Massotty. On this page, it explains how Kader Abdolah is a pen name created in memoriam to friends of his who died under the persecution of the current Iranian regime. The Dutch version does not explain this, either deeming it irrelevant or assuming that the typical Dutch reader would already be familiar with Kader Abdolah and his history (Dunphy and Emig, 2010, p. 95).

The pseudonym is an important paratextual feature; Genette writes about the 'pseudonym effect', which assumes the pseudonym is known to the reader. Genette explains that once the reader has the author's biographical information, the pseudonym is included in his/her image or idea of that particular author, meaning that the reader distinguishes his/her view of the figure of the author from the figure of the private man/woman (Genette, 1997 [1987], pp.46 - 54) However, I do not believe Genette's assertion rings true in this case, as the very fact that Kader Abdolah is a pseudonym in memoriam to friends who were persecuted under the Iranian regime closely links the figures of writer and private man. It is apparent that the pseudonym was chosen for very personal reasons, which hints at the semi-autobiographical nature of the novel (and the majority of Abdolah's other works), linking in once again

with the emphasis on the personal, more emotive, presentation of the novel in its English translation.

The final paratextual feature that I would like to investigate within the framework of *skopos* theory is the glossary. The source and target texts both feature a glossary of terms that is presented just after the final chapter of the novel. Both glossaries contain Persian references to important words, places or people, and an explanation or definition. The explanation is provided in Dutch in the source text, and in English in the target text. An example of an entry in the glossary in Dutch and English is displayed below.

> *Saffraanberg: zo genoemd omdat de berg in de herfst bedekt is met rode en gele bloemen* (Abdolah, 2007 [2000], p. 377)
>
> Saffron Mountain – named after the red and yellow flowers that cover the mountainside in the autumn (Abdolah, translated by Massotty, 2006 [2000] p. 322)

It is interesting that all of the items in the English glossary relate to the Iranian or Persian elements of the text. This is despite the fact that the source text also incorporates a number of Dutch elements, e.g. poetry by the Dutch poets Rutger Kopland and J.C. Bloem, which may also have warranted further explanation in the English glossary. It is also worth noting that the Dutch text features an asterisk every time a word or phrase is encountered that has been defined in the glossary. No such reference is made in the English translation. We can therefore assume that the source text deliberately aims to bring the reader into contact with features that are 'foreign' to the typical Dutch reader, and whilst the English translation does this in a

more subtle way (no asterisks) with regard to system 1 (Iran), it does not do so at all with regard to system 2 (The Netherlands). As such, the text is presented in a different way in its English translation, and the 'exotic' elements seem more a consequence of the personal and evocative story of the text as opposed to the purpose of it.

As we can see, *skopos* theory is an effective framework that we can use to help us analyse paratextual features, especially in complex examples such as the works of 'Dutch writers of non-Dutch descent' where not only two, but three, systems are involved, and cultural features are key. Functional theories maintain that, as a general translation strategy, word-oriented or word-for-word translation is only appropriate in contrastive linguistics, so that language structures can be compared with regard to their syntagmatic position or word order (Reiss and Vermeer, 2013 [1984]). However, it is true that such models can easily overlook non-linguistic phenomena, such as cultural values. I believe that the same applies to paratextual features. For example, if we translate the quotations on the back of the Dutch book word-for-word, or even quotation-for-quotation, we are failing to take different cultural contexts into account and as a result, the product would not work as effectively in the English market.

In the case of Kader Abdolah's *Spijkerschrift*, the quotation from *NRC Handelsblad* on the back cover would not resonate with English readers to the same extent as Dutch readers, which can explain why it was not used in the English paratext. The fact that *NRC Handelsblad* is a popular newspaper in the Netherlands, but not generally known in England (in contrast with The Times Literary Supplement, the Big Issue and the Independent, which are the sources referenced on the back cover of

the English version) plays a role here, as well as assumed unfamiliarity with the Dutch poets and authors mentioned in the quotation itself.

I do believe that it is important that a book is presented to the target audience in a suitable way, taking into account the specific conditions regarding the target audience's situation, and that this may involve offering additional information (for example the biographical information about Kader Abdolah and his pseudonym, or different quotations) under the (expected) circumstances of the recipient's situation. I therefore maintain that by focusing or view on the 'prospective' instead of the 'retrospective', *skopos* theory provides an important framework for a paratextual analysis, and that knowledge or insights of this theory should be taken into account when we consider how we should present a book. In this way, the translator, or publisher, is offered a more creative role than simply transferring information word-for-word or paratextual element-for-paratextual element.

However, *skopos* theory does not come without its limitations, and Nord herself gives generous treatment to the main criticisms of functionalism in her book, *Translating as a Purposeful Activity Functionalist Approaches Explained*, for example the fact that the use of such strategies may be regarded as failing to do justice to the original source text and that functionalism is sometimes viewed as a theory of mere 'adaptation', reducing the richness of the source text (Nord, 1997, 109-123). In paratextual terms, I believe that it is crucial that we present the book in a way that appeals to the target audience, and as I also believe that it is essential that we avoid taking an ethnocentric standpoint by removing references to foreign elements or adapting them to our own views of 'otherness', I feel that a book's paratext can serve a special function here. By presenting the book in an effective way that corresponds

with the book's function in the target culture, it is able to allow readers to find out, or access, information that may well be presented in a more foreignizing fashion in the text itself.

I do not feel that 'Dutch authors of non-Dutch descent' necessarily write with the intention of improving Dutch cultural well-being, but the fact that their writing falls into this category not only contributes to the ongoing multiculturalism debate in the Netherlands, but also contributes to the success of such books. It is therefore hardly surprising that the paratexts of such books focus on features specific to this situation. However, when we translate such books into English, paratextual elements are altered or amended in order to suit the situation of the English reader, who is assumed to be more interested in the 'exotic' origins of the author than his/her role as a mediator between two different cultures. Correspondingly, paratextual elements of the English translations of 'Dutch authors of non-Dutch descent' place a greater emphasis on the 'non-Dutch descent' part of the equation than their 'Dutchness' itself. The paratextual elements in Kader Abdolah's *Spijkerschrift* that I have outlined above can be explained by means of *skopos* theory. However, I have only been able to consider one example here. I believe that further research is required in this field, as it is clear that paratexts have huge implications on how source texts are represented in target cultures. As a final note, I would like to suggest that Vermeer's quotation from page 3 of this essay should, perhaps, be rephrased to read:

> ***Present*** your text/translation in a way that enables it to function in the situation in which it is used and with the people who want to use it and precisely in the way they want it to function.

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