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TRADUCTION LITTÉRAIRE
LITERARY TRANSLATION

COLLECTION UNESCO D'ŒUVRES REPRÉSENTATIVES
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The French influence in the early Dutch reception of F. M. Dostoevsky's *Brat'ja Karamazovy*

A case study

Pieter Boulogne
Katholieke Universiteit Leuven

1. Introduction

In Germany and France translations of practically all major and minor novels and stories by Fëdor Michajlovič Dostoevsky (1821–1881) were published, and often reprinted, before the outbreak of the First World War.¹ Already in the early 1880s the German readership accepted Dostoevsky as modern. Moreover, thanks to the particular popularity of his works in German translation “ergriff die russische Literatur breitere Schichten des Publikums und fand eine größere Resonanz als zuvor” (Hoefert 1974: viii). Also among the French Dostoevsky's name had become a household word by the end of the 1880s. As Hemmings (1950b: 2) puts it: “everyone in France had read, or pretended to have read” his main works.

1. For an extensive but incomplete overview of early German translations of Dostoevsky, see Romein (1924: 196–200) and Bautz (1990: 1365–72). In spite of its promising title, the recent bibliography of Schweikert (2003: 7) does not mention the German translations of Dostoevsky, nor translations of other “generally known authors”. For an overview of early French translations of Dostoevsky, see Romein (1924: 210–12), Boutchik (1934: 50–8) and Gide (1923: 5–6).

In the Dutch-speaking regions of Europe, however, the reception of Dostoevsky had a particularly slow beginning. The very starting point of this reception was the publication in 1881 of the obituary notice “Necrologie van Feodor Dostoi-effsky” in the literary journal *De Portefeuille* (1880–1881: 443). Nevertheless, four years later he was still a total stranger to the average Dutch reader. An article of the newspaper *De Amsterdammer* of 1885 speaks for instance of Dostoevsky in terms of “the great Russian writer, unknown in this country” (Cooplandt 1885: 10).

During the three decades that followed the discovery of Dostoevsky, the Netherlands and Flanders showed very little interest in his works. Of his major philosophical novels only the Dutch translations *Schuld en boete* (Dostojewsky 1885, *Crime and Punishment*) and *De gebroeders Karamazow* (Dostojefsky 1913, *The Brothers Karamazov*) had appeared before the First World War.² Besides, both target texts are second-hand translations: *Schuld en boete* (1885) is a translation from German and *De gebroeders Karamazow* (1913) was established through French.

Recent descriptive translation research (De Mesel 2004) has proved that *Schuld en boete* (1885), translated through the German work *Raskolnikow* (Dostojewskij 1882), is a macro-structurally adequate translation of Dostoevsky’s original. This is not the case of *De gebroeders Karamazow* (1913), the translation made by the social-democratic author Anna Van Gogh-Kaulbach (1869–1960).

The present article focuses on the particular nature of the latter translation i.e. the very first and until the 1930s only Dutch translation of Dostoevsky’s *Brat’ja Karamazovy* (1879–1880) and on the motives underlying the adopted translation strategies. The article is structured as follows. The second part, “Mitja’s prison break”, deals with the translational status of *De gebroeders Karamazow* (1913) and with the most remarkable shifts vis-à-vis Dostoevsky’s original work, which are situated in its epilogue. The third part is dedicated to the early French reception of *Brat’ja Karamazovy*, or more specifically, to the first French translation of the latter, to its translators and critics. In the fourth part of this article, the particular nature of *De gebroeders Karamazow* (1913) is linked to the impact of the French reception of *Brat’ja Karamazovy* on its Dutch reception.

2. Mitja’s prison break

The fact itself that *De gebroeders Karamazow* (1913) by Anna Van Gogh-Kaulbach was not translated directly from Russian, but through French, was not kept a secret by the editor; it is mentioned explicitly on the title page of its third edition (1917).

2. The first Dutch translations of Dostoevsky’s *Besy* (1871–1872, *The Possessed / The Devils*) and *Idiot* (1868, *The Idiot*) were only published in, respectively, 1920 and 1922 (Waegemans & Willemsen 1991: 159, 165).

The existing bibliographies³ of Russian literature in Dutch translation, for their part, do not mention which French version of *Brat'ja Karamazovy* served as the actual source text for the Dutch translation. So far this has never been researched.

A macro-structural and microtextual comparison of *De gebroeders Karamazov* (1913) with the early French translations of the same source text, has shown that this Dutch translation is a remarkable amalgam of two different French translations. About eighty-five percent of the pages are translated from *Les frères Karamazov* (Dostoïevsky 1906), a translation by Jean-Wladimir Bienstock and Charles Torquet. The remaining fifteen percent are translated from *Les frères Karamazov* (Dostoïevsky 1888) — a polemical translation by Ely Halpérine-Kaminsky (1858–1936).⁴

The translated episodes from the latter translation concern a.o. the last six chapters of *De gebroeders Karamazow* (1913). For the sake of clarity it must be stressed that Dostoevsky's original novel contains four parts and an epilogue, which consists of only the following three chapters: I. *Proekty spasti Mitju* (*The plans to save Mitja*), II. *Na minutku lož' stala pravdoj* (*For a little while a lie became truth*) and III. *Pochorony Iljušečki. Reč' u kamnja* (*The funeral of Iljušečka. The speech at the stone*). The epilogue of *De gebroeders Karamazow* (1913), however, continues with six other chapters, entitled as follows: IV. *De keuze* (*The choice*), V. *Mitja's vertrek* (*Mitja's departure*), VI. *Mitja's ontvluchting* (*Mitja's escape*), VII. *Vader Zossima* (*Father Zosima*), VIII. *Weer een Karamazow* (*Again a Karamazov*) and IX. *De uitspraak* (*The verdict*).

The six added chapters in question do not originate from Dostoevsky's genius: they are the fruit of the fetterless imagination of the French translator Halpérine-Kaminsky and the obscure romantic poet Charles Morice (1861–1919). The latter did not understand a single word of Russian (see Dostoïevsky 1929: vi–vii) and hence he was not involved in the translating process in the narrow sense of the word.

In Dostoevsky's *Brat'ja Karamazovy* (1879–1880), the plans to liberate the innocent Mitja Karamazov from jail, which come up in the epilogue's first chapter, I. *Proekty spasti Mitju* (*The plans to save Mitja*), are not carried out. The novel ends somewhat unsatisfactorily, with Alěša Karamazov's moralizing speech after the funeral of the little boy Iljušečka. In defence of Dostoevsky one could argue that he

3. Kingma (1981) and Waegemans & Willemsen (1991).

4. Whereas the pages 1–324, 326–30, 360–72, 379–403 and 415–17 of *De gebroeders Karamazow* (1913) seem to be translated from *Les frères Karamazov* (1906) by Bienstock & Torquet, the principal source text for the pages 325, 331–59, 373–8 and 418–42 was *Les frères Karamazov* (1888) by Halpérine-Kaminsky. However, on several places in the Dutch target text one can find examples of interference of both mediating French translations.

intended to write a sequel to his *Brat'ja Karamazovy*.⁵ This plan was foiled, however, by his unexpected death from emphysema on 28 January / 9 February 1881.

The epilogues of *Les frères Karamazov* (1888) and *De gebroeders Karamazow* (1913) provide Dostoevsky's last novel with a much more spectacular and happy ending. Encouraged by Katerina Ivanovna, Alëša decides to undertake some action. On the eve of the departure of the convoy of the sentenced to Siberia, he and the seductive Grušenka, both disguised as peasants, visit the jail in which Mitja is imprisoned. Having plied an officer with lots of brandy and having bribed some guards, Alëša, who promptly turns out to be born a manipulator, manages to set his brother free. Instead of eloping himself, he takes the place of his brother in jail, completely voluntarily. Almost immediately after the departure of his brother, Alëša falls asleep. In his dream, he has a vision of his mentor: the deceased monk Zosima.

Writing this vision, Halpérine-Kaminsky was inspired by the sermon of Zosima from chapter III of the sixth book of Dostoevsky's original novel. In his translation he did not translate this chapter. In *De gebroeders Karamazow* (Dostojevsky 1913: 171–80) by Van Gogh-Kaulbach the sermon of Zosima was, however, not omitted. Alëša's vision functions consequently as a bizarre echo in the latter translation.

Hemmings (1950a: 237) has pointed out that the dream of Alëša, created originally in French by Halpérine-Kaminsky and translated into Dutch by Van Gogh-Kaulbach, has little credibility as such: it consists of a succession of reasoned arguments, which do not belong to a dream. Dostoevsky himself always made dreams chaotic, vague, inexplicable and therefore credible.

The epilogues of *Les frères Karamazov* (1888) and *De gebroeders Karamazow* (1913) eventually tell how Alëša's true identity is discovered, and that he is sent for trial. Not surprisingly, the court has only sympathy for the strange self-sacrifices of Alëša, who asks for his own acquittal "because only in that way Dmitri Feodorowitch Karamazow is innocent — at least in point of facts" (Dostojevsky 1913: 440). Alëša's continues as follows:

You declared that he has had the desire to commit a murder. [...] My brother gets away from penal servitude, but stays imprisoned in his conscience. Yet, once the desire has manifested itself, that invisible punishment of remorse may be insufficient. An overt criminal desire must be followed by a public punishment. Your codes of law did not dictate a punishment for such inner crimes; well then, gentlemen, serve justice! You cannot punish me for a murder, of which you are not thinking of accusing me, but through the fact itself, and independently of your will, you shall have prosecuted

5. According to the testimony of Dostoevsky's contemporary Suvorin, Alëša Karamazov was to become an anarchist and was to kill the tsar in the sequel that Dostoevsky had planned for his *Brat'ja Karamazovy* (see Frank 2003: 727).

the evil thought of my brother by punishing me. Do realize that I only delivered me as your prisoner because I had heard my brother pronounce the name of my father with a threat of death. Not that I believe he would ever have executed his threats; but these threats are a crime and a shame — however maybe yet propitiated by the humiliation of an unjust conviction. In this way all the guilty shall be punished in a different manner: my brother Iwan, for his purely intellectual errors, with the confusion of his mind — may it please God, that it be temporary; the murderer with death; and my brother Dmitri with a kind of moral humiliation (Dostojevsky 1913: 441).

In the French translation by Halpérine-Kaminsky, the third and very last chapter of Dostoevsky's genuine epilogue, III. *Pochorony Iljušečki. Reč u kamnja* (*The funeral of Iljušečka. The speech at the stone*), is completely omitted. Therefore, the moralizing speech of Alëša in chapter VIII of *Les frères Karamazov* (1888) is not seen by the French reader as “another sermon by Alëša”.

As mentioned earlier, the last six chapters of the epilogue of *De gebroeders Karamazow* (1913) were translated from Halpérine-Kaminsky's version. The third chapter of its epilogue, however, was translated from *Les frères Karamazov* (1906) by Bienstock and Torquet. Thus, the epilogue of Van Gogh-Kaulbach's translation includes two different moralizing speeches of Alëša: the first one, at the stone, by Dostoevsky and the second one, in court, invented by Halpérine-Kaminsky. This causes another echo-effect, which may have annoyed the Dutch readers.

Alëša's pathetic pleading in court ends with the words: “I count thus that your justice is to be made. I have nothing more to say, my gentlemen, but only, that I accept your judgement in advance in all respect and humbleness, whatever it may turn out to be” (Dostojevsky 1913: 441). Van Gogh-Kaulbach writes, in imitation of Halpérine-Kaminsky: “The emotion was so great, that it could only manifest itself through dead silence, interrupted by sobbing”.

The finale reaches its culmination when the crippled girl Liza miraculously enters the courtroom by herself, without crutches or wheelchair. Pointing at Alëša she yells out: “He is a righteous man! He saved me!” (Dostojevsky 1913: 442). The manifestation of this prodigious healing, by everyone accredited to Alëša, is followed by his acquittal and by enthusiastic ovations. Alëša remains modest, goes home with Liza and gets engaged with her. It is left to the reader's imagination that they lived happily ever after.

Strikingly, the Dutch pseudo-translation of Dostoevsky's epilogue is larded with loan words from Russian, such as ‘izba’ and ‘moujik’, whereas this kind of words are usually translated in a naturalizing way (i.e. as ‘hut/house’ and ‘peasant’) in the rest of the text of *De gebroeders Karamazow* (1913). By means of this exotic vocabulary, the French translator Halpérine-Kaminsky undoubtedly tried to create a Russian *couleur locale* in order to make the epilogue credible as an inalienable part of an original Russian work.

3. *Brat'ja Karamazovy's* early French reception

Translating *Brat'ja Karamazovy*, Halpérine-Kaminsky did not limit himself to the rewriting of the epilogue: he also adapted the sequence of the chapters and left out quite some episodes (see also Hemmings 1950a).

A number of these passages were collected and published as a separate novel by Dostoevsky of some 150 pages, *Les Précoces* (*The Precocious*, see also Dostoïevsky 1930: 107–265). In the first editions of this work the name of Karamazov was substituted by 'Chestomazov'. Only in the 1930 version of *Les Précoces* the original name of Karamazov was re-established. *Les Précoces* was a great commercial success in France: the first edition of 1889 was quickly sold out (see Dostoïevsky 1930: 109), and over thirty-five reprints followed, even until the mid-1930s.

Also other *belles infidèles* by Halpérine-Kaminsky testify to his particular creativity in translating Dostoevsky. E.g. in 1886, a work entitled *L'esprit souterrain* (*The Underground Spirit*) was published. For many years this work was considered a translation of *Zapiski iz podpol'ja* (1864, *Notes from the Underground*). Minszen (1933: 16) discovered, however, that *L'esprit souterrain* is an amalgam of two translations (see also Miller 1973): the first one of Dostoevsky's (in)famous notes *Zapiski iz podpol'ja* and the other one of his less known pre-Siberian, sentimental novel *Chozjajka* (1847, *The Landlady*).

In 1888, a Dutch translation of *L'esprit souterrain* (1886) was published under the title *De onderaardsche geest* (Dostojewsky 1888, *The Underground Spirit*). So far this remarkable target text escaped the attention of Academia — which until the 1980s was reluctant to consider translations as a valid object of study. In the bibliographies by Kingma (1981: 158) and by Waegemans & Willemssen (1991: 168), *De onderaardsche geest* (Dostojewsky 1888) is mentioned as a translation of only *Zapiski iz podpol'ja* (1864).

In the first decade of the previous century, Halpérine-Kaminsky was sharply criticized for his translations of Dostoevsky. Especially André Gide (1869–1951), who was familiar with more adequate, German translations of the Russian author (Rayfield 2000: 340), blamed Halpérine-Kaminsky for having taken a highly creative position in translating *Brat'ja Karamazovy*:

Effrayés par son étendue, les premiers traducteurs ne nous donnèrent de ce livre incomparable qu'une version mutilée; sous prétexte d'unité extérieure, des chapitres entiers, de-ci de-là, furent amputés (Gide 1923: 62).

Polemics rose in France; Halpérine-Kaminsky defended his translation strategy with ardour, expanding the prefaces of later editions of respectively *L'esprit souterrain* (Dostoïevsky 1929: i–xxviii), *Le journal intime de Raskolnikov* (Dostoïevsky 1930: 109–11) and *Les frères Karamazov* (Dostoïevsky 1932: 13–14).

The quintessence of Halpérine-Kaminsky's defence against Gide's attack consists in his assertion that the French readership of the nineteenth century was not mature enough to appreciate a raw Dostoevsky. He maintains that an adequate translation of Dostoevsky's last novel, of which "un bon tiers contenait des épisodes sans lien direct avec la marche générale de l'action" (Dostoïevsky 1932: 13), at that time would have meant "éloigner à plaisir et pour de longues années les lecteurs français des *Frères Karamazov*" (Dostoïevsky 1932: 13).

The latter contention of Halpérine-Kaminsky should be regarded in its historical and cultural context. In the mid-1880s, two different works were published in France whose purpose was to familiarize the French readers with Russian literature: *Les grands maîtres de la littérature russe du 19^{me} siècle* by Ernest Dupuy (1885) and *Le roman russe* by Count Eugène-Melchior de Vogüé (1904).

In spite of the title of his work, Dupuy does not even mention Dostoevsky (see Teitelbaum 1946: 99); apparently he did not consider him "a great master of the Russian literature of the nineteenth century". Vogüé, on the other hand, who had a much greater impact on the early French reception of Dostoevsky than Dupuy, does treat the great master quite in detail.

In *Le roman Russe* (1886), Vogüé (1904: 203–77) dedicates a bulky chapter, entitled *La religion de la souffrance*,⁶ to Dostoevsky. In this part, he seized the opportunity to warn the French readership against some works of Dostoevsky. Concerning *Prestuplenie i nakazanie* (*Crime and Punishment*), the count says for instance that "cette lecture est même très difficile pour les femmes et les natures impressionables" (Vogüé 1904: 246). In more general terms, Vogüé describes Dostoevsky as follows:

On se révolte contre la prolixité de l'auteur, on veut le gagner de vitesse, et aussitôt on ne comprend plus ; le courant magnétique est interrompu. C'est du moins ce que me disent toutes les personnes qui ont fait cette épreuve (Vogüé 1904: 253).

A bit further Vogüé (1904: 253) maintains that reading some novels by Dostoevsky requires the same amount of concentration as reading a philosophical treatise, which he calls "un plaisir ou un inconvénient, suivant les catégories de lecteurs" (Vogüé 1904: 253). The count himself clearly belonged to the second category.

In the chapter of *Le roman russe* (1885) dedicated to Dostoevsky, it is striking that *Brat'ja Karamazovy* receives blatantly less attention than everything else.

6. In consequence of the publication of Vogüé's work, the phrase "la religion de la souffrance" became a cliché to refer to Dostoevsky. This was criticized by Gide (1924: 201): "En France, nous faisons grand cas et grand usage des formules. C'est une manière de « naturaliser » un auteur; cela nous permet de le ranger dans la vitrine. L'esprit français a besoin de savoir à quoi s'en tenir; après quoi, l'on n'a plus besoin d'y aller voir, ni d'y penser. [...] Malheur aux auteurs dont on ne peut réduire la pensée en une formule!"

Nevertheless, the relatively few passages on *Brat'ja Karamazovy* are widely sufficient for Vogüé to make it clear that he attributes little literary value to Dostoevsky's very last novel:

Dans *l'Idiot*, dans les *Possédés* et surtout dans les *Frères Karamazof*, les longueurs sont intolérables, l'action n'est plus qu'une broderie complaisante qui se prête à toutes les théories de l'auteur, et où il dessine tous les types rencontrés par lui ou imaginés dans l'enfer de sa fantaisie (Vogüé 1904:255).

Vogüé is aware of the little attention he pays to *Brat'ja Karamazovy*, and justifies it by referring to the novel's alleged unpopularity among the Russians themselves:

Je ne m'arrêterai pas davantage aux *Frères Karamazof*. De l'aveu commun, très peu de Russes ont eu le courage de lire jusqu'au bout cette interminable histoire ; pourtant, au milieu de digressions sans excuses et à travers des nuages fumeux, on distingue quelques figures vraiment épiques, quelques scènes dignes de rester parmi les plus belles de notre auteur, comme celle de la mort de l'enfant (Vogüé 1904:265–6).

In *Le roman Russe* (1886) the novel *Brat'ja Karamazovy* is mentioned only once again, namely when Vogüé tells the following anecdote about the prolixity of the Russian literature in general and of Dostoevsky in particular. This anecdote gave once again a negative image of Dostoevsky's last novel on the part of the French reader, even before the latter had the opportunity to read a translated version:

Le roman français se fait de plus en plus léger, preste à se glisser dans un sac de voyage, pour quelques heures de chemin de fer; le lourd roman russe s'apprête à trôner longtemps sur la table de famille, à la campagne, durant les longues soirées d'hiver ; il éveille les idées connexes de patience et d'éternité. — Je vois encore Féodor Michailovitch, entrant chez des amis le jour où parurent les *Frères Karamazof*, portant ses volumes sur les bras, et s'écriant avec orgueil : « Il y en a cinq bonnes livres au poids! » Le malheureux avait pesé son roman, et il était fier de ce qui eût dû le consterner (Vogüé 1904:266).

The latter quotation is very significant for the nature of the French literary system at the end of the nineteenth century. In 1888, Ferdinand Brunetière, a French literary critic, made the following statements, quite in line with Vogüé:

Vos Russes me fatiguent: ils abusent du droit que l'on a d'être long, puisqu'ils n'en sont pas plus clairs. Pour suivre un drame judiciaire ou le récit d'une aventure mondaine, ils me demandent plus de temps, de patience et même d'effort d'esprit qu'il ne m'en faudrait, je crois, pour apprendre l'économie politique ou débrouiller un budget (Brunetière 1888:372–3).

The nineteenth century French readers and critics — who were accustomed to the rational, clearly structured and disciplined works of their own literature — were particularly inclined to take offence at the prolix, unstructured and chaotic masterpieces of Russian literature. It may be said that among the Russians, Dostoevsky

beats the lot in his prolixity and confusion, and that *Brat'ja Karamazovy* is the best example of it. Thus, whereas for instance Turgenev was relatively easily accepted by the French readership, Dostoevsky had more barriers to overcome. This is confirmed by Teitelbaum (1946), who adds another reason:

While the French reader could [...] easily understand Turgenev, he remained bewildered before Dostoyevski. There was an abyss between the French bourgeois, against whom Dostoyevski directed from venomous pages, and Dostoyevski's characters (Teitelbaum 1946: 100).

According to Gide, Vogüé, whose survey and articles effected a great influence on the nineteenth century French and European reception of Russian literature, is to be hold, at least partly, responsible for the aloofness of the French public regarding Dostoevsky in general. This is illustrated by the following statements:

Ces jugements dépréciatifs purent retarder, il est vrai, la traduction, la publication et la diffusion de Dostoïevsky, décourager d'avance bien des lecteurs (Gide 1923: 5).

M. de Vogüé, qui présentait la littérature russe à la France, il y a quelque vingt ans, semblait effrayé de l'énormité de ce monstre. Il s'excusait, il prévenait poliment l'incompréhension du premier public ; grâce à lui, on avait chéri Tourgueneff ; on admirait de confiance Pouchkine et Gogol ; on ouvrait un large crédit pour Tolstoï ; mais Dostoïevsky, décidément, c'était trop russe ; M. de Vogüé criait casse-cou (Gide 1923: 59).

Previously, on 30 October 1884, Vogüé had written a letter to Plon, the editor of Halpérine-Kaminsky's translations, to advise against the publication of a French translation of *Brat'ja Karamazovy*:

Je suis entièrement de l'avis de M^{me} Arapof pour *Les Frères Karamazovy* ; c'est le plus faible, le plus lourd et le plus long des romans de Dostoïevsky ; peu de Russes en soutiennent la lecture, il rebuterait à coup sûr le goût français. Je ne saurais assez vous conseiller, si vous êtes en mesure de le faire, d'entreprendre de préférence la publication des *Souvenenirs de la Maison des Morts* (Troyat 1942: 615).

Halpérine-Kaminsky and his publisher Plon, specialized in translations of Dostoevsky, were thus fully aware of the threatening culture shock predicted by Vogüé. As a translator of *Brat'ja Karamazovy*, Halpérine-Kaminsky feared for the russophilia and the fresh interest of the French readership in Dostoevsky, that had followed the publication of *Le crime et le châiment* (Dostoïevsky 1884), the very first French translation of *Prestuplenie i nakazanie* (*Crime and Punishment*) by Victor Derély. He hoped to increase the chances of success of the novel by omitting several chapters and adding a new conclusion:

Aussi avons-nous jugé utile, dans l'intérêt même du génial écrivain russe, de ne pas laisser aux premiers lecteurs français du chef-d'œuvre, l'impression d'une œuvre inachevée, déséquilibrée, touffue à l'excès, encombrée d'épisodes dont on ne saisissait pas le lien avec l'ensemble de l'action (Dostoïevsky 1932: 13–14).

In spite of his sharp criticism, Gide manifests quite some understanding for the motives underlying Halpérine-Kaminsky's translation, which he by the way calls "fort bonne dans tout ce qu'elle consentait à traduire":

Peut-être certains, se rapportant à l'époque où elle parut, estimeront-ils que le public n'était point mûr encore pour supporter une traduction intégrale d'un chef-d'œuvre aussi foisonnant; je ne lui reprocherai donc que de ne point s'avouer incomplète (Gide 1923: 62).

Halpérine-Kaminsky (Dostoïevsky 1929: xi), for his part, objects to this by referring to the title page of his translation, that reads: "traduit et *adapté*" (italics added). According to him, this fully corresponds to the traditional French way to present a translation of that nature.

Concerning the invented epilogue of *Les frères Karamazov* (1888), Halpérine-Kaminsky declares that "c'est toujours Dostoïevsky qui s'exprime, mais par le libre truchement de ses interprètes français" (Dostoïevsky 1932: 14). He gives the following details about this "libre truchement":

Nous [...] avons ajouté une conclusion, non pas de notre invention, quant au fond, mais en nous inspirant des indications précises de l'auteur dissimulées au cours du roman même et de sa correspondance privée, inédite (Dostoïevsky 1932: 14).

The plan of Halpérine-Kaminsky succeeded: *Les frères Karamazov* (1888) was most certainly successful in France. He himself declared proudly that it was thanks to his adaptation that "ce chef-d'œuvre rendu... mettons, moins « foisonnant », est devenu classique aux yeux du public" (Dostoïevsky 1929: xii).

Even though in 1906 and 1923 respectively a more adequate French translation by Jean-Wladimir Bienstock and Charles Torquet (Dostoïevsky 1906) and an adequate translation by Henri Mongault and Marc Laval (Dostoïevski 1923)⁷ were published, the version of Halpérine-Kaminsky was regularly reprinted until the mid-1930s.

One should bear in mind that also the translation *Les frères Karamazov* (1906) by Bienstock and Torquet, which served as a source text for about eighty-five per cent of *De gebroeders Karamazow* (1913), leaves a lot to be desired according to the current West-European translational norms, chiefly because it is a strongly

7. Halpérine-Kaminsky wrote the following venomous comment on this translation: "Tout récemment parut une nouvelle traduction des *Frères Karamazov* qui, cette fois, semble être complète, à en juger par ses trois volumes d'impression serrée. Je n'ai à m'occuper ni de sa valeur littéraire ni de sa fidélité, n'ayant pas eu le courage de la lire après mon long et pénible travail sur le texte russe; je la mentionne afin de signaler cette fois l'effort qu'elle a coûté, si disproportionné au but visé; elle pourrait sans doute intéresser quelques attentifs historiographes de Dostoïevsky; mais elle ne servira point, aujourd'hui encore, la diffusion de son œuvre parmi les simples lecteurs." (Dostoïevsky 1929: xiv)

abridged version of *Brat'ja Karamazovy*.⁸ Therefore, also this translation was criticized by Gide. On 4 April 1911 he published an article in *Le Figaro* to incite the public for the representation of the drama of Jacques Copeau and J. Croué, based on *Les frères Karamazov* (1888) by Halpérine-Kaminsky.⁹ It contains the following comments on *Les frères Karamazov* (1906):

Elle [la nouvelle traduction] offrait ce grand avantage de présenter, en un volume plus serré, l'économie générale du livre ; je veux dire qu'elle restituait en leur place les parties que les premiers traducteurs en avaient d'abord éliminées ; mais, par une systématique condensation, et j'allais dire congélation de chaque chapitre, ils dépouillaient les dialogues de leur balbutiement et de leur frémissement pathétiques, ils sautaient le tiers des phrases, souvent des paragraphes entiers, et des plus significatifs. Le résultat est net, abrupt, sans ombre, comme serait une gravure sur zinc, ou mieux un dessin au trait d'après un profond portrait de Rembrandt. Quelle vertu n'est donc point celle de ce livre pour demeurer, malgré tant de dégradations, admirable ! (Gide 1923: 63)

It is interesting to see that even Halpérine-Kaminsky, in spite of his own position, felt the need to criticize the so-called “complete” translation of Bienstock and Torquet (Dostoïevsky 1906). His following comment, which besides is defensible, was published in the 1929 *L'esprit souterrain*'s preface, subtitled “Comment on a dû traduire Dostoïevsky”:

Plus de vingt ans après notre adaptation des *Frères Karamazov*, parut une traduction qui s'« avouait », elle, « complète », et cela « en un seul volume », alors que notre texte comportait deux volumes, déjà fort compacts. Je renvoie le lecteur à l'avis compétent d'André Gide lui-même (p. 63 de son *Dostoïevsky*) pour se rendre compte de la trahison de cette « traduction complète ». Et M. Gide ignore, évidemment, toute sa monstruosité, puisqu'il lui était impossible de la confronter avec le texte original... (Dostoïevsky 1929: xiii).

4. Dutch reticence towards *Brat'ja Karamazovy*

When, in the first quarter of the twentieth century, Anna Van Gogh-Kaulbach had accepted to translate *Brat'ja Karamazovy* into Dutch for the very first time, she

8. At a microtextual level, Bienstock and Torquet have considerably shortened, standardized and naturalized almost every sentence of the Russian source text. Moreover, many a paragraph was simply omitted. At a macro-structural level, the original's following five chapters are lacking: the author's preface, chapters II and III of book ten, chapter III of book eleven and chapter VII of book twelve. Some small parts of these chapters were integrated in other chapters.

9. According to Halpérine-Kaminsky (Dostoïevsky 1929: xii): “la merveilleuse adaptation scénique des *Frères Karamazov* dont la construction et le développement ont été exactement calqués sur notre texte français du roman, comme me l'a écrit l'un des auteurs de la pièce, M. Jacques Copeau.” The French piece in question had repercussions on the Dutch literary community through the publication of a predominantly positive critique in the weekly magazine *De Samenleving* (M[eer] 1910: 649).

had the choice between two different French source texts: the highly inadequate, but very successful *Les frères Karamazov* (1888) by Halpérine-Kaminsky or the macro-structurally more adequate, but less successful *Les frères Karamazov* (1906) by Bienstock and Torquet.

The dilemma resulted in a compromise: she translated the overwhelming part of the text from Bienstock and Torquet and most of the epilogue and some other pieces from Halpérine-Kaminsky. Apparently, Van Gogh-Kaulbach and her publisher had more confidence in the chances of success of the spectacular and maudlin epilogue by Halpérine-Kaminsky than in those of Dostoevsky's genuine epilogue.

This pursuit of acceptability at the cost of narrative equivalence, and the fact that inadequate mediating translations were used, interpreted in polysystemic terms (see Even-Zohar 1990), indicate that on the eve of the First World War, Russian literature occupied a peripheral position in the Dutch literary system. Otherwise said, the Dutch-speaking readership of the first quarter of the twentieth century was still marked by quite some aloofness vis-à-vis Russian literature in general and Dostoevsky and his last novel in particular.

In 1916 the lack of interest of the Dutch readers toward Dostoevsky struck Attie Nieboer, to my knowledge the only literary critic who wrote a review of the translation by Van Gogh-Kaulbach. In an attempt to understand why "the greatest of all judges of human nature" was largely neglected in the Netherlands, he jumped — rather quickly — to the conclusion that the explanations are to be found in "one of the deepest rooted defects in the character of our people", namely "the narrow-minded conventionality" (Nieboer 1916: 373). According to him, the "repugnance, the inclination to reject everything that is stranger than usual, that is not in accordance with what is generally accepted and what is, in their opinion, fixed for all times" is typical of many northern peoples. In the case of the Dutch people, however, this character trait would "take a revolting shape". In the view of Nieboer, Dostoevsky would never become a popular writer in the Netherlands simply because he "is a *Russian* in all his fibres, in each pulse beat; because all his men are Russians, because they are who they are. If need be, they are beasts, miraculous mixtures of animal and God, men full of lies, betrayal and childlike truth, tough and cynic, but at the same time with a female softness; stupid and barbarian, and deep, perceptive thinkers with a beautiful consciousness of Christianity... everything what a man can be if he dares to be a man" (Nieboer 1916: 374).

When discussing the actual translation by Van Gogh-Kaulbach, Nieboer (1916: 420) first criticizes the price of the book (five guilders), which he claims to be not at all within the reach of the average reader. He explains the high price by referring to the unpopularity of all translated novels by Dostoevsky. Even *Schuld en boete* (*Crime and Punishment*), so widely acclaimed by critics all over the world, appeared to be "a rope around the neck" of the publishing house. In line with this, Nie-

boer predicts little success for *De gebroeders Karamazow* in the foreseeable future. Nevertheless, he encourages the reader to put his librarian under pressure to buy the book “although it may not be asked for very frequently” (Nieboer 1916:420).

In his review Nieboer pays considerable attention to the portraits of the main characters. They can indeed be seen as a provocation of conservative literary taste, for as much the Karamazovy — with the exception of Alëša — are afflicted with practical or theoretical moral degradation. Father Karamazov is described as “a lecher, a crook, who betrayed the poor” with the only virtue of self-criticism. Ivan is the atheist, the philosopher, in whose view “everything is permitted”. Dmitrij in turn is “a man in the widest sense of the word”, “the human being who lives it up, who stuns himself with binges, the slave of his sensual desires”. Nieboer (1916:420) himself judges the latter character surprisingly positively, because by suffering from his own lowness, Dmitrij is a prototype of “the Russian man, of the “human being” everywhere on earth”. However, he is particularly full of admiration toward Alëša, whom he calls “probably the most beautiful character of all novels written until now” (1916:421). In line with this eulogy, Nieboer pronounces a very positive general judgement about the novel, in which he finds “many words of great wisdom and truth and love” (Nieboer 1916:421). Nevertheless, even he admits that he skipped some considerations expressed by Ivan, which according to him drives the reader to madness.

In accordance with his favourable general judgement, the Dutch critic states that the publishing house cannot be forgiven for the lack of care with which the novel was brought out:

An ugly brownish cover [...], carelessly sewn, a cheap and unsatisfactorily revised “print”; no, this edition, which is by the way already quite expensive for a translated work, should have been something better, even in time of war (Nieboer 1916:423).

On the other hand, Nieboer (1916:423) praises the publishing house and the translator Anna Van Gogh-Kaulbach for the text of the translation itself, which he calls “in general good”. His only criticism to her concerns some formulations, which according to him sound too artificial in Dutch. Apparently, the critic was not aware of the surprising degree of inadequacy of the translation — or maybe this was not his concern.

More interestingly, Nieboer (1916:423) passes a big part of the responsibility for the sloppiness of the edition onto the Dutch readers, “who give away steaks of money to trashy books, that they throw away after the reading, who insufficiently support the editor [...] to publish an invaluable work such as this one, which is not a sensational best seller. Such a work can only be gainful by being sold to libraries. Logically, the acquisition price must be high, and the edition itself cheap.” By way of conclusion, Nieboer (1916:423) expressed his hope that “the difficult saleability

of the novel, beforehand presumed by the editors, would turn out to be a mistake”.

As shown, Nieboer argued that the aloofness of the Dutch-speaking readership regarding Dostoevsky and the writer's unpopularity were mere consequences of the narrow-mindedness/conservatism of the average Dutch reader. Although this assertion might not be totally wrong, it is not satisfactory as a full explanation. The reticence towards *Brat'ja Karamazovy* can also be explained by referring to the novel's reputation bestowed upon it by Vogüé, who had quite some influence on the early Dutch reception of the nineteenth-century novelists of Russian literature. Vogüé's impact on the Dutch-speaking readers was straightforward, namely through his survey and articles, which were widespread among the Dutch and the Flemish, as well as indirect, i.e. through secondary works influenced by him.

For instance, in 1885 an extended essay on Dostoevsky and his works by Jan Ten Brink appeared in the journal *Nederland*. The aim of the essay was to “make one of the most genial Russian novelists more widely known among us” (Ten Brink 1885: 105). In his essay, Ten Brink refers regularly to Vogüé, who is presented as the highest authority on Russian literature. It is thus no case of coincidence that in this essay very little attention is given to *Brat'ja Karamazovy*; whereas more than fifteen pages are dedicated to *Prestuplenie i nakazanie* (*Crime and Punishment*), Dostoevsky's last novel is only given the following brief and negative comment:

His last novel: “The Brothers Karamazow” (1879, 1880) bears a peculiar likeness to the last unfinished work of Gustave Flaubert, “Bouvard et Pécuchet” (1881), in which two speakers continue ad nauseam a dialogue about all kinds of possible scientific topics. However, there is a difference. The French little old men, Bouvard and Pécuchet, dabble in all sorts of knowledge and science, whereas the Brothers Karamazov are halfwits, who envy each other's philosophical and religious ideas and try to interrogate each other by means of eccentric slyness (Ten Brink 1885: 82).

The latter quotation constitutes — to put it mildly — a rather bizarre way to describe the essence of Dostoevsky's last novel for the very first time to the Dutch-speaking readership. It is clear that it was not aimed at making the Dutch readership enthusiastic for *Brat'ja Karamazovy*. The comparison between Flaubert's *Bouvard and Pécuchet* and Russian literature was made earlier by Vogüé (1904: xxxiii–xxxiv). Judging from his unwarranted comment, it seems improbable that Ten Brink actually had read *Brat'ja Karamazovy*.

Vogüé's *Le roman russe* (1885) was also used as a source of *Inleiding tot de Russische literatuurgeschiedenis* (1909), one of the first original Dutch surveys of Russian literature (see Romein 1924: 214). In this book by Stokvis (1909),¹⁰ *Brat'ja*

10. Stokvis himself was the first in the Netherlands to translate Dostoevsky directly from Russian into Dutch; in 1906 his translation of *Belye Noči* (*White Nights*) was published under the title *Witte nachten* (Dostojevskij 1906).

Karamzovy is called “the most important, but also the most difficult work of D.” (Stokvis 1909: 143).

The Dutch publishing houses certainly did not consider presumed difficulty as a commercial advantage. Stokvis (1909), who otherwise shows a lot more admiration for Dostoevsky’s last novel than Vogüé did, might thus have frightened Dutch publishing houses such as Van Holkema & Warendorf, that were considering to publish the first Dutch translation of *Brat’ja Karamazovy*.

This kind of criticisms could explain why Van Holkema & Warendorf chose to use French translations as source texts, which were targeted toward acceptability, and not for instance a macro-structurally more adequate German one.¹¹ This is striking because it was common to translate Dostoevsky into Dutch from German; from my research on the genealogy of the early Dutch translations of Dostoevsky (see Boulogne 2008) it resulted that of eleven Dutch translations in book form of Dostoevsky that were brought out before the First World War, eight were (predominantly) translated from German.¹²

5. Conclusion

German translations of Dostoevsky, generally adequate ones, played a major role in the early Dutch reception of the writer — at least in quantitative terms. The influence of French translations on the Dutch reception of Dostoevsky, however, seems at first sight rather limited: *De onderaardsche geest* (Dostojewsky 1888) and *De gebroeders Karamazow* (Dostojefsky 1913) are the only two Dutch Dostoevsky-

11. The first German translation of *Brat’ja Karamazovy* was published in 1884 (see Bautz 1990: 1366). Another German translation of the same novel, by S. Himmelstjerna, was brought out in 1901 (see Romein 1924: 200). In 1906 a totally new one, this time provided by E. K. Rahsin, was published (see Bautz 1990: 1366).

12. The following Dutch titles were translated from German: (a) *Schuld en boete* (Dostojewsky 1885), (b) *De misleide* (Dostojewski 1886), (c) *Arme mensen* (Dostojewsky 1887), (d) *De speler* (Dostojewsky 1890), (e) *Arme Nelly* (Dostojewsky 1891), (f) *Uit Siberië* (Dostojefsky 1891), (g) *Uit het doodenhuis* (Dostojewski 1906) and (h) *De echtgenoot* (Dostojewski 1907). Respectively the following German translations from Russian served as source texts for the here above mentioned Dutch translations: (a) *Raskolnikow* (Dostojewskij 1882), (b) *Erniedrigte und Beleidigte* (Dostojewski 1885), (c) *Arme Leute* (Dostojewski 1887), (d) *Der Spieler* (Dostojewski 1888), (e) *Erniedrigte und Beleidigte* (Dostojewski 1890), (f) *Aus dem toden Hause* (1886), (g) *Aus dem toden Hause* (Dostojewski 1890) and (h) *Der Hahnrei* (Dostojewski 1888). The Dutch target texts (a) *Schuld en boete*, (b) *De misleide* and particularly (f) *Uit Siberië* also reveal microtextual influence from French mediating translations. Respectively from *Le crime et le châtimement* (Dostoevsky 1884), *Humiliés et offensés* (Dostoevsky 1884) and *Souvenirs de la maison des morts* (Dostoevsky 1886).

translations in book form published before the First World War that were made entirely from French. Nevertheless, the mediating French translations had an utmost peculiar qualitative impact on the early Dutch reception of Dostoevsky.

In this article it has been described how two different polemical French translations of Dostoevsky's *Brat'ja Karamazovy* were fused together into the Dutch work *De gebroeders Karamazow* (1913). The motives underlying Van Gogh-Kaulbach's translation strategy were linked to the reticence of the Dutch readership toward Dostoevsky in general and *Brat'ja Karamazovy* in particular. Moreover, this aloofness was attributed, at least partly, to the influence of the early dominant French criticism of Dostoevsky's very last novel.

The translation amalgam *De gebroeders Karamazow* (1913) by Van Gogh-Kaulbach was a rather modest success: it was reprinted three times: in 1915, 1917 and in 1920 (see Waegemans & Willemsen 1991: 164). Its monopoly in the creation and manipulation of the image of Dostoevsky's very last masterpiece by means of Dutch translation would last until the 1930s, when a new, again shortened and adapted Dutch translation, and a complete Dutch translation of *Brat'ja Karamazovy* were published.¹³

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13. Namely *De gebroeders Karamazow* (Dostojewsky 1930) and the translation by A. Kosloff *De gebroeders Karamazow* (Dostojefski 1932), see Waegemans & Willemsen (1991: 162, 164). Strikingly, the former work once again includes a translation of the epilogue invented by Halpérine-Kaminsky and Morice. This translation provides the reader with a number of illustrations made by the artist André Vlaanderen, including an illustration of an invented scene. The picture in question shows Alëša sitting in jail having his vision of the monk Zosima (see *De gebroeders Karamazow. Derde en vierde deel*. Dostojewsky 1930: 248).

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- 1885 Dostojewski, Theodor. *Erniedrigte und Beleidigte. Roman*. <Unižennye i oskorblénnye, 1861> Berlin & Stuttgart: Verlag von W. Spemann. Aus dem Russischen übersetzt und mit einer Einleitung versehen von Konstantin Jürgens. 226 p.
- 1886 Dostojewski, Theodor. *Aus dem todten Hause. Denkwürdigkeiten eines nach Sibirien Verbannten*. <Zapiski iz mërťvogo doma, 1860–1862> Dresden und Leipzig: Verlag von Heinrich Minden. Frei nach dem Russischen. 411 p.
- 1887 Dostojewski, Theodor. *Arme Leute*. <Bednye ljudi, 1846> Dresden und Leipzig: Verlag von Heinrich Minden. Aus dem Russischen von A. L. Hauff. 248 p.
- 1888 Dostojewski, Fedor. *Der Hanrei*. Roman. <Večnyj muž, 1870> Berlin: Fischer Verlag. Deutsch von August Scholz. 251 p.
- 1890 Dostojewski, F. M., *Der Spieler. Aus den Erinnerungen eines jungen Mannes*. <Igrok, roman, 1866> Berlin: Verlag von Otto Janke. Aus dem Russischen übersetzt von L. A. Hauff. 288 p.

- 1890 Dostojewski, F.M. *Erniedrigte und Beleidigte*. <Unižennye i oskorblënnye, 1861> Berlin: Verlag von Otto Janke. Aus dem Russischen übersetzt von L. A. Hauff. 292 p.
- 1890 Dostojewski, F.M. *Aus dem toten Hause*. <Zapiski iz mërtnovogo doma, 1860–1862> Berlin: Otto Janke. Aus dem Russischen übersetzt von L. A. Hauff. 311 p.

Abstract

The present article focuses on *De gebroeders Karamazow* (1913), the first Dutch translation of F.M. Dostoevsky's novel *Brat'ja Karamazovy* (*The Brothers Karamazov*). More specifically, it deals with the French influence in the early Dutch reception of this novel. The introduction consists of a brief comparison of the German, French and Dutch early reception of Dostoevsky, which shows that before the First World War the Dutch and the Flemish were marked by a lack of enthusiasm toward the Russian writer. Further, *De gebroeders Karamazow* is analyzed as an amalgam of two polemical French translations. The most remarkable narrative shifts of the Dutch translation vis-à-vis the Russian source text are illustratively discussed. These shifts are mainly situated in its epilogue, more than half of which was invented by the first French translators of *Brat'ja Karamazovy*. In the third part, the focus moves to the motives underlying the translation strategy adopted by the first French translators of the Russian text. Finally, an attempt is made to explain the particular nature of *De gebroeders Karamazow* by shedding a light on the early French reception of *Brat'ja Karamazovy*, which substantially contributed to the Dutch reticence toward Dostoevsky in general and his last masterpiece in particular.

Résumé

Le présent article se concentre sur *De gebroeders Karamazow* (1913), la première traduction néerlandaise de *Brat'ja Karamazovy* (*Les frères Karamazov*) de F.M. Dostoïevski. Plus particulièrement, il traite de l'influence française dans la réception initiale néerlandaise de ce roman. L'article est introduit par une courte comparaison de la réception allemande, française et néerlandaise de Dostoïevski. Il en ressort qu'avant la Première Guerre mondiale les Néerlandais et les Flamands manquaient d'enthousiasme envers l'écrivain russe. Ensuite, l'article présente une analyse traductologique de *De gebroeders Karamazow*, qui s'avère un amalgame de deux traductions françaises polémiques. Illustrations à l'appui, il traite des glissements narratifs les plus remarquables de la traduction néerlandaise vis-à-vis du texte source russe. Ces glissements se situent principalement au niveau de l'épilogue, duquel plus de la moitié a été inventée par les premiers traducteurs français de *Brat'ja Karamazovy*. La troisième partie discute les motifs sous-jacents à la stratégie de traduction adoptée par les premiers traducteurs français du texte russe. Enfin, le caractère singulier de *De gebroeders Karamazow* est expliqué par la singularité de la réception initiale française de *Brat'ja Karamazovy*. Celle-ci a contribué de manière fondamentale à la réticence néerlandaise envers Dostoïevski en général et son dernier chef-d'œuvre en particulier.

About the author

Pieter Boulogne (1982, Leuven) holds a Licentiate Degree in Slavonic Studies (KULeuven). After completing his Academic Teacher Training, two Bachelor years of French and Italian Studies and gaining some experience as a freelance translator/interpreter, he joined the research unit of Slavonic Studies in 2006. He is a certified community interpreter Dutch–Russian/French/Italian and a sworn translator/interpreter Dutch–Russian. Presently, he is writing a Ph.D. dissertation on the early Dutch reception of F.M. Dostoevsky. He co-teaches a BA course in Russian and regularly reviews Central and Eastern European books. His main research interests lie in Russian literature and in Translation Studies. Outside Academia he occasionally works as a sworn translator and community interpreter.

Address: Slavonic and East European Studies, Faculty of Arts, Katholieke Universiteit Leuven, Blijde-Inkomststraat 21 box 3318, 3000 Leuven, Belgium.

E-mail: pieter.boulogne@arts.kuleuven.be, pieterboulogne@hotmail.com

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