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Translation Politics: Foreign Autobiographies on the Nineteenth-Century Dutch Book Market

Autobiographical narratives are highly dominated by coordinates of time and place. Upon sitting down to compose a life story, autobiographers have to relate to models of identity that are available for the historical and cultural context in which they live and experience their lives (Smith and Watson, *Reading Autobiography* 34). On the basis of these insights into the situatedness of autobiographical acts, it follows that any research into representations of the "self" should pay attention to the specific times and places in which self-representations are produced, circulated, and received. A book-historical perspective might be of value here, since book history shifts focus from authors and texts to both the cultural context and the other agents involved in their production, distribution, and consumption—for example, readers and publishers (Finkelstein and McCleery). In this article, I will discuss the role of publishers in constructing a significant element of an autobiographer's context, namely the supply of autobiographical narratives on the book market.

Publishers have a key role in the book market; as "cultural bankers" (Bourdieu 75), they decide what narratives will be printed and distributed to the reading audience in their area of business. As a result of the many different languages in the world, publishers generally operate on a local (i.e., national) market. Yet national book markets are interconnected, most clearly through the translation of books from one language into another. Since the production of translations relates to money, publishers will choose titles from the international supply that they deem will be profitable in their local market. Their decisions will, accordingly, reveal what kind of autobiographical narratives are suitable and acceptable in a specific time and place. On that basis, research into translation

politics seems to be a fruitful way of conducting both a situated analysis of life writing practices and a study into the underexplored theme of the international transmission of autobiographical narratives (Lejeune, "Towards a Guide of Autobiographical Europe"). I will demonstrate this point by exploring the translation politics of Dutch publishers in the period 1850-1918. As the analysis reveals that foreign women's autobiographies were quite prominent on the book market, the final part of the article highlights the identity models available to female autobiographers in the Netherlands. Initially, however, I will set out some of the features of the Dutch book market in order to contextualize the autobiographical supply available to nineteenth century readers.

A Foreign Affair. Autobiographies on the Dutch Book Market

The trade in books has been an international business right from the time of the invention of the printing press in the fifteenth century. Due to the relative freedom of the press in the Northern part of the Low Countries, the province of Holland developed into one of the most important centres for the production and distribution of books in Europe in the seventeenth century. However, as a result of the liberalization of the intellectual climate in France, and more severe censorship in the politically weakened Dutch Republic, the country lost its leading position in the international book trade. Meanwhile, the national market developed from the middle of the eighteenth century (Van Delft 108-109). The same process could be witnessed in other countries, with the international rise of nationalism favouring vernacular languages and, hence, the production of books in these tongues.

Although the degree of literacy of the Dutch had traditionally been high, and printers had produced Dutch titles previously, the share of books in the national language rose to some 90 percent in the final decade of the eighteenth century (Van Delft 134). Nevertheless, the production of original literature was surpassed by the number of foreign titles translated into Dutch. In 1806, for instance, twenty novels were published, but only four were written in Dutch; the remainder were translated from—chiefly—German and some from English (Kloek 12). Despite a general complaint that the development of Dutch literature was damaged by the vast number of translations, even in 1850 some 45 per-

cent of total book production was comprised of such texts.¹ Still in the 1880s, publisher A. C. Kruseman wrote in his history of the book trade in the Netherlands: "Our literature is often accused of being too dependent on translations" (Kruseman I, 64).

The translation of foreign books was an important business strategy for the book trade in the Netherlands, as it provided publishers with a way to reduce their costs. After all, Dutch publishers had only a small local market and could not sell their goods to anyone other than the reading public in the Netherlands, those in the Flemish part of Belgium (from 1830), and readers in the colonies. Consequently, the circulation rates of Dutch books were low and publishers had to budget if they were to earn any money. Since it had become more customary to pay native authors for their manuscripts over the course of the century (Kuitert; Kalmthout), authorial fees were among the major costs involved in the production of books (Van Lente and De Wit 70-75). However, because of the lack of international copyright arrangements, publishers could acquire foreign texts for free.

The extent to which the Dutch book trade depended on translations of foreign texts is highlighted by the rejection of the Bern Convention, an arrangement on international copyrights signed by a number of European countries in 1886 (Dongelmans). The convention was strongly opposed by Dutch publishers, who believed that making payments to foreign authors would damage the local book trade, meaning that their businesses would suffer major financial losses and the public would be faced with limited choices of reading material. The publishers argued that the book trade in a small country such as the Netherlands could only provide the national audience with a variety of texts if there was free access to the international supply of books. Accordingly, advised by the professional body of book traders in the Netherlands, the Dutch government did not subscribe to the Bern Convention until 1912.

By that time, the national book market had become stronger. As a result of demographic and educational developments; an increase in

¹ Figure based on the section 'Ter vertaling aangekondigde werken' [Announcements concerning books to be translated] in the Dutch book trade journal *Nieuwsblad voor den boekhandel*, volume 1850. See also Huisman (2008, 41).

prosperity among the middle classes; and technical factors, such as the introduction of the steam press, the number of potential readers grew from the middle of the nineteenth century onwards. This expanded market was reflected in a growing number of titles produced in Dutch, from 1734 in 1850 to 3960 in 1910.² Furthermore, the books on offer were from a greater variety of genres. Whereas religious and educational literature had traditionally formed the majority of Dutch book production, new genres—such as the novel, illustrated magazines and children's books—were being introduced to attract new groups of readers beyond the traditional reading elite. My research aimed to identify the share of published autobiographies on this expanding Dutch book market.³

To estimate the number of autobiographies among the total book production in the Netherlands, I spot-checked the national bibliography and counted all autobiographies published in four sample years. Since the Dutch bibliography was only set up in 1849, I began my research in 1850 and then examined the years 1870, 1890 and 1910. Following the definition provided by Philippe Lejeune ("Autobiographical Pact"), I

² Figures based on volumes 1850, 1870, 1890, and 1910 of the national Dutch bibliography: *Alphabetische naamlijst van boeken, landkaarten en verdere in den boekhandel voorkomende artikelen die in het jaar 1850 in het Koninkrijk der Nederlanden uitgegeven of herdrukt zijn*, benevens opgaves van den uitgever, den prijs en eenige aantekeningen alsmede een wetenschappelijk register (Amsterdam: C. L. Brinkman 1851); *Alphabetische naamlijst van boeken, landkaarten en verdere in den boekhandel voorkomende artikelen die in het jaar 1870 in het Koninkrijk der Nederlanden uitgegeven of herdrukt zijn* . . . (Amsterdam: C. L. Brinkman 1871); *Brinkman's alphabetische lijst van boeken, landkaarten en verder in den boekhandel voorkomende artikelen, die in het jaar 1890 in het koninkrijk der Nederlanden uitgegeven of herdrukt zijn*, benevens opgave van den uitgever, den prijs en eenige aantekeningen; voorts een lijst der overgegangene fondsartikelen, alsmede een wetenschappelijk register (Amsterdam: C. L. Brinkman 1891); *Brinkman's alphabetische lijst van boeken, landkaarten en verder in den boekhandel voorkomende artikelen, die in het jaar 1910 in het Koninkrijk der Nederlanden uitgegeven of herdrukt zijn* . . . (Leiden: A. W. Sijthoff 1911). See also Huisman (2008, 41).

³ My research was part of the larger project *Controlling Time and Shaping the Self: Education, Introspection and Practices of Writing in the Netherlands*, headed by Prof. Dr. Arianne Baggerman at Erasmus University, Rotterdam.

counted all books in which the name of the author is identical to the name of the narrator and the main character of the narrative. The definition was, however, loosely applied, and I also included anonymous and other books that had been reviewed or marketed as autobiographies.

Year	Title production	Autobiography	%
1850	1734	11	0.6
1870	1930	22	1.1
1890	2490	30	1.2
1910	3960	30	0.8

Table 1: Autobiographies published on the Dutch book market, 1850-1910. *Alphabetische naamlijst van boeken* . . . 1850, Idem 1870, Brinkman's *alphabetische lijst van boeken* . . . 1890, Idem 1910.

Year	Autobiography	Dutch	Translated	English	German	French	Swedish
1850	11	8	3	1	-	2	-
1870	22	15	7	5	1	-	1
1890	30	25	5	3	1	1	-
1910	30	19	11	5	4	1	1
	93	67	26	14	6	4	2

Table 2: Translated and original Dutch autobiographies on the Dutch book market, 1850-1910. *Alphabetische naamlijst van boeken* . . . 1850, Idem 1870, Brinkman's *alphabetische lijst van boeken* . . . 1890, Idem 1910.

The results of the bibliographical research are presented in Table 1, which highlights that the number of published autobiographies almost tripled from eleven in 1850 to thirty in 1910. Notwithstanding this increase, absolute numbers are low and the share of autobiographical books was never higher than 1.2 percent. For comparison purposes, the share of novels rose from 4 percent (seventy titles) in 1850 to 5.8 percent in 1910 (231 titles), whereas the percentage of religious books dropped from 18.2 percent (315 titles) to 10.5 percent (414 titles) in these same years.

The absence of circulation rates makes it impossible to identify the exact meaning of these figures, but some additional findings do indicate that autobiographies were quite popular among the reading public in the Netherlands. One indication is the high number of translations: of ninety-three autobiographies published in the four sample years, twenty-six were initially printed in other languages (Table 2). On average, 28

percent of the published autobiographies had been translated, but the share of translations was (much) higher in all years except 1890. The general percentage of translated books on the Dutch market did, however, decline, from 45 percent in 1850 to 11 percent in 1910.⁴ Compared to these figures, the high rate of translated autobiographies may indicate that the demand surpassed the native Dutch supply of such literature.

The impression of autobiographies as a genre that had to be imported to satisfy demand is confirmed by the fact that Dutch critics thought of such texts as being a foreign affair. For instance, in 1856, a critic described in a journal how the French presses had been "sweating" to print the vast amount of French memoirs available (Anonymous). In 1869, another reviewer was of the opinion that almost every French male who had played some part in public life felt obliged to publish his memoirs (Knoop). In 1881, yet another critic discovered that there were also many such texts in England (Muller). However, according to most reviewers, the Dutch were not inclined to publish their life stories. Critics greatly regretted this reluctance, since autobiographical narratives were regarded as important "building materials" for the writing of contemporary history (Huisman, "Selling the Self").

Dutch critics' historical conception of the genre first and foremost meant that autobiographers were cautioned against sketching personal particularities. "One does not appear in public in dressing gown or house coat," as one reviewer put it (Chonia, "Grooten in huisgewaad"). Instead, writers were advised to present themselves as eyewitnesses of history, and to confine themselves to descriptions of historical reality as they had experienced it. Moreover, autobiographical publications by Dutch authors—who could document recent developments in the Netherlands—were deemed to be of national importance. Some critics even tried to persuade native autobiographers and diarists to make their life stories public, but in the meantime they instead discovered more foreign examples of autobiographical literature (Huisman, *Publieke levens*, 171-72). These contemporary observations reflect the bibliographical figures: during the period 1850-1910, some 30 percent

⁴ Figures based on the section 'Ter vertaling aangekondigde werken' [Announcements concerning books to be translated] in the book trade journal *Nieuwsblad voor den boekhandel* 1850. See also Huisman, *Publieke levens* 41

of the published autobiographies on the Dutch book market were translations of foreign titles.

Conversion Narratives and Celebrity Autobiographies

Foreign autobiographies translated into Dutch were originally published in British or American English (fourteen), German (six), French (four) and Swedish (two), as can be seen from the right side of Table 2. Except for Swedish, the majority of educated Dutch readers could understand these books in their original language. Consequently, Dutch critics reviewed many non-translated French, German and English books in journals, while reading societies also offered literature in a variety of tongues. For example, in 1866, some 50 percent of the books borrowed by the members of the Haarlem Reading Museum were in French and German and, to a lesser extent, in English (De Vries 147). In contrast to the reading elite associated with such societies, however, new groups of readers were more dependent on texts in the Dutch language. A further investigation of the translation politics of Dutch publishers can, therefore, reveal the kind of foreign autobiographies that they thought were fit for a broader, more general audience within their local market.

Given the figures, a striking feature is the limited number of French memoirs translated: only four French titles appeared in the Dutch language in the sample years, including two versions of Chateaubriand's *Mémoires d'outre-tombe* (1850). On the other hand, in the professional journal of Dutch book traders, vast numbers of French memoirs were announced, while Dutch critics envied the French culture of documenting the recent past by writing and publishing such texts. But apparently, publishers did not deem French memoirs profitable enough to sell to a general Dutch audience. The non-translation of these books might be explained by anti-French sentiment, which was due to the French occupation of the Netherlands (1795-1813), but it is more likely that the group of readers interested in contemporary French history could digest these titles in their original language.

The English language was much less well known by Dutch readers, which explains the relatively large number of autobiographies translated from English. More importantly, the English language zone offered a kind of autobiographical literature that publishers were particularly

interested in: spiritual memoirs and conversion narratives. These texts were very popular in the Netherlands, predominantly among orthodox Protestants who had left the Dutch Reformed State Church in 1834. Since that time, Protestant publishers had flooded the market with cheap booklets containing the life narratives of Dutch pietists (Van Lieburg 22-23). This supply was expanded with narratives written by religiously related authors from abroad. As a result of the close relationship between Dutch Protestantism and English Methodism, Great Britain was the most important source of foreign conversion narratives that could be translated into Dutch.

Since the first translation of John Bunyan's *Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners* (1666) in 1689, the book has been reprinted in the Netherlands, with at least ten editions of this famous autobiography being published during the nineteenth century. An example of a slightly more contemporary title is *God the Guardian of the Poor, and the Bank of Faith* (1786) by the strict Calvinist preacher William Huntington. The success of this book in the Netherlands is evidenced by the fact that a new translation (1858) was published for the third time in 1870. The size of the audience that publishers expected to attract with these spiritual narratives can be seen from a flyer announcing the Dutch edition of *The Story of his Life and Labors* (1900) by the famous English preacher Charles H. Spurgeon. According to the publisher, all readers who liked Bunyan would also be interested in this work. He further stated that the book was worth the investment of four guilders, because it contained "enduring truths" and could, therefore, be reread repeatedly—even by future generations. To make the book also accessible to less affluent groups of buyers, the publisher presented it in four relatively cheap instalments of 1.50 guilders each (Daamen).

While Dutch publishers did find some suitable conversion narratives in America and Germany as well, they tended to choose other kinds of autobiographical narratives from these countries. In the early twentieth century in particular, publishers associated with the labour movement selected socialist autobiographies from the German language zone. *Aus meinem Leben* (1910) by August Bebel, founding member of the Sozial-Demokratische Arbeiterpartei, is an example. From the American supply, Dutch publishers were particularly interested in autobiographies by celebrities. These books included *Struggles and Triumphs, or Forty Years' Recollections* (1869) by the showbiz millionaire P. T. Barnum,

and *The Story of My Life* (1903) by Helen Keller, the renowned deaf, dumb and blind girl who had learned to communicate despite her disabilities. Appropriate celebrities were also identified in Scandinavia; the two Swedish titles translated into Dutch were autobiographical narratives by the famous female writers Frederika Bremer and Selma Lagerlöf.⁵

Their translation politics reveal that Dutch publishers made their choices on the basis of celebrity and religion or ideology. Since conversion narratives were the type of autobiography that publishers thought would be the most profitable on their local market, they were drawn towards the autobiographical supply in Protestant countries, especially Great Britain. At the same time, publishers chose life stories by renowned celebrities from the international supply. And as a consequence of publisher's choices, quite a few women's autobiographies entered the book market. Due to the publishers' translation politics, autobiographies by women account for almost 20 percent of the autobiographical supply on the Dutch book market in the studied period.

Of the ninety-three autobiographies found in the sample years, 16 were written by women. Of these, ten were translated from English (six), Swedish (two) or German (two). It is, however, impossible to state whether the share of women's autobiographies on the Dutch book market should be interpreted as high, normal, or low. The extensive literature on women, gender and autobiographies does not contain comparable figures for other countries.⁶ However, regarding the dominant perspective that an ideology of separate spheres prevented women from writing and publishing their autobiographies (Sanders 1989; 2001), the figure of 20 percent does seem to be fairly high. To shed more light on the range of autobiographical practices available to women, I will now

⁵ Selma Lagerlöf, *Herinneringen van een kind* (Amsterdam: H. J. W. Becht 1910), the Swedish original could not be found; Frederika Bremer: *haar leven, brieven en nagelaten geschriften*, uitgegeven door hare zuster Charlotte Quiding-Bremer (Haarlem: Erven Loosjes 1870), translated from the German edition: *Lebensschilderung, Briefe und nachgelassene Schriften: in drei Theilen* (Leipzig: Brockhaus 1868).

⁶ For an overview of the literature on women, gender and autobiography: Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson, *Women, Autobiography, Theory. A Reader* (Madison: U of Wisconsin P 1998).

discuss the translation politics of Dutch publishers with regard to the international supply of women's autobiographies.

Exemplary Women's Lives

Contrary to the general picture of publishers' translation politics, conversion narratives by foreign women were conspicuously absent on the Dutch book market. Despite the availability of British narratives by Protestant females (Peterson 5-16), these texts were not actually translated. This might be explained by the fact that Dutch female autobiographers were very present in the sub-genre of spiritual memoirs. In fact, the continuously reprinted, *Bekeeringsweg van Eva van der Groe, zuster van Theodorus van der Groe, in leven predikant te Kralingen, door haar zelve beschreven* (1838) [Conversion Way of Eva van der Groe, Sister of Theodorus van der Groe, in Life Minister of Kralingen, Written by Herself] is even thought to be the most popular conversion narrative of the nineteenth century (Van Lieburg 173). Since more narratives by Dutch females were published in this genre, the supply may have met the demand, meaning that publishers need not look for pietist autobiographies by foreign women.⁷

When it came to the translation of foreign women's autobiographies, celebrity rather than religion seems to have been a key factor for Dutch publishers. Yet religion was not completely absent; female autobiographers had to fit into the mental framework of Dutch Protestantism. Within this structure, women could perform as autobiographers if they wrote a conversion narrative, or a variant in which they claimed a divine vocation for the act by which they had gained their fame. These acts

⁷ In the flow of the Catholic emancipation movement in the Netherlands, foreign Catholic conversion narratives—by men and women—were translated from the 1870s. For instance, *A protestant converted to catholicity by her bible and prayer book alone and the struggles of a soul in search of truth* by Fanny Maria Pittar (ca. 1847) was published in Dutch for the first time in 1870 and reprinted in *Galerij van beroemde bekeerlingen der negentiende eeuw* (1873-1878), a collective biography of famous Catholic converts translated from the German original *Convertitenbilder aus dem neunzehnten Jahrhundert* (1865-1870) by D. A. Rosenthal.

were regularly practised in the field of philanthropy, but could also include writing. Favourable female celebrities were, therefore, Protestant female writers and Christian heroines: women who were renowned for both their piety and their engagement in social or charity work. Preferably, the two categories melted into one exemplary life which was deemed suitable for a female audience. According to Dutch critics, the English writer Charlotte Elisabeth Tonna was such an example.

As an author of edifying novels, the evangelical Tonna was well-known to the reading public in the Netherlands. Her successful novel *Judah's Lion* (1843) was translated and published in 1850. Tonna's biography became known through the translation of Erskine Neale's *The Closing Scene; or, Christianity and Infidelity Contrasted in the Last Hours of Remarkable Persons* (1848), which also appeared in Dutch in 1850. A few years later, readers could learn even more about this "steadfast, faithful and active Christian woman" (Neale 22) when, in 1853, they were presented with a translation of Tonna's autobiography, *Personal Recollections* (1846). In this narrative, she explained how God had given her the task of spreading the Gospel through her writing. The book was applauded by Dutch critics, and it is not a surprise that at least two publishers chose this autobiography for translation; by following the lines of a conversion narrative and presenting an exemplary Protestant woman, the book was very suitable for the Dutch market.⁸

The extent to which the exemplary model dominated the field of women's autobiographies in the 1850s can be seen from the way that *Wonderful Adventures of Mrs. Seacole in Many Lands* (1857) was presented in the Netherlands. The book contains the life story of Mary Seacole, a Scottish-Jamaican widow whose claim to fame was based on her taking care of British soldiers during the Crimean War (1853-1856). Whereas the English title of her book stressed the adventurous aspects of her life, the title of the Dutch edition concentrated on the benevolence Seacole had displayed towards the soldiers. Provided with the title *Mary*

⁸ According to the section 'Books selected to be translated' in the 1850 volume of the professional book trade journal *Nieuwsblad voor den Boekhandel*, publisher Gebr. Van Kraaij presented the book twice to the commission granting the rights to translate a book. A double presentation indicates competition between two or more publishers.

Seacole's avonturen in de West en in de Krim, of het belangwekkende leven eener heldinne der barmhartigheid (1857) [Mary Seacole's Adventures in the West and the Crimean, or the Important Life of a Heroine of Mercy], translator and minister Jacob Jongeneel tried to fit Seacole into the model of the Christian heroine. This was no easy task, because Seacole was black and did not refer to a divine vocation to legitimize her worldly activities. In his preface, the minister therefore stated that Seacole could not compete with Florence Nightingale, the "civilised sister of mercy". Jongeneel, nevertheless, advised readers not to be disturbed by Seacole's "weaknesses" and to appreciate her for her "truthful, heroic humanity":

May Mary Seacole's life also find a positive response in the Netherlands, the country in which benevolence finds its home like a sister, in which women's courage is admired and embraced by men, in which thoroughness and philanthropic actings are valued so much higher than sweet talks; may the stranger, who labored among strangers, be welcomed as a soul mate of every upright philanthropist and every loving woman (5).

At least one critic followed Jongeneel's presentation of Seacole; he set her alongside Elisabeth Fry and other philanthropists, and praised the adventurous Seacole as yet another female example of Christian charity (V. V.).

By coercing Seacole into the model of the Christian heroine, the translator of her autobiography reveals precisely the type of women's narratives that were deemed to be the most acceptable for the Dutch market. Female celebrities whose autobiographies were to be published in Dutch had to combine Protestant piety with socially valuable work. In addition to taking (spiritual or material) care of people, this work could also consist of writing edifying novels and children's literature. None of the foreign female autobiographers, however, went too far beyond the limits of their gender. Neither *Histoire de ma vie* (1855) nor *Meine Lebensgeschichte* (1861) by George Sand and Fanny Lewald respectively—both of whom were radical feminists engaged with the political revolutions of 1848—were translated, although both books were reviewed in journals. The same applies to the lives of American first-wave feminists, such as *Life and work of Susan B. Anthony* (1898). On the other hand, *Pensées et souvenirs* (1909) by the English Quaker

Josephine E. Butler, leading lady of the international movement against prostitution, was both translated into Dutch and met with great enthusiasm, since Butler had made the world "a better place for all" (Bronsveld).

Until the end of the research period, Dutch publishers selected foreign women's autobiographies for their exemplary and educational value to (female) readers, although the strictly religious example gradually gave way to a more general notion of commitment to an ideal that was acceptable to the public in the Netherlands. At the same time, however, Dutch publishers were drawn towards negative examples of life stories by notorious singers, dancers, and actresses, whose lives had a racy edge. An example is Lola Montez, which was the stage name of the Irish woman Eliza Rosanna Gilbert, who became a "Spanish dancer" after her divorce in 1834 (Seymour).

Lola Montez not only performed her erotic and exotic dances throughout Europe, but was also the mistress of King Ludwig I of Bavaria and became an international celebrity due to the extensive media-coverage of her life. Once her lover had been forced to abdicate in 1848, and Lola Montez was exiled to France, she sold her memoirs to *Le Pays*, a journal which published the first instalment of her narrative in January 1851. Translated from the German edition, *Memoiren der Lola Montez, Gräfin v. Landsfeld* (1851), the Dutch version was presented the same year. This rapid turnaround indicates that the Dutch publisher expected the book to appeal to the reading audience in the Netherlands as well. Critics, however, were infuriated with the translation of Montez' memoirs. One reviewer (Veritas) accused the publisher of disgracing his press by printing the work of a bigamous woman known as the concubine of a lustful King. Other critics (Chonia; R.) just thought that the publisher had fallen prey to a desire for money-making.

These contemporary observations confirm the idea that *chroniques scandaleuses* appealed to the Dutch reading public as much as conversion narratives and spiritual memoirs, and, well into the twentieth century, publishers continued to offer autobiographies by internationally renowned female celebrities who were associated with some sort of scandal. Examples include *Aus meinem Bühnenleben* (1876) by the German actress Karoline Bauer, who had been secretly married to the first Belgian king. Her autobiography was translated into Dutch in the same year the book was published in the original language. The same

goes for *My Past* (1913) by Marie Larisch, a niece of Elisabeth (Sisi), Empress of Austria, who was supposed to have been involved in the mysterious death of Crown Prince Rudolf.

Although autobiographies by infamous females were generally opposed or ignored by critics, publishers apparently saw a market for scandalous chronicles by notorious women. Dutch translation politics, thus, cultivated two models of female autobiographers: on the one hand there was a model of deranged femininity that no Dutch woman was supposed to take as an example, while on the other there was a model of religious and / or virtuous femininity, characterized by piety and modesty that women *should* use as an example. Consequently, it does not come as a surprise that most of the fifty-one Dutch women who had an autobiography published in the second half of the nineteenth century continued with the format of a conversion narrative (Huisman, “‘Schrijf, want deze woorden zijn getrouw en waarachtig’”).⁹

Conclusions

In order to understand the autobiographical practices of recent and earlier times, it is important to situate these in their historical and cultural contexts. As I have demonstrated, a book-historical perspective can be of value in reconstructing autobiographers' narrative contexts. Admittedly, it takes a lot of work to count all of the autobiographies in a national bibliography—even when examining a small country like the Netherlands. Yet this kind of research has several advantages. Firstly, it is a way of studying the international transmission of autobiographical texts, and in this respect my analysis of the Dutch book market highlights the importance of religion in publishers' translation politics. Foreign autobiographies from Catholic countries were rarely translated during the period 1850-1918. In order to attract a general Dutch audience, publishers opted, instead, for autobiographies from Protestant nations. I have, further, demonstrated that Dutch publishers were espe-

⁹ Figure based on the inventories of both printed and manuscript egodocuments—a concept referring to a range of autobiographical narratives (Dekker)—by Dutch people born between 1500 and 1914. These inventories are available on the internet <www.egodocument.net>.

cially interested in Protestant conversion narratives and exemplary autobiographies by world-famous celebrities who presented their lives in terms of a Protestant ethic—or whose lives could be moulded into such a format. Accordingly, a second benefit of this type of research is that it reveals the horizon of expectation in a specific time and place.

In contrasting general ideas on the difficulties that women had in writing and publishing autobiographies, my bibliographical research demonstrates, at least for the Netherlands, that the cultural context was relatively open to these writers; almost 20 percent of the autobiographical supply on the Dutch book market in the period 1850-1918 consisted of women's lives. Most of these books were translations of foreign autobiographies, and the translation politics of Dutch publishers, thus, stimulated the visibility of female autobiographers in the Netherlands. The types of autobiographies that were selected for translation do, however, reveal the limitations of the narrative space for women. Apart from being famous, they had to either conform to the anti-model of *chroniques scandaleuses* by infamous women, or the exemplary models of the Christian heroine and the Protestant female writer.

While the first category referred to above seems to have been particularly profitable for publishers, the second and third were appreciated more by critics. In both cases, however, women's narratives had nothing to do with the kind of autobiographies that critics were in favour of: historical memoirs in which an autobiographer documented the recent past from a personal perspective. Such women's narratives were available, especially in France, but these books were not translated, while Dutch women did not publish historical memoirs until the early twentieth century. Accordingly, the supply of autobiographical narratives surrounding potential Dutch female autobiographers encouraged them to follow the nearly a-historical examples of either the pious woman, or the woman who has fallen from grace.

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PAWEŁ RODAK

Past, Present, and Future of Autobiography Competitions and Archives in Poland

Thanks to the invaluable work of humanist sociologists who organized competitions to generate autobiographical documents in the early twentieth century, Poland could proudly claim to have the largest collection of autobiographical materials in Europe prior to the dismantling of the Iron Curtain. These documents added up to a long-standing autobiographical tradition which dates back to the sixteenth century when hand-written estate-related journals of the gentry (*silva rerum*) chronicled the most significant facts from the life of a family such as weddings, births, baptisms and deaths. These manuscripts developed dynamically in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and resemble the English *commonplace books*, the French *livres de raison*, the German *Hausbuch*, and the Italian *notize della famiglia*.

Other building blocks of the autobiographical tradition in Poland are travel diaries, personal diaries, letters and memoirs. Travel diaries have been written since the sixteenth century, mostly during military expeditions, diplomatic missions, pilgrimages, and educational or scientific journeys, but took a more intimate character from mid-eighteenth century onwards. When Romanticism resulted in a shift from highly conventional letter-conversation to letter-confession in the nineteenth century, the same development towards intimacy could be observed in the longstanding tradition of letter-writing. Memoirs were most intensively written in the nineteenth century, usually for the purpose of describing events related to Polish history in which the writer partook such as partitions, national uprisings, post-uprising emigration, imprisonment and deportation to Siberia.

Against this backdrop, twentieth-century autobiography competitions, and the resulting documents and archives, are just another