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Brand new translation, same old story? The perpetuation of female and racial stereotypes in (re)translation

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Citation

Zeven, K. L. (2026, January 14). *Brand new translation, same old story?: The perpetuation of female and racial stereotypes in (re)translation*.

Version: Publisher's Version

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CHAPTER 3

Characterizing Daisy Buchanan in
retranslations of *The Great Gatsby*:
Translator behaviour and
reader reception

This chapter explores the characterization of Daisy Buchanan in the two Dutch translations of the great American Classic *The Great Gatsby*, published first in 1948 (translated by Lili Cornils) and then in 1985 (translated by Susan Janssen). After an introduction to research on retranslation and reader reception, the chapter first briefly summarizes a number of important differences in Daisy's characterization between the Dutch translations and the English source text, and between the first translation and the retranslation, arguing that such differences may affect readers' views on Daisy's personality. It then discusses the results of a reader response survey in which real readers were presented with fragments from the two translations and were asked to assess Daisy's personality traits. The results show interesting differences in reader responses between the 1948 and 1985 translations, though the differences in scoring were only statistically significant for characteristics *confident* and *helpless*. Nevertheless, the emerging patterns confirm that translator decisions may indeed affect the way readers receive and perceive female characters and their gender roles.

This chapter is based on: Zeven, K. & Dorst, A.G. (2022). Characterizing Daisy Buchanan in retranslations of *The Great Gatsby*: Translator behavior and reader reception. In S. Cadera & A. Walsh (Eds.), *Retranslation and reception: Studies in a European context* (pp. 324–345). Approaches to Translation Studies (49). Brill.

3.1. Introduction

When the twenty-first century was heralded as “The Age of Retranslation” (Collombat, 2004), the interest in retranslation as an object of research was kindled as well. A decade onwards, there were more academic publications on the topic of retranslation than ever before (Van Poucke, 2017). The Netherlands, however, seems to be ‘the odd one out’ in both respects: while Dutch retranslations of literary classics – regardless of their status – are few and far between, research on retranslation from a Dutch perspective is almost entirely non-existent, although a small number of Flemish scholars have made valuable contributions to the debate on the topic (Van Poucke 2017, 2019; Boulogne 2019). Notwithstanding the justified appeal by several translation scholars to start conducting research beyond individual case studies (Koskinen & Paloposki, 2019) and to move away from the more traditional approach of comparing different translations of literary texts on a micro-textual level (Van Poucke & Sanz Gallego, 2019), this research gap is one of

the reasons why this chapter pursues the avenue of a case study before embarking on a journey travelling one of the “new ‘highways’ of investigation” that Van Poucke and Sanz Gallego (2019, p. 3) encourage translation scholars to discover. Eventually, a collection of case studies into Dutch retranslations would open up the possibility of “plac[ing] individual case studies within the bigger picture” (Koskinen and Paloposki 2019: 1).

Another motivation for conducting a follow-up to our case study of Dutch retranslations of *The Great Gatsby* (Zeven & Dorst, 2020) is the relative scarcity of research that has been conducted into the effects of retranslations. Despite recent publications focusing on the reception of retranslations (Cadera & Walsh, 2017), the following observation made by Alvstad and Assis Rosa (2015) still rings true – not just when it comes to translations into Dutch:

Even if the literature deals extensively with causes, motivations, influences and sometimes also purposes (both real and alleged), it is only seldom that the consequences or effects of retranslations are even mentioned. (Alvstad & Assis Rosa, 2015, p. 15)

There has been a general call for more reception research in Translation Studies (Cadera & Walsh, 2017; Di Giovanni & Gambier 2018). As some scholars have noted, the scant reception studies that have been conducted so far have been primarily in audiovisual translation (Brems & Ramos Pinto, 2013). This chapter, like our 2020 paper on the impact of translators’ choices of the (re)translations of *The Great Gatsby* on the characterization of the novel’s female characters, aims to address both of these research gaps. But while we previously investigated the **potential** effects of translation choices on the way female characters are portrayed, our focus in the present chapter is on the **actual** perception of actual readers.

It is here that the importance of defining the term *reader* comes in. The discussion of the notion of the reader by academics over the course of the twentieth century has sprouted a host of labels and definitions, depending not only on the subdiscipline of the scholar coining the label, but also on the perspective taken, the type of reading researched, and the scenario in which a text is being read (Chan, 2016; Assis Rosa, 2006). Both Chan and Assis Rosa provide insightful overviews of the different names and definitions used by literary and translation scholars.

Assis Rosa distinguishes three different types of reader. There is the actual or real reader “who is the receiver of the literary text and is defined by Seymour Chatman as ‘the flesh-and-bones you or I sitting in our living rooms reading the book’” (1978, p. 150); this reader may or may not be the same as the ideal reader, who is “able to understand the meaning and significances of any literary text” (Assis Rosa, 2006, p. 101). Both the real and ideal reader should be distinguished from the implied reader, who is the one explicitly or implicitly addressed in the text, i.e. “a hypothetical personage who shares with the author not just background knowledge, but also a set of presuppositions, sympathies and standards of what is pleasant and unpleasant, good and bad, right and wrong” (Leech & Short, 1989, p. 208).

Assis Rosa criticizes the prominence given to the ideal reader over the actual and implied reader since one cannot truly identify translation norms of acceptability and adequacy if these are neglected. Other translation scholars, too, have recently advocated giving central stage to the real or actual reader. Hickey (2003), for example, highlights the importance of taking into account when evaluating (re) translations those he refers to as “lay readers” (Hickey, 2003, p. 62). By lay readers he means that is “all non-experts, including the end-readers of literary works who sit down to have ‘a good read’” (2003, p. 66). Hickey compares the average reader of a translation to a driver of a car who is not necessarily knowledgeable or interested in the tools used to produce their car or a patient who does not have the means to properly evaluate the work a dentist does on their teeth. They only assess the end product, that is, the target text itself. These lay readers, he states, “are interested in the product to the extent to which it affects them as readers, stimulating some kind of reaction or experience in them as readers” (2003, p. 63). They do not read the translation against the original, nor do they usually compare different translations of the same literary work. While research into the reception of retranslations by professional, ideal or informed readers such as literary critics (Bladh, 2019) or translators (Miletich, 2015) is obviously equally valuable, the fact that the most important readers of a novel are its lay readers is the reason why the present chapter will focus on the real reader and present the findings of a reader response survey.

3.2. Retranslating Daisy Buchanan: A micro-textual analysis

Zeven and Dorst (2020) explored “how ideas about gender are captured in literary works, and how such ideas are reinforced, revised or rejected in (re)translation” (661). Focusing on Daisy Buchanan, the paper showed how both the 1948 translation by Cornils and the 1985 retranslation by Janssen include translation decisions that (un)consciously present Daisy in a more negative way than the source text does. We postulated that this may affect Daisy’s characterization in the novel and the way her character is received by readers of the translations. The micro-textual analysis showed that both translations (hereafter: TT1948 and TT1985), but especially TT1948, paint a picture of Daisy as more manipulative than the English source text (hereafter: ST), and as a temptress rather than coquettish and beguiling. While in Fitzgerald’s *The Great Gatsby* the language used to describe Daisy’s personality and behaviour is characterized by a systematic ambiguity, this ambiguity has disappeared in both translations as a result of wordings that potentially lead to a more negative view of Daisy by readers of the translations.

This may be illustrated by the following example of the way in which both translations deal with an observation made by the story’s narrator. The narrator remarks how Daisy often gives the person she is talking to the feeling that they are special: “That was a way she had” (1925, p. 14). In the ST it is up to the reader to decide how to interpret this comment: is Daisy sincere or fake? Both translators, however, opt to translate “a way” with the diminutive form of the noun *manier* [manner]: *maniertje* [little manner] (1948, p. 17) and *maniertjes* [little manners] (1985, p. 11). The diminutive has the pejorative connotations of ‘mannerisms’ or ‘affectations’, thus implying that Daisy is insincere and manipulative. TT1984 uses the plural form and adds “*een van haar*” [one of her], making Daisy even more lacking in sincerity. The impression is given that this is a woman who simply wants to wrap men around her little finger. Another example relates to Daisy’s perceived helplessness. In one case, when she suddenly draws attention to her bruised knuckle with an “awed expression” (1925, p. 17), her reaction is so completely over the top that the reader feels she is ridiculing herself to get her own back at Tom by ostensibly acting the helpless female. This is one instance where Daisy can indeed be considered calculating. Yet instead of reproducing Daisy’s

theatrical performance, TT1948 translates “awed” with “*angstig*” [scared] (1948, p. 15), turning Daisy into a frightened little girl. Conversely, TT1985 has “*met ontzetting vervuld*” [filled with awe] (1985, p. 21), which, like the ST, portrays her as bitter and cynical rather than weak or helpless.

The current study now aims to determine whether such differences in reader reception can indeed be established when readers are presented with short fragments from the novel featuring Daisy in either the 1948 translation or the 1985 retranslation. Like the previous micro-textual case study, the current reader reception study wishes to raise awareness for the ideological implications of translation decisions at the micro-textual level, and highlight the influence that translators may – either consciously or unwittingly – have on gender stereotyping and the way gender bias and stereotyping are perpetuated, even reinforced, through translation and retranslation.

3.3 Reader reception of Daisy Buchanan: A reader response survey

As stated previously, the goal of the current study was to examine whether the readers of the 1948 Dutch translation of *The Great Gatsby* by Cornils have a different perception of Daisy Buchanan’s personality traits from readers of the 1985 retranslation by Janssen, and whether these differences in reader responses can be attributed to different lexical choices made by the translators. The study elicited responses from participants using a web-based survey. Participants first provided their spontaneous responses to seven very short fragments of 1-2 sentences, and then scored the female character in the fragments on 12 different character traits. The aim of the study was to expose whether (un)conscious lexical shifts in retranslation may affect gender perceptions and stereotypes in translation and in the reading of fiction in general. To the best of our knowledge, such issues of gender and gender bias in the reception of (re)translations have not been studied through the elicitation of responses from real readers as they read fragments from a novel.

3.3.1 Methodology

3.3.1.1. Materials and method

For the current study, an online reader response survey was created in Google Forms. It was distributed through the personal networks of the two researchers

and their students in the Master in Translation at Leiden University. Students were asked specifically to approach people over the age of 30 and without a degree in languages, linguistics or literature. They were encouraged to include people from various geographic locations, cultural backgrounds and educational levels. This study did not focus on any particular type of reader and we did not select participants on the basis of any specific criteria. We did aim to avoid people with a degree in languages, including our own colleagues in Linguistics and Literature and our own students in Translation, with the intention to recruit participants who would respond naturally to the fragments as they read them without immediately overanalysing the language used. The survey was addressed to a general readership and required no specific background knowledge or reading experience. Sufficient knowledge of Dutch to read the fragments was assumed if participants decided to complete the survey.

Zeven and Dorst (2020) argued that Daisy comes across as more manipulative in the two Dutch translations of *The Great Gatsby*, in particular in TT1948. The image of a woman who sets out to seduce men is emphasized in these translations, again especially so in the 1948 translation. Daisy is also made out to be less sincere, more shallow, and more indifferent (to the point of being cold and callous), as well as more helpless in both translations than in the ST. Based on these findings, seven short fragments from *The Great Gatsby* featuring Daisy Buchanan were selected in which we believed the lexical choices made by Cornils (1948) and/or Janssen (1985) influenced how Daisy is perceived by readers. In the current study, *Version Lili* presented readers with fragments from TT1948, while *Version Susan* presented readers with the same fragments from TT1985. Participants saw only one translation. In total, 103 participants completed the survey. Of these, 57 participants (55.3%) read the fragments from TT1948 (*Lili*) and 46 participants (44.4%) the fragments from TT1985 (*Susan*).

The participants were first asked to answer three general questions on their gender, age and reading behaviour. Then they were told they would be shown seven very short fragments from a famous novel (they were not told which novel) and instructed to provide a maximum of five words (e.g. *gemeen* [mean] or *slim* [smart]) that summarized their spontaneous first impressions of the female character in the fragments. The participants read each fragment in turn and were enabled to type their responses in a short answer text box. After the last fragment, the participants were told they would be shown the same seven fragments again

and were asked to indicate which personality traits they found best described the female character by scoring twelve characteristics (e.g. *zelfingenomen* [conceited and self-absorbed] or *zelfverzekerd* [confident]) from 1 to 5 on a Likert scale, with 1 meaning *does not describe the character at all* and 5 meaning *describes the character very well*.

3.3.1.2. *Participants*

A total of 103 participants completed the survey. Tables 1 – 3 provide more information on their gender, age category and reading behaviour. Table 1 shows that 69 (67%) of the participants were female, and 34 (33%) were male; no participants identified as *other* or indicated that they did not wish to specify.

Table 1. Sex/gender of the participants

Female	69	67.0%
Male	34	33.0%
Total	103	100%

Table 2 shows that most of the participants were aged between 31 and 60 (83.5% in total). Only 2 participants (1.9%) were 30 or younger, and 15 participants (14.6%) were older than 60.

Table 2. Age of the participants (by age group)

26-30	2	1.9%
31-35	10	9.7%
36-40	13	12.6%
41-45	11	10.7%
46-50	16	15.5%
51-55	18	17.5%
56-60	18	17.5%
61-65	5	4.9%
66-70	8	7.8%
71-75	0	0%
76-80	2	1.9%
Total	103	100%

Table 3 shows that in terms of reading behaviour, the largest group - 43 participants or 41.7% – reads 3 to 10 novels per year. The other 3 reading categories demonstrate

a balanced distribution: 20 participants (19.4%) never read novels, 19 (18.4%) read 1 to 3 novels per year, and 21 (20.4%) read more than 10 novels per year.

Table 3. Reading behaviour (in novels read per year)

None	20	19.4%
1-3 novels	19	18.4%
3-10 novels	43	41.7%
> 10 novels	21	20.4%
Total	103	100%

Overall, the tables show that the participants in our survey represent a relatively heterogeneous group in terms of gender, age groups and reading behaviours, though the sample is not perfectly balanced.

3.3.2 Results

The survey yielded a considerable amount of data, given that the participants were first asked to provide spontaneous responses to seven fragments, and were then asked to score the female character on twelve characteristics. In the analyses below, we will therefore zoom in on those results that are most interesting given our current focus on retranslation and reader reception, and on those results directly connected to our claims in the micro-textual analysis about possible reader responses. The current survey can be used to determine whether there is any empirical support for these claims. As our 2020 paper argued that the 1985 retranslation is less negative in its portrayal of Daisy than the 1948 translation, we can now use the survey results to examine whether Daisy is described more negatively by respondents who saw the fragments from TT1948 (*Version Lili*) than those who saw TT1985 (*Version Susan*).

3.3.2.1. Scoring Daisy Buchanan's character traits

Our expectation based on the micro-textual analysis in Zeven and Dorst (2020) was that the scores for *Version Lili* (1948) would be more negative than those for *Version Susan* (1985). We were particularly interested in responses to passages in which we felt that the translations presented Daisy as more manipulative, seductive, shallow, insincere and weak than Fitzgerald's ST.

An independent samples T-test was carried out in SPSS27 to determine whether there were any statistically significant differences between the scorings given for the twelve characteristics in *Version Lili* versus *Version Susan*. The T-tests showed that only for *zelfverzekerd* [confident] and *hulpeloos* [helpless] there was a significant difference between the two versions (equal variance not assumed): *zelfverzekerd* ($t(91.02) = 2.21, p = .03$) and *hulpeloos* ($t(96.7) = 2.69, p = .008$). Participants who read the 1985 retranslation, *Susan*, found Daisy more confident ($M = 2.98, SD = 1.09$) than those who read the 1948 translation, *Lili* ($M = 2.53, SD = .97$). Participants who read the 1985 retranslation also found Daisy less helpless ($M = 2.52, SD = 1.09$) than those who read the 1948 translation ($M = 3.11, SD = 1.1$).

The sections below will provide further discussion of these statistically significant differences, as well as other interesting observations that can be made based on the participants' scoring as well as spontaneous responses. The discussions have been grouped around what we feel are Daisy's most relevant personality traits, as based on the real readers' responses.

3.3.2.1.1 Confident, Helpless or Conceited?

Tables 4 - 6 show the scores for *zelfverzekerd* [confident], *hulpeloos* [helpless] and *zelfingenomen* [conceited and self-absorbed] in *Lili* (1948) and *Susan* (1985). These traits demonstrate a clear difference in the scoring between the two versions, though only confident and helpless were statistically significant.

Table 4. Scores for personality trait *zelfverzekerd* [confident]

"The character is confident"		Version		Total
		Lili TT1948	Susan TT1985	
1	Count	4	3	7
	% within Version	7.0%	6.5%	6.8%
2	Count	32	16	48
	% within Version	56.1%	34.8%	46.6%
3	Count	10	8	18
	% within Version	17.5%	17.4%	17.5%
4	Count	9	17	26
	% within Version	15.8%	37.0%	25.2%
5	Count	2	2	4
	% within Version	3.5%	4.3%	3.9%
Total	Count	57	46	103

After reading TT1948, 56.1% of the participants selected a score of 2 for confidence, 63.1% in total when scores 1 and 2 are combined. By contrast, 34.8% of the participants who read TT1985 selected score 2, and 41.3% in total when combining scores 1 and 2. For TT1948, score 2 is clearly considered the most suitable score, and scores 3 and 4 were given much less often and roughly the same number of times – 17.5% and 15.8%. This distribution is markedly different for TT1985, where scores 2 and 4 are the most frequent scores, with roughly the same percentage (34.8% and 37.0%), and score 3 being selected much less often (17.4%). Interestingly, this suggests that while readers of TT1948 are united in labelling Daisy as insecure, the readers of TT1985 are almost equally divided where Daisy's confidence is concerned. While a perceived lack of confidence is in itself not necessarily positive or negative, it may contribute to the idea of Daisy being either more vulnerable or weak – the former seeing Daisy as a victim of her circumstances, the latter primarily being a character flaw.

Table 5. Scores for personality trait *hulpeloos* [helpless]

“The character is helpless”		Version		Total
		Lili TT1948	Susan TT1985	
1	Count	4	6	10
	% within Version	7.0%	13.0%	9.7%
2	Count	15	21	36
	% within Version	26.3%	45.7%	35.0%
3	Count	13	12	25
	% within Version	22.8%	26.1%	24.3%
4	Count	21	3	24
	% within Version	36.8%	6.5%	23.3%
5	Count	4	4	8
	% within Version	7.0%	8.7%	7.8%
Total	Count	57	46	103
	% within Version	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

The characteristic *hulpeloos* [helpless] can be considered a possible antonym for *zelfverzekerd* [confident], so it is interesting to examine whether it shows the same unexpected distribution. Table 5 shows that this is not the case for TT1985. While readers were divided into considering Daisy confident (score 4, 37.0%) and not confident (score 2, 34.8%), they are clearly not divided in their opinion on whether she is helpless: 45.7% selected the score 2 (not helpless) while only 6.5% selected the score 4 (helpless). Here, a clear contrast with TT1948 can be seen again: while

only 6.5% of the readers of TT1985 consider Daisy helpless, 36.8% of the readers of TT1948 consider her to be so. While most of the scores for TT1985 are either 2 (45.7%) or 3 (26.1%), the scores for TT1948 are more evenly distributed between 2 (26.3%), 3 (22.8%) and 4 (36.8%), suggesting that these readers are more divided in their opinion on Daisy's perceived helplessness than the readers of the retranslation. This difference may be attributed to the fact that the word *hulpeloos* [helpless] has various connotations, ranging from powerlessness to weakness. Again, it depends on the associations of the reader whether the scores may be interpreted as either the one or the other, or as a combination of these sentiments. The spontaneous responses may help shed some light on whether the readers look upon Daisy as someone who might be pitied, judged or both.

Another closely related character trait is *zelfingenomen/arrogant* [conceited and self-absorbed/arrogant]. While confidence is normally a positive trait, too much confidence can make someone conceited, turning it into a negative trait. Table 6 shows that while readers of the retranslation were divided on whether Daisy is confident or not, they clearly find her to be conceited: 54.3% selected the score 4 and only 17.4% selected the score 2. Together, scores 4 and 5 account for almost 70% of the participants. Conversely, while 56.1% of the readers of TT1948 found Daisy lacking in confidence (score 2), 49.1% find her to be conceited. A relatively large group of readers remains neutral (24.6%) after reading TT1948, while this is a much smaller group for TT1985 (10.9%).

Table 6. Scores for character trait *zelfingenomen/arrogant* [conceited and self-absorbed/arrogant]

"The character is conceited and self-absorbed (arrogant)"		Version		Total
		Lili TT1948	Susan TT1985	
1	Count	4	2	6
	% within Version	7.0%	4.3%	5.8%
2	Count	8	8	16
	% within Version	14.0%	17.4%	15.5%
3	Count	14	5	19
	% within Version	24.6%	10.9%	18.4%
4	Count	28	25	53
	% within Version	49.1%	54.3%	51.5%
5	Count	3	6	9
	% within Version	5.3%	13.0%	8.7%
Total	Count	57	46	103
	% within Version	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

The rather paradoxical scores may actually also be taken as evidence that Daisy is perceived as an ambiguous character who evokes contradictory interpretations and emotions in readers. Taking these contradictory scorings into consideration, the spontaneous responses to the individual fragments may provide additional context for where these divided opinions stem from. We expected that fragments 2 and 4 would potentially divide respondents' perceptions of Daisy in terms of all three traits, with fragment 2 focusing on (lack of) confidence, and fragment 4 on helplessness. Fragment 2 included “‘Do they miss me?’ she cried ecstatically.” (1925: 15). The difference between the two translations potentially contributing to different reader perceptions were the addition of “*Denk je*” [Do you think...] (1948: 12), expressing a tentativeness that may create the impression that Daisy is insecure. Alternatively, Daisy's reaction – taken the (pretend) elation implied by “ecstatically” – may be seen as that of someone who is narcissistic and self-absorbed. Fragment 4 included the phrase “awed expression” (1925: 17), discussed above. Would readers of TT1948 indeed see Daisy as helpless and powerless, or as cynical and manipulative?

For fragment 2, fourteen readers of the retranslation label Daisy as *onzeker* [insecure], compared to thirty-one readers of TT1948. A close synonym, *zoekend naar bevestiging* [looking for confirmation] is used only once by both groups. One respondent to TT1948 mentions *behoefstig* [needy], another uses *afhankelijk* [dependent]. These responses clearly reflect the different patterns that emerged for the scores. The other responses (given by both readers who labelled Daisy as insecure as those who did not) can even more clearly be seen as support for our claim that translation choices can affect characterization and reader perception. Twenty-six readers of the retranslation provide positive descriptions including spontaneous, warm, enthusiastic, happy and gregarious – a stark contrast with the twenty-five readers of TT1948 who see Daisy as arrogant, attention-seeking narcissistic, displaying false modesty, over-the-top and pathetic. To compare: only one of the readers of the retranslation who explicitly uses a negative description of Daisy has her down as *ijdel* [vain].

As for helplessness, the word itself is used only once (TT1948), while synonyms *machteloos* [powerless] and *onmachtig* [powerless] appear once in TT1948 and twice in TT1985. One reason may be that the helplessness conveyed by the text is that of a woman who is dependent and frightened (and therefore *weak*) rather than a woman whose wings have been clipped or who is vulnerable.

The spontaneous responses bear out these different connotations, which were also reflected in the translations, primarily as a result of *angstig* [frightened] for Daisy's "awed expression" in fragment 4. The responses to other fragments also contribute to this portrayal of Daisy as someone who is frightened rather than cynical. With 21 readers of TT1948 mentioning *angstig* [frightened] or *bang* [afraid] against only 5 readers of TT1985, the spontaneous responses support the findings from the scores. Similarly, only 10 respondents in TT1948 label Daisy as *zelfverzekerd* [confident] or *zelfbewust* [self-assured], versus 17 in TT1985. For TT1948 *onzeker* [insecure] was used considerably more often to describe Daisy (67 instances and 41 respondents) than for TT1985 (33 instances and 25 respondents). Thus, it can safely be concluded that readers of the first translation do indeed see Daisy as more insecure than readers of the retranslation.

3.3.2.1.2 Silly, Cynical or Shallow?

As discussed in Zeven and Dorst (2020), reviews of *The Great Gatsby* often refer to Daisy as being silly, callous and shallow. Tables 7 - 9 show the scores for characteristics *dom* [silly/unintelligent], *oppervlakkig* [shallow] and *cynisch* [cynical] in *Lili* (1948) and *Susan* (1985). Though the differences between the two translations are not statistically significant for these traits, and the differences are less marked than for confident, helpless and conceited, some interesting differences emerge.

Table 7. Scores for character trait *dom* [silly]

"The character is silly"		Version		Total
		Lili TT1948	Susan TT1985	
1	Count	8	11	19
	% within Version	14.0%	23.9%	18.4%
2	Count	19	8	27
	% within Version	33.3%	17.4%	26.2%
3	Count	19	20	39
	% within Version	33.3%	43.5%	37.9%
4	Count	10	6	16
	% within Version	17.5%	13.0%	15.5%
5	Count	1	1	2
	% within Version	1.8%	2.2%	1.9%
Total	Count	57	46	103
	% within Version	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

After reading TT1948, 19.3% of the participants consider Daisy to be silly/unintelligent (scores 4 and 5), 47.3% does not consider her so (scores 1 and 2) and 33.3% remains neutral. After reading TT1985, considerably more readers remain neutral (43.5%) and fewer either do (15.2% vs 19.3%) or do not (41.3% vs 47.3%) consider her silly/unintelligent. This suggests a slightly more positive view of Daisy's intelligence in the retranslation, though the relatively large neutral group suggests readers may be unsure about her intelligence, an effect that the ambiguity of the original English ST can also be said to create – Daisy may very well be playing dumb a large part of the time.

Table 8. Scores for character trait *cynisch* [cynical]

“The character is cynical”		Version		Total
		Lili TT1948	Susan TT1985	
1	Count	4	6	10
	% within Version	7.0%	13.0%	9.7%
2	Count	12	8	20
	% within Version	21.1%	17.4%	19.4%
3	Count	18	8	26
	% within Version	31.6%	17.4%	25.2%
4	Count	19	19	38
	% within Version	33.3%	41.3%	36.9%
5	Count	4	5	9
	% within Version	7.0%	10.9%	8.7%
Total	Count	57	46	103
	% within Version	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

When it comes to Daisy's cynicism, mixed feelings are more clearly noticeable for TT1948 than TT1985. In TT1948, 21.1% selected score 2 (not cynical), 31.6% remained neutral and 33.3% selected score 4 (cynical). After reading TT1985, readers were more clearly convinced of Daisy's cynicism: 41.3% selected score 4, while 17.4% remained neutral and 17.4% selected score 2. Interestingly, this may be taken as a sign that the retranslation was more successful in showing that Daisy is cynical rather than silly or shallow, and therefore more in line with how her behaviour is likely to be interpreted in the source text. This is supported by the findings for *oppervlakkig* [shallow], where 12.3% of the readers of TT1948 selected score 5 versus only 2.2% of the readers of TT1985. Conversely, 17.5% selected score 2 (not shallow) after reading TT1948 versus 30.4% for TT1985.

In order to elicit answers that might help to determine whether or not Daisy is perceived to be shallow, fragment 5 included a reference to the “bantering inconsequence” (1925: 24) of a conversation between Daisy and Jordan. Fragment 4 (discussed above) and fragment 7, which includes Daisy’s comment on what she hopes her daughter to become “a beautiful little fool” (1925: 22) were selected to find out if readers would mention Daisy’s cynicism.

Table 9. Scores for character trait *oppervlakkig* [shallow]

“The character is shallow”		Version		Total
		Lili TT1948	Susan TT1985	
1	Count	2	2	4
	% within Version	3.5%	4.3%	3.9%
2	Count	10	14	24
	% within Version	17.5%	30.4%	23.3%
3	Count	20	13	33
	% within Version	35.1%	28.3%	32.0%
4	Count	18	16	34
	% within Version	31.6%	34.8%	33.0%
5	Count	7	1	8
	% within Version	12.3%	2.2%	7.8%
Total	Count	57	46	103
	% within Version	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Even though *callous* was not included as a separate personality trait in the scoring, we did expect respondents to use this description in their spontaneous responses, in particular after reading fragment 5. The cold indifference that Daisy seems to exude may well contribute to readers’ perceptions of Daisy being *shallow*. Yet although answers like *afstandelijk* [detached], *koud* [cold], *koel* [cool], *kil* [cold/impassive], *onverschillig* [indifferent] and *lusteloos* [listless/apathetic] abound in both groups, explicit references to shallowness such as *oppervlakkig* [shallow], *vlak* [shallow] and *zonder diepgang* [without depth/shallow] and *leeg* [empty], *inhoudsloos* [without substance] and *onbeduidend* [inconsequential] were made by only a few respondents, namely six for each translation.

The spontaneous answers regarding Daisy’s cynicism are much more unambiguous. They clearly support the findings from the scores regarding the mixed feelings respondents of TT1948 seem to have when it comes to Daisy’s cynicism. Although almost the same percentage of readers of both translations

refer to Daisy as cynical and/or bitter, as well as disillusioned and/or disappointed, the remaining labels given by readers of TT1948 were at times contradictory (e.g. strong/confident v. weak/insecure), and more frequent references were made to Daisy being powerless by this group than by the respondents to the retranslation. The clearest difference between the two groups is that readers of TT1948 described Daisy in more negative terms, such as weak, submissive, crazy, irrational, panicky, insecure, nasty and catty, whereas most (though not all) of the remaining the answers of readers of the retranslations suggest that Daisy feels like she is put behind, sad, unhappy, fatalistic, tragic, loving and caring.

3.3.2.1.3 Manipulative and Insincere?

Tables 10 and 11 show the scores for character trait *manipulatief* [manipulative] and *oprecht* [sincere] for *Lili* (1948) and *Susan* (1985).

Table 10. Scores for character trait *manipulatief* [manipulative]

“The character is manipulative”		Version		Total
		Lili TT1948	Susan TT1985	
1	Count	2	1	3
	% within Version	3.5%	2.2%	2.9%
2	Count	6	2	8
	% within Version	10.5%	4.3%	7.8%
3	Count	7	2	9
	% within Version	12.3%	4.3%	8.7%
4	Count	22	31	53
	% within Version	38.6%	67.4%	51.5%
5	Count	20	10	30
	% within Version	35.1%	21.7%	29.1%
Total	Count	57	46	103
	% within Version	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Contrary to our expectations, the scores for manipulative are much higher for the retranslation: a considerable 67.4% of the respondents selected score 4 for this trait in TT1985, compared to 38.6% in TT1948. However, TT1948 has more 5 scores: 35.1% versus 21.7%. Taken together, a staggering 89.1% find Daisy manipulative after reading TT1985 and 73.7% after reading TT1948.

Table 11. Scores for character trait *oprecht* [sincere]

“The character is sincere”		Version		Total
		Lili TT1948	Susan TT1985	
1	Count	6	7	13
	% within Version	10.5%	15.2%	12.6%
2	Count	30	22	52
	% within Version	52.6%	47.8%	50.5%
3	Count	14	10	24
	% within Version	24.6%	21.7%	23.3%
4	Count	6	6	12
	% within Version	10.5%	13.0%	11.7%
5	Count	1	1	2
	% within Version	1.8%	2.2%	1.9%
Total	Count	57	46	103
	% within Version	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

For *oprecht* [sincere] it is first of all striking that there are no noticeable differences between the two versions. Readers of both TT1948 and TT1985 are united in their opinion that Daisy is insincere: in total, 63.1% (10.5% + 52.6%) of the readers of TT1948 and 63.0% (15.2% + 47.8%) of the readers of TT1985 did not find her sincere. Another 24.6% (TT1948) and 21.7% (TT1985) remained neutral. Only 12.3% (TT1948) and 15.2% (TT1985) considered here sincere to some degree.

It is important to note that the word *manipulatief* [manipulative] is never used in these fragments, so the question remains which fragments, and which lexical choices in these fragments, trigger the readers' interpretation of Daisy's behaviour as manipulative. As discussed above, the Dutch diminutive *maniertje* [mannerism] may very well be one such trigger word. The spontaneous responses show that for fragments 1 and 6 participants used either the word *manipulatief* [manipulative] itself or words related to this character trait. The number of times that manipulative is explicitly mentioned by readers of TT1948 is 22, by nineteen respondents (two using the word for both fragments 1 and 6, and one using the word 4 times: for fragments 1, 3, 4, and 6). For TT1985, the total is 16, by fourteen respondents (two using the word for both fragments 1 and 6). For both groups, two-thirds of the instances in which manipulative is mentioned explicitly are triggered by fragment 1: fifteen of the nineteen respondents to TT1948 and ten of the fourteen respondents to TT1985.

Based on these spontaneous responses, one would have expected the scores for *manipulatief* [manipulative] to have been higher for the 1948 translation, not the 1985 retranslation. The reason behind the finding that the scores showed a higher percentage of the respondents to TT1985 regarding Daisy as manipulative can be sought in other words that may contribute to this picture. The words that may contribute to readers' perception of Daisy being manipulative depend on the context: in fragment 1 they reflect the readers' reactions to the (dis)ingenuous game Daisy seems to play, as well as to her perceived lack of sincerity; in fragment 6 the answers contributing to the picture of a manipulative woman are divided between reactions suggesting that Daisy tries to wrap men around her little finger and respondents labelling her as insincere.

Some of the descriptions used in reaction to fragment 1 that are likely to be a result of the interpretations made by both translators in their use of the diminutive *maniertje* [mannerism] have more negative connotations, such as *listig* [cunning] and *geslepen* [cunning], *berekenend* [calculating], *sluw* [cunning or sly], *slinks* [sly], and *geslepen* [shrewd] or *doortrapt* [shrewd]. Others portray Daisy in a more positive light, such *slim* [smart or clever] and *gewiekst* [clever], *geraffineerd* [clever and cunning] or *uitgekookt* [cunning], which all denote ingenuity with connotations of a certain sneaky admiration. Contrary to what might be expected on the basis of the scores, however, respondents to TT1985 refer to Daisy's playing with the narrator's emotions only slightly more frequently than the respondents to TT1948 (eleven for TT1985 versus ten for TT1948), and the descriptions with more negative and more positive connotations are evenly distributed in both groups of readers.

Both groups of respondents use a range of descriptions that may not be synonyms but which nevertheless point to their regarding Daisy as insincere, such as *nep* [fake], *overdreven* [exaggerated], *onwaarachtig* [disingenuous], *toneelspeelster* [actress], *gemaakt* [pretend] and *onecht* [artificial]. For fragment 1 there are ten respondents in both groups who use such descriptions. For fragment 6, there is a distinct difference between the number of respondents viewing Daisy as insincere on the basis of the answers given by respondents: ten respondents to TT1948 mention behaviour or qualities that might contribute to her being seen as *gespeelde onschuld* [playing innocent], *onecht* [artificial], *nepvamp* [fake femme fatale], *overdreven* [exaggerated], while only four respondents to TT1985 mention similar qualities. Adding up all of these spontaneous responses, the readers of

TT1948 were initially more negative in their view of Daisy in terms of her perceived manipulative behaviour and lack of sincerity than their scores may reveal.

3.3.2.1.4 Seductive?

Table 12. Scores for character trait *verleidster* [temptress]

“The character is a temptress”		Version		Total
		Lili TT1948	Susan TT1985	
1	Count	4	1	5
	% within Version	7.0%	2.2%	4.9%
2	Count	6	5	11
	% within Version	10.5%	10.9%	10.7%
3	Count	12	13	25
	% within Version	21.1%	28.3%	24.3%
4	Count	30	21	51
	% within Version	52.6%	45.7%	49.5%
5	Count	5	6	11
	% within Version	8.8%	13.0%	10.7%
Total	Count	57	46	103
	% within Version	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

The results in table 12 are rather complex: while the highest score (5) is selected more often for TT1985 (13.0% versus 8.8%), score 4 is selected more often for TT1948 (52.6% versus 45.7%). Combining scores 1 and 2, and scores 4 and 5, we then see that for TT1948 17.5% of the participants did not find Daisy a temptress while 61.4% did. For TT1985, 13.1% did not consider her a temptress while 58.7% did. This shows that again, contrary to expectations, the retranslation is received as more negative in its portrayal of Daisy than the 1948 translation, though the differences are small and not statistically significant. Compared to manipulative, Daisy is not perceived as overly seductive. Especially in contemporary readings, this may be considered a sign of Daisy being in control and powerful.

One important issue to consider here though is whether being seductive is actually considered a negative trait by readers: is Daisy seen as flirtatious, playful and spontaneous or as cunning, manipulative and a temptress that uses her charm get her way? Looking at the spontaneous responses to the seven fragments, we see that the notion of a temptress is actually referred to more than twice as much by readers of the first translation: eleven respondents of TT1948 mention the

word *verleidster* [temptress] or *verleidelijk* [seductive] and *verleidend* [seducing] a total of 12 times, against only five respondents of TT1985. Words that might contribute to the image of a woman who is seductive or a temptress, such as *flirterig* [flirtatious], *koket* [coquettish] and *uitdagend* [seductive], are mentioned by both groups of readers. In both groups, too, some answers, such as *opdringerig* [pushy] are clearly negative, while some are positive, e.g. *liefdevol* [loving] or *spontaan* [spontaneous]. There is, however, also a large number responses where it is difficult to gauge to what extent the readers see Daisy's behaviour in a negative light or not, such as *flirterig* [flirtatious], which may imply either playfulness or manipulation, depending on the beholder. Some respondents refer to Daisy's flirtatiousness in combination with positive qualities or behaviour, such as a sense of humour or playfulness, whereas others mention it in combination with references to Daisy being calculating or insincere.

Given the scope of this chapter, it is impossible to zoom on these complex issues in further detail. The only conclusions regarding Daisy's image as a temptress that may be drawn after comparing the spontaneous responses to the scores are that based on the number of times words describing her as a temptress or seductive were explicitly mentioned in the spontaneous responses, the prediction that readers of the first translation would be more likely to see Daisy as a temptress than readers of the retranslation was perfectly plausible, and that the outcome of the scoring for this personality trait is indeed surprising.

3.4 Conclusion

This chapter set out to find empirical support for our claims that translator decisions may affect characterization in novels by using a reader response survey. Based on our micro-textual analysis of the two existing Dutch translations of F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby*, we argued that readers of the two Dutch translations are presented with a more negative portrayal of Daisy Buchanan than the English source text, and that readers of the translations may as a result have a more negative opinion about her personality. We argued that both Dutch translations present Daisy as more manipulative, seductive and weak than the English source text, the 1948 translation even more so than the 1985 retranslation. We therefore expected to find that Dutch readers in our reader response survey would demonstrate such negative interpretations of Daisy's personality in their

spontaneous responses as well as in their scoring of a number of personality traits. With regard to the issue of retranslation, we expected the 1948 translation to result in an even more negative reception than the 1985 retranslation.

The results show that readers do indeed spontaneously refer to many negative personality traits, such as shallow, manipulative, weak, insincere, pushy, etc. In addition, for the personality traits *zelfverzekerd* [confident] and *hulpeloos* [helpless] the statistical analysis did indeed confirm that the 1948 translation results in statistically different – more negative – opinions than the 1985 retranslation. Specifically, readers of the 1948 translation found Daisy significantly more helpless and less confident. Though the results for the other personality traits were not statistically significant, some interesting patterns emerged from an analysis of the scores. Based on a combination of the scores and spontaneous responses, we see that the readers of the 1948 translation see Daisy as more helpless, insecure and frightened. With regard to Daisy's cynicism, the responses support the findings from the scores that the respondents of the 1948 translation have mixed feelings, using contradictory labels at times, and referring frequently to Daisy's helplessness, while the respondents to the 1985 retranslation are united in considering Daisy cynical rather than helpless, and also sometimes describe Daisy as being put behind, fatalistic and tragic. Contrary to our expectations, readers of the 1985 retranslation actually found Daisy more manipulative than readers of the 1948 translation when considering the scores. Yet the spontaneous responses showed they were initially more negative. Both groups frequently referred to this characteristic, and variations on it. Though readers of the 1948 translation made more frequent reference to Daisy being a temptress, both groups do not score her as very seductive, and the responses also indicate that this is not necessarily considered a negative trait.

The current study shows both the value and the limitations of using a reader response survey. Working with real readers and spontaneous responses, a lot of data is generated, which is often 'messy' and complex to interpret. Nevertheless, we feel that both the spontaneous responses and the scores yield interesting insights into how the readers are interpreting Daisy's personality, even in response to very short fragments. After reading only seven extremely short fragments, readers already have their opinions ready, and these are clearly rather negative. The results of the responses and scores both support our claims that translator decisions may affect characterisation and result in different opinions from the source text or a previous

translation. We therefore encourage all translators to take note of such effects and reflect more consciously on how existing gender stereotypes may influence our translator decisions, and whether such interpretations are warranted based on the language of the source text. We also feel that retranslations in particular may prove to be a valuable tool in exposing how language perpetuates, confirms or rejects gender stereotypes and how characters are described in terms of their gender, sexual orientation, race, ethnicity, religion, age, social status or education. Obviously, more research is needed on retranslations in general, and on retranslations and their effect on reader responses in particular. But the results of our brief reader response survey clearly show that the cliché is inevitably true: language matters.

3.5 Appendix

Gatsby questionnaires

Fragments presented to participants group A

Version ‘Lily’

Fragment 1

Weer lachte ze alsof ze iets heel geestigs gezegd had, en hield mijn hand een ogenblik vast, waarbij ze mij in het gezicht keek als wilde ze mij verzekeren dat er niemand op deze wereld bestond, die ze zo graag zien wou als mij. Dit was een van haar maniertjes.

Fragment 2

Ik vertelde haar, dat ik op weg naar het oosten in Chicago een dag was overgebleven, en dat een dozijn mensen haar lieten groeten.

“Denk je dat ze mij missen?” riep ze extatisch uit.

Fragment 3

... ze gaapte en kwam met enkele vlugge bewegingen stond ze op. “Ik ben stijf,” klaagde ze, “ik heb te lang op deze divan gelegen.”

“Het is niet mijn schuld,” antwoordde Daisy vinnig, “ik heb de hele middag geprobeerd je naar New York te krijgen.”

Fragment 4

Voordat ik antwoorden kon, keek ze met angstige uitdrukking naar haar pink. “Kijk!” Klaagde ze, “ik heb hem bezeerd.” We keken allen, – de knokkel was zwart en blauw.

Fragment 5

Soms praatten miss Baker en zij gelijktijdig, bescheiden en met schertsende inconsequentie, niet bepaald babbelziek, maar koel zoals haar witte japonnen en haar onpersoonlijke ogen, ontdaan van alle verlangen.

Fragment 6

Alsof zijn afwezigheid iets in Daisy opwekte, leunde zij voorover en zei met haar bedwelmende stem: “Ik ben blij je hier bij ons te hebben, Nick. Je herinnert me aan een – aan een roos, een echte roos. Vind je ook niet?” En vragend keek ze naar miss Baker: “Een echte roos?”

Fragment 7

Ik bemerkte dat onstuimige gevoelens zich van haar meester gemaakt hadden, daarom vroeg ik haar iets over haar dochtertje, in de mening dat het haar kalmeren zou.

...

“En ik hoop dat ze een dwaas zal zijn, - dat is het beste wat een meisje in deze wereld zijn kan, een mooie, kleine dwaas.”

Fragments presented to participants group B

Version ‘Susan’

Fragment 1

Ze lachte weer alsof ze iets heel geestigs had gezegd, en hield mijn hand even vast, waarbij ze mij in de ogen keek, me verzekerend dat er niemand anders ter wereld was die ze zo graag wilde zien. Dat was zo een maniertje van haar.

Fragment 2

Ik vertelde haar dat ik onderweg naar de oostkust mijn reis een dag in Chicago onderbroken had, en dat een dozijn mensen haar liet groeten.

‘Missen ze me?’ riep ze opgetogen uit.

Fragment 3

‘Daar moet je mij niet op aankijken,’ beet Daisy van zich af, ‘ik heb je al de hele middag naar New York proberen te krijgen.’

Fragment 4

Voordat ik iets terug kon zeggen, vestigden haar ogen zich met ontzetting vervuld op haar pink. ‘Kijk eens!’ klaagde ze, ‘ik heb hem bezeerd.’ We keken allemaal – de knokkel was bont en blauw.

Fragment 5

Soms praatten juffrouw Baker en zij tegelijk, onopdringerig en met schertsende onbeduidendheid die nooit echt gebabbel werd, die zo koel was als hun witte japonnen en hun onpersoonlijke ogen waarin elk verlangen afwezig was.

Fragment 6

Alsof zijn afwezigheid iets binnenin haar opwekte, leunde Daisy weer voorover, haar stem gloeiend en zangerig. ‘Ik vind het fijn je aan mijn tafel te hebben, Nick. Je doet me denken aan een – aan een roos, een absolute roos. Vind je ook niet?’ Steun vragend wendde ze zich tot juffrouw Baker: ‘Een absolute roos?’

Fragment 7

Ik zag dat ze erg van streek was, dus stelde ik haar een paar, mijns inziens, kalmerende vragen over haar dochtertje.

...

“En ik hoop dat ze een dom gansje zal zijn – dat is het beste wat een meisje kan zijn in deze wereld, een mooi, dom gansje.”

Characteristic listed for the participants of both groups to score on a 1 to 5 on a Likert scale

Het vrouwelijke personage is...

assertief

hulpeloos

cynisch

onoprecht

kwetsbaar

dom

egoïstisch

onzeker

bitchy

manipulatief

vol van zichzelf

oppervlakkig

verleidend