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WATERSHIP DOWN

Translating Watership Down

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1. Abstract

This thesis analyses the major issues that occur when translating Richard Adams' *Watership Down* (1972) into Dutch by categorising them into Christiane Nord's four categories of translation problems. The focus lies on text-specific problems, such as the rabbit language Lapine, the use of eye dialect, the names of the characters in the novel, and the religious elements. Two passages of the novel have been translated into Dutch accompanied by footnotes, which explain certain choices and different options for the chosen translation. After that, a brief comparison is made between the already existing translation by Max Shuchart and the translation made for this thesis.

2. Introduction

Watership Down was Richard Adams' first novel. It was published by Rex Collings Limited in 1972 after having been rejected by several other publishers. The inspiration for the novel came from stories Adams told his children during long car drives. *Watership Down* was originally intended as a children's book, but is now also widely accepted as literature for adults. This can largely be attributed to Adams' implementation of classical heroic and quest themes as in Homer's *Odyssey* and Virgil's *Aeneid*, and the religious symbolism used throughout the novel. These are things a translator must take into account when translating this novel.

However, there are other things a translator must think about when translating this book, such as the use of language and names, the style of writing and many other translational problems which occur when making a translation of *Watership Down*.

The novel is based around Hazel and Fiver, two rabbit-brothers who feel that danger is coming to their warren. The plot revolves around their group of rabbits who flee the warren in search of a safe new home elsewhere and the adventures they have along the way. Important elements of the novel are the religious aspects, heroism, leadership and mythology. This can be seen in the different heroic character traits of the rabbits which allude to epic poems: Hazel is courageous, Bigwig is strong, there is poetry and storytelling. Fiver is often compared to the seer Cassandra, who is not believed when she predicts what will happen to Troy. The quest for a new home is one of the most important themes of the novel, which again alludes to the *Odyssey* and the *Aeneid*. These themes are not very apparent in the passages I chose to translate, so I will not go into this aspect any further, but it is something to be considered when translating the whole novel.

When reading Richard Adams' *Watership Down* (1972), the most striking aspect – besides, of course, the fact that the characters are talking rabbits – is the language these

rabbits use. Adams himself refers to it as Lapine, a language he created for the rabbit characters "wherever a rabbit word was needed rather than words used by human beings" (Introduction xiv). But how does a translator deal with these neologisms? All the rabbits in the novel have names which have either a special meaning, explained in footnotes in the text, or are named after plants. This is also a translational difficulty in the text. Another issue when translating this novel, is the use of phonetic speech by some of the characters.

The novel has already been translated into Dutch in 1974 by Max Shuchart, titled *Waterschapsheuvel*, but has never been translated again. The translation can be considered as a little outdated, because it was written more than forty years ago. The target audience for my translation will be readers of the Dutch literary publishing house, Het Spectrum, where the first translation has been published. This will benefit the translation comparison I will conduct after discussing the main translation issues.

This thesis will give an overview of the translational difficulties of this novel, using Christiane Nord's theory of translation problems. It will also give potential and desirable solutions for these problems.

To start with I will analyse parts of the novel using Christiane Nord's theory. Translation scholar Christiane Nord classifies translation problems into four different categories. By categorising the different translations difficulties of the source text, the translator will have a better overview of the different types of problems and can already start thinking about possible solutions before actually translating into the target language. The four categories are 1) pragmatic problems, 2) linguistic problems, 3) culture-specific problems, and 4) text-specific problems, which will be explained in more detail per subchapter. The main focus will lie on the fourth category with problems such as the use of Lapine, naming of rabbits and use of eye dialect. This will be followed by my translation of several passages from the novel. These are the passages which contain a lot of the translation problems

discussed in the analysis. The annotations will explain some of the choices I made during the translation. I will compare my translation to that of Shuchart to see how the major translation problems, namely the Lapine, names of characters and Kehaar's speech, were solved by him. This will be followed by a short conclusion in which I will summarize and reflect on my findings.

3. Theoretical Framework: Analysis

3a. Pragmatic Problems

The first category Nord establishes is pragmatic problems. Pragmatic problems are differences in background knowledge between a source text reader and a target text reader, and the difference between the time and place in which the source text was written and in which the target text is read.

A pragmatic problem which arises stems from the differences between English and Dutch culture and time. The story is set on the English countryside and was published in 1972, almost half a century ago. A translator must take these things into consideration when translating the text. Nowadays, people may have different ideas of life in the country. Industrial improvements have changed the way farms are run. In the novel, Hazel is shot by one of the farmers. This is something that could be considered odd, because it is unusual for farmers to own a gun and to use it on animals. A translator may choose to modernise the text or otherwise needs to make the reader aware when she story is set.

The second pragmatic problem is the intertextuality of the text. The source text uses a quote at the start of every chapter from novels, plays, songs, poems, the Bible, and quotations of famous historical figures. Most of these are excerpts of British literature, but there are also a few which are in French. When translating these, I would use already existing Dutch translations and I would not translate the French, because this is also not done in the source text and the Dutch reader is likely to have comparable, if not more extensive knowledge of French than the original reader. It would seem odd not to use already existing translations, because some quotes are well known and the title or name of the person who said it, are mentioned under the epigraphs. The epigraphs all have a relevant meaning to the chapter they

are in, which also has to be taken into consideration. These epigraphs have a kind of
foreshadowing effect of what is going to happen in the coming chapter.

3b. Linguistic Problems

The second category is linguistic problems. Syntax, vocabulary and conventions can differ
between an English source text and a Dutch target text. Adams uses long sentences, with a lot
of subclauses, which is unusual in Dutch and it would be quite hard and very unnatural to
keep the same structure in a Dutch translation. Other than that, there are not many major
linguistic issues in *Watership Down.* In the footnotes accompanying my translation, I discuss
several minor linguistic translation issues. Most of these are words or constructions that do
not occur in Dutch and therefore had to be changed. Constructions such as 'a five-barred gate'
or 'the May sunset' cannot be translated in a similar construction in Dutch. Sometimes the
sentences structure had to be changed in order to make the sentence more understandable in
Dutch. Words such as 'runt' do not really have a Dutch equivalent and had to be changed into
something which is similar in meaning. There are also certain idioms which cannot be
changed into a Dutch idiom, so it had to be translated into something which was closest in
meaning to the source text.

3c. Culture-Specific Problems

The third category concerns translation problems which arise from a difference between the
norms and conventions of the source culture and the target culture, such as politeness
conventions or a difference in measurement units. There are not that many culture-specific
issues in *Watership Down;* the main culture-specific elements are the name of the farm and

names of surrounding areas. However, in the front of the novel is a detailed map, which shows the area where the story takes place and the legend explains where certain incidents happen. The translator may choose to think of Dutch names for these places or to transfer the English names into the Dutch text. I would choose retaining the English names of the countryside, because this makes the reader more aware that the story is set in England.

3d. Text-Specific Problems

The fourth category is that of the text-specific problems. These translation difficulties are those which are specific for a particular text and for which the solution cannot be standardised. The novel has quite a few problems that can be put into this category.

<u>Lapine</u>

The first one is the use of Lapine, which consists of neologisms. Richard Adams gives a brief explanation of the origin of Lapine in his introduction to the novel, which would also be translated into Dutch if a translation were to be published. This helps a translator when thinking of how to translate the neologisms into Dutch. Adams created Lapine "wherever a rabbit word was needed rather than words used by human beings" (Introduction xiv). Most of the Lapine terms are explained in footnotes or become clear when reading the text. These terms are used by all the rabbits. According to Adams "[t]here is no grammar or construction in the language [Lapine]. It is simply a motley collection of substantives, adjectives, and verbs. Here and there a word is onomatopoeic (for example, *hrududu*, the sound of a tractor going along)" (Introduction xiv). The fact that there is no grammar makes it a bit easier to translate because it is one less thing to have to take into consideration. However, the onomatopoeic words are probably the most difficult ones to translate, because the pronunciation will differ between the source and target audience. For example, the word

hrududu would be more likely spelled as *hroedoedoe* in Dutch. Not all the words are onomatopoeia's, but Adams states about the sound of the words: "some of the invented words were given a kind of wuffy, fluffy sound (for example, *Efrafa*) – the sort of noises that rabbits *might* make if they did talk" (Introduction xiv).

Adams explains that "[t]he Lapine plural suffix *il*, rather than the English suffix *s*, was used to help emphasize that Lapine was a different language" (Introduction xiv). Seeing as Dutch also uses *s*, and sometimes *en* to denote a plural, the suffix *il* can be used in Dutch as well, as it creates similar distance. For example, the word *elil*, which means 'enemies', can be used in the target text as well. In the source text this word is never used in its singular form and can be transferred into Dutch without a difference in pronunciation. The word *elil* could shadow the word *evil*, which would be lost in a Dutch translation when using *elil*, but seeing as the other Lapine words do not bare any resemblance to existing words, I do not think it is very important to keep that connotation in the translation.

<u>Eye dialect</u>

The second text-specific problem is the use of eye dialect: some of the speech is written down phonetically. The seagull Kehaar's outlandish speech is shown on page with the use of eye dialect. This term was "used to describe the phenomenon of unconventional spelling used to reproduce colloquial usage" (Brett 49). Eye dialect "clearly poses problems for the translator" (Brett 50). David Brett explains that

> [f]ew languages display such a tenuous relationship between sound and orthographic representation as there is in English, hence, the use of eye dialect *sensu stricto* may not be feasible in the target language. Furthermore, regional or class-based accents, and all the stereotypes they evoke, are unlikely to have exact counterparts in other languages. (50)

Brett discusses Massimiliano Morini's different strategies which a translator can use to translate eye dialect into the target language. According to Morini, the translator can "1) write his target text in the standard version of the target language; 2) employ two or more variants of the target language; 3) translate one of the variants by a non-standard (incorrect, popular) variant of the target language" (50).

Kehaar is a seagull, based on a "Norwegian Resistance fighter" (Introduction xii) Adams had met during the war, who has a broken wing and comes to live with the rabbits. Hazel employs Kehaar, when he is able to fly again, to find out more about the area they have come to and to see if there are any female rabbits in the neighbourhood. Because Kehaar is a bird, his Lapine is not very good, but he is able to communicate with the rabbits in a deficient use of the language. In translating *Watership Down* I think it would be unwise to standardise Kehaar's speech, because it is mentioned several times how outlandish he sounds to the rabbits and how his speech is different from the Lapine language the rabbits use. By not using eye dialect, Kehaar's speech would seem perfectly understandable to the rabbits and it would seem strange to then have the narrator mention the strangeness of Kehaar's speech. Furthermore, it emphasizes the fact that Kehaar is not a rabbit and does not speak Lapine.

Brett states that a translator, by using strategy 2) or 3), "risks transferring the text onto a sociolinguistic plane distant from that of the original, or creating hierarchies that are not present in the source text, respectively" (51), but Brett offers a fourth possibility: "the creation of a synthetic target language, composed of incorrect or slightly modified words and phrases and by regional words and expressions phonetically adapted to the rules of the target language" (51). In my translation I will try to use this strategy, because I think is the most fitting for this text. According to Cees Koster, if a dialect only plays a minor role in a text, it can be domesticized into a standard use of Dutch, but if the dialect is important for the text, it would be unacceptable to standardise the language (Koster 40). I will try to represent

Kehaar's speech by using a made-up version of Dutch in which the pronunciation can be read by using eye dialect. It is hard to prevent the eye dialect from becoming stigmatised. The dialect can become associated with certain populations, which should be avoided, because the text should remain objective and should not show anyone in a bad light. One way of preventing this is by toning the use of eye dialect down and by trying to make sure the dialogue does not remind the reader of certain communities. Another solution can be to use phonetic spelling of words. I will try to create a synthetic language in which Kehaar uses the same tone throughout his speech and to not make the eye dialect too intense.

Character names

The third text-specific translation problem is the names of the characters. A translator may choose to use the strategy of foreignization, in which case the proper names are kept the same in the target text as they are in the source text. The opposite strategy is domestication; the names are translated or changed into ones that fit the target text. Because the meaning of the names in *Watership Down* is significant to the characterization of the rabbits, it would be wise to use domestication in order for the target audience to understand this significance. If the original names are maintained, in other words, foreignized in translation, their significance will be lost. Some of the names are explained in footnotes, others are simply names of plants or flowers. Evelina Jaleniauskienė and Vilma Čičelytė discuss different strategies which can be used when translating proper names. For my translation I plan to use localisation, which is when translators change the names into references in the culture of the target audience. Jaleniauskienė and Čičelytė mention that this also "includes phonological and grammatical adaptation of names and the use of gender endings" (33). The rabbit's names which are also names of plants will be translated into their Dutch equivalents.

Religious elements

Another text-specific problem in *Watership Down* is the religious elements in the novel. The rabbits have their own form of religion and throughout the novel they tell each other allegorical stories. According to Benjamin J. Benefiel this religion makes the reader "able to understand how the rabbits relate to each other and the rest of the world, how they view the nature of death and thus the meaning of life, and most importantly what it means to be a rabbit" (5). He states that "[w]ithout an understanding of the religious aspects of the novel, a reader of Watership Down would be lost in trying to understand these characters as real beings in a real world" (5). The rabbit's religion adds a whole new layer to the story and when translating the text, this should be taken into account. The religious elements are not, according to Adams, based on an actual religion, as he stated in an interview with BBC Radio in 2007. Because of this, there are no set structures or allusions that a translator has to consider, which offers a bit more translational freedom. The religious elements do not occur in the passages I translated.

The use of Lapine, eye dialect, names and religious elements are the major translation problems of *Watership Down*. Of course there are many more smaller issues a translator has to keep in mind when translating, but I have tried to give a general overview of the biggest problems that occur when translating this novel. The next part consists of my translation of two different parts of the novel. The first translation is part of the first chapter and the second one is part of chapter twenty-three. I chose these passages because they contained the most elements of the translational problems I have discussed above. I have used footnotes to explain some of my choices in translation.

4. Translation & Footnotes

Text A

De sleutelbloemen waren uitgebloeid. Aan de rand van het bos, waar minder begroeiing was en de grond richting een oud hek helde met daar voorbij een greppel met bramenstruiken, waren nog maar een paar gele stukjes tussen het bosbingelkruid en de wortels van een eikenboom te zien. Aan de andere kant van het hek zat het hogere deel van het veld vol met konijnenholen. Op sommige plekken was het gras volledig verdwenen en overal lagen hoopjes opgedroogde keutels, waardoorheen slechts het kruiskruid nog groeide. Zo'n honderd meter[1] verderop, onderaan de heuvel, stroomde de beek, minder dan een meter breed, half verborgen door boterbloemen, waterkers en blauwe beekpunge. Het wagenspoor liep over een stenen duiker omhoog tegen de tegenovergelegen heuvel tot aan een traliehek met vijf stangen[2] in de doornhaag. Het hek leidde naar het pad.

Deze zonsondergang in mei[3] bracht rode wolken, er was nog een halfuur tot de schemering. De droge helling was vol met konijnen – sommige knabbelden op het dunne gras vlakbij hun holen, andere durfden wat verder naar beneden te gaan om paardenbloemen en misschien een sleutelbloem te zoeken die de andere konijnen over het hoofd hadden gezien. Hier en daar zat er een rechtop op een mierenhoop rond te kijken, met rechtopstaande oren en zijn neus in de wind. Maar een merel, die onverstoorbaar aan de rand van het bos aan het zingen was, maakte duidelijk dat er hier niks verontrustends was, en in de andere richting, langs de beek, was alles goed zichtbaar, leeg en stil. Alles was vredig op de konijnenberg.

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[1] This is a culture-specific problem. I changed the measurements 'yards' and 'feet' into metres, because this is more common in Dutch. Publishing houses require this from translators and the reader has a better idea of the distance.

[2] This is a linguistic problem. The construction 'a five-barred gate' is not a construction that is used in Dutch and therefore had to be changed. Using Andrew Chesterman's strategy, I would classify this as a change in clause structure. I chose to contract 'barred gate' into *traliehek* and added the 'five barred' behind it as *met vijf stangen*.

[3] This is also a linguistic problem of the same nature as the one in footnote 2. 'The May sunset' had to be changed into a grammatical Dutch equivalent, because *de mei zonsondergang* is not a construction which can be used in Dutch.

Bovenaan de oever, vlakbij de wilde kersenboom waar de merel aan het zingen was, was een klein cluster van holletjes, bijna verborgen onder de doornstruiken. In de groene schemering, bij de ingang van een van deze holen, zaten twee konijnen naast elkaar. Na een tijdje kwam de grootste eruit, glipte in de beschutting van de doornstruiken langs de oever en zo over de greppel het veld in. Even later volgde de ander.

Het eerste konijn stopte op een zonnig plekje en krabde met snelle bewegingen van zijn achterpoot aan zijn oor. Alhoewel hij een jaarling was en nog niet zijn volle gewicht had bereikt, had hij niet de verontruste blik die de meeste "paria's"[4] in hun ogen hadden – dat wil zeggen de rangschikking van gewone konijnen in hun eerste levensjaar die, ontberend aan aristocratische afkomst of ongebruikelijk formaat en kracht, worden onderdrukt door hun ouderlingen, terwijl ze een zo goed mogelijk leven proberen te leiden (vaak in de open lucht) aan de rand van hun wrangen.[5] Hij zag eruit alsof hij wist hoe hij voor zichzelf moest zorgen. Toen hij rechtop ging zitten, om zich heen keek en met beide voorpoten over zijn neus wreef, straalde hij scherpzinnigheid en kracht uit. Zodra hij ervan verzekerd was dat alles veilig was, vouwde hij zijn oren naar achter en begon aan het gras te knagen.

Zijn metgezel leek minder op z'n gemak. Hij was klein, had grote, starende ogen en hief en draaide zijn hoofd op een manier[6] die niet zozeer waakzaamheid, maar meer een onophoudelijke nervositeit suggereerde. Zijn neus bewoog voortdurend, en toen een hommel zoemend naar een distel achter hem vloog, sprong[7] hij op en draaide zich verschrikt om,

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[4] This is a text-specific problem. The word 'outskirters' has a specific meaning in this context. I thought the word *paria* has the same connotations as 'outskirters'. Another option was *buitenstaanders*, but this sounds less like a term that would be used when talking about a rabbit warren.

[5] This is a linguistic problem. This sentence is very long and has a lot of subclauses. Dutch needs more words to make the sentence clear and readable. I changed the hyphens into parentheses, because Dutch tends to not use hyphens as much as English.

[6] This is a linguistic problem. The idiom 'had a way of' is lost and this is due to there not being a suitable Dutch equivalent. In English this means the quality the action has or usual type of behaviour. I think using *op een manier* (in a certain way) comes quite close to the meaning in English.

[7] This is a linguistic problem. I translated the word 'jumped' as *sprong* and not as *schrok*, because I thought the words 'with a start' would show that the rabbit is scared, which I translated as *verschrikt*. If I had used both *schrok* and *verschrikt,* it would have been a bit redundant. I also interpreted it as literally jumping up, because that is what a startled rabbit would do.

waardoor twee dichtbij gezeten konijnen een hol inschoten, totdat de dichtstbijzijnde, een

rammelaar wiens oren een zwarte punt hadden, hem herkende en weer verder at.

'Ach, het is Vijfje[8] maar,' zei het zwart-orige konijn, 'bang voor bromvliegen. Kom,

Duindoorn wat zei je nou net?'

'Vijfje?,' zei het andere konijn. 'Waarom heet ie zo?'

'Vijf in een nest, weet je wel: hij was de laatste – en de kleinste. Een wonder dat ie

nog niet is gepakt. Ik zeg altijd een mens ziet 'm niet en een vos wil 'm niet. Maar ik geef toe,

hij weet uit de problemen te blijven.'[9]*

Het kleine konijn naderde zijn metgezel, huppend op lange achterpoten.

'Laten we wat verder weg gaan, Hazel,' zei hij. 'Weet je, er is iets vreemds met de

konijnenberg vanavond, al weet ik niet precies wat. Zullen we naar de beek gaan?'

'Is goed,' antwoordde Hazel, 'dan kun je voor mij een sleutelbloem zoeken. Als het

jou niet lukt, dan niemand niet.'

Hij ging als eerst de helling af. Zijn schaduw strekte zich achter hem uit op het gras.

Ze kwamen bij de beek en begonnen te knagen en te zoeken bij de karrensporen op het pad.

Het duurde niet lang voor Vijfje had gevonden waar ze naar op zoek waren.

Sleutelbloemen zijn een delicatesse onder konijnen, en veelal[10] zijn er eind mei nog maar

weinig meer over in de buurt van konijnenbergen, zelfs niet bij de kleinere.[11] Deze stond nog

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[8] This is a text-specific problem. It was difficult to find a suitable Dutch equivalent for his name. I wanted to keep the element of the number five, because the text explains how the rabbit got his name. One of my first options was *Quinnie*, because it contains the Latin word for five (*quinque*). However, this seemed a bit too farfetched. The word 'fiver' made me think of a five pound note and I wanted to try and have the same reference to money in the target text. A five guilder note used to be called a *vijfje* and this is why I eventually chose *Vijfje* as the rabbit's name. The number and reference to bank notes are both in the name.

[9] [*Een wonder … te blijven*] These three sentences have quite a few changes between the source text and the target text. Because it is a piece of dialogue, I wanted to make it believable as it is in the source text. Dialogue should be translated realistically and offers a bit more freedom in translation.

[10] This is a linguistic problem. I chose to translate 'as a rule' with *veelal* and not with *in de regel*, because I did not think it was fitting in this context. It does not concern an actual rule, because nature has no strict rules of when certain plants grow.

[11] This is a linguistic problem. The words *zelfs niet bij de kleinere* is placed at the end of the sentence. This is because I felt the second part of the sentence would become too long and maybe a little unclear as well. If I had chosen to leave the sentence as it is in the source text, it would have ended with: *in de buurt van zelfs een kleine konijnenberg*. This is not very easy to read for the target audience.

niet in bloei en ging met zijn platte spreiding aan bladeren bijna verborgen onder het hoge gras. Ze tastten net toe toen twee grotere konijnen vanaf de andere kant van het weiland op ze af renden.

'Sleutelbloem?', zei de een. 'Goed - laat maar voor ons liggen. Kom, opschieten nou,' zei hij erbij toen Vijfje aarzelde. 'Je hoorde me toch, of niet?'

'Vijfje heeft het gevonden, Vlasbek,' zei Hazel.

'En wij eten het op,' antwoordde Vlasbek. 'Sleutelbloemen zijn voor *Ausla** - dat weten jullie toch? En anders leren we het jullie wel even.'

*Konijnen kunnen tot vier tellen. Alle getallen boven vier zijn *hrair* – "veel" of "duizend". Daarom gebruiken ze *U Hrair* – "De Duizend" voor alle vijanden (ofwel *elil*, zoals zij dat noemen) van konijnen tezamen – de vos, de hermelijn, de wezel, de kat, de uil, de mens, enz. Waarschijnlijk waren er meer dan vijf konijnen in het nest toen Vijfje werd geboren, maar zijn naam, *Hrairoe*, betekent "Kleine Duizend" – met andere woorden, de kleinste uit velen of, zoals dat ook wel wordt genoemd, "het onderdeurtje".[12]

*Bijna alle konijnenbergen hebben een *Ausla*,[13] een groep sterke of slimme konijnen – van twee jaar of ouder – die om het Hoofdkonijn en zijn wijfje heen leven en gezag uitoefenen. Ausla's verschillen. In de ene konijnenberg is de Ausla misschien de troep van een krijgsheer: een andere Ausla kan uit grotendeels slimme patrouilleerders of tuinplunderaars bestaan. Soms is er plek voor een kundig

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[12] This is a linguistic problem. A translation for the word 'runt' is quite hard to find in Dutch. In the source text the example is given using pigs, which I have chosen to leave out, because in Dutch there is not really a word that has the same meaning as the 'runt' which is specifically for animals. The word *onderdeurtje* was in my opinion the most fitting translation, although this means a small person (van Dale). (Runt: "A small pig, esp. the smallest in a litter; a pig that is small as a result of illness or malnutrition" (Oxford English Dictionary).

[13] This is a text-specific problem. In the source text the Lapine words are in italics when mentioned for the first time in both the main text and the footnotes. When they are mentioned more again, they are no longer in italics. I have chosen to do the same throughout the target text, because readers need to be aware that there are strange (Lapine) words, but that these words are part of the rabbits' vocabulary. It should not be stressed throughout the whole novel that these words are unusual, because the reader needs to become a part of the rabbits' story where Lapine is spoken among them.

verhalenverteller; of een ziener of intuïtief konijn. Bij de Sandleford konijnenberg was de Ausla op dit moment nogal militair van aard (hoewel, niet zo militair als andere Ausla's, zoals later zal blijken).

Text B

De drie konijnen vonden Kehaar in zijn verblijfplaats. Die lag vol vogelpoep, was vuil en stonk. Konijnen zullen nooit ondergronds ontlasten en Kehaars gewoonte om zijn eigen nest te bevuilen had Hazel altijd doen walgen. Maar nu, verlangend naar het nieuws, leek de guanogeur haast aangenaam.

'Goed je weer terug te zien, Kehaar,' zei hij. 'Ben je moe?'

'Vleugel nog steeds is moe. Vlieg beetje, stop beetje, alles goed.'

'Heb je honger? Zullen we wat insecten voor je zoeken?'

'Goed. Goed. Goeie jongens. Veel kever.' (Kehaar noemde alle insecten 'kever'.)

Het was duidelijk dat hij hun attenties had gemist en er klaar voor was om van zijn terugkeer te genieten. Ook al was het niet meer nodig dat ze eten naar hem toebrachten, voelde hij klaarblijkelijk dat hij daar recht op had. Bollebof [14] ging zijn verzamelaars halen en Kehaar vroeg tot zonsondergang hun aandacht. Tenslotte keek hij sluw naar Vijfje en zei,

'Hé, menier Kleine Uk, jij weet wat iek preng, ja?'

'Geen flauw idee,' antwoordde Vijfje, nogal kortaf.

'Dan iek zeg. Dees grote heuvel, iek ga vlieg die kant, dees kant, waar zon opkomen, waar zon neergaan. Is geen konijnen. Is niksniet, niksniet.'

Hij zweeg. Hazel keek Vijfje afwachtend aan.

'Dan iek ga laag, laag naar bodem. Is erf met oov'ral groot bomen, op klein heuvel. Ken jij?'

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[14] This is a text-specific problem. I decided to translate the name Bigwig into *Bollebof*. In the novel it is described how he got this name: because he has a lot of fur on top of his head. Bigwig is one of the leaders and used to be in the *Owsla*, which makes him an authoritative figure. His name also refers to this status and I wanted to transfer that into the target language. I considered using the word 'kuif', but was not able to come up with a decent name with that in it that would also denote the meaning of boss or someone important.

'Nee, dat kennen we niet. Maar vertel.'

'Iek laat zien. Is niet ver. Jij kan hier zien. En hier sijn konijnen. Sijn konijnen leef in schuur; leef bei mensen. Ken jij?'

'Bij mensen? Zei je nou "leven bij mensen?"'

'Ja, ja, leeft bei mensen. In schuur; konijnen leeft in krat in schuur. Mens prengt eten. Ken jij?'

'Ik weet dat dit gebeurt,' zei Hazel. 'Ik heb er wel eens over gehoord. Goed gedaan, Kehaar. Je bent zeer grondig geweest[15]. Maar dat kan ons niet verder helpen, toch?'

'Iek denk is moeders. In groot krat. Ander plek geen konijnen; niet in veld, niet in bos. Geen konijnen. Iek niet zie ze.'

'Dat klinkt vreselijk.'

'Wacht. Iek zeg meer. Nu jullie luister. Ik ga vlieg, andere kant, waar zon is midden op dag. Jij kent, die kant is Groot Water.'

'Dus je bent naar het Grote Water geweest?' vroeg Bollebof.

'Na, na, niet zo ver. Maar dees kant op is rivier, ken jij?'

'Nee, we zijn nog niet zo ver geweest.'

'Is rivier,' herhaalde Kehaar. 'En hier is konijndorp.'

'Aan de andere kant van de rivier?'

'Na, na. Jij gaat die kant is groot felden oov'ral. Dan na lang tijd is dorp konijn, erg groot. En na dit is ijzerweg en dan rivier.'

'IJzerweg?' vroeg Vijfje.

'Ja, ja, ijzerweg. Jij hem niet zien – ijzerweg? Mens maak hem.'

---

[15] This sentence has quite a high register which may make it sound a bit old fashioned. This is partly due to the character Hazel who is the leader of the group and speaks in a fairly high register, but also because the source text was written almost thirty-five years ago and uses quite old fashioned language. I chose to keep this, because it is also part of the author's style and it adds to the uniqueness of the novel.

5. Comparing Translations

(See Appendix C and D for Shuchart's Translation)

When comparing my translation to that of Shuchart, there are a few interesting similarities and differences. Shuchart changed the measurements yard and feet into *meter* and *centimeter* respectively. I chose to use *meter* for both, but this shows that we both changed the measurements to suit Dutch conventions. Shuchart's translation is at times a little archaic, which can be seen in the words he chose to use, such as *vergewist, nabijzijnde* and *zich te goed doen aan*. The layout and spelling are also outmoded, but this is to be expected from a 1974 translation, and there is some inconsistency in italicising the Lapine words in the footnotes. Shuchart used less comma's and added some Dutch expressions which are not in the source text, such as *kan zijn eigen boontjes doppen*, although he kept closer to the structure of the English sentences than I did. He rarely changed the sentence or word order, whereas I have done this to make the Dutch more understandable.

The vocabulary Shuchart used for the words to do with the rabbits and their warren is quite different to my choices. He calls the warren *kolonie*, changed 'yearling' into *een jaar oud*, and 'outskirters' into *zelfkanters*, whereas I translated these words respectively into *konijnenberg/ wrangen, jaarling,* and *paria's*. The reason I translated 'warren' as *konijnenberg* and *wrangen* is because a 'warren' is the network of underground tunnels where rabbits live, and the words I chose represent that, whereas *kolonie* is the group of rabbits rather than their habitat. I tried to use the correct terminology for rabbit-related words: a yearling is called *jaarling* in Dutch, so this is the word I used. *Paria* and *zelfkanter* have a similar meaning, but *zelfkanter* is not used very often any more. I took a little more freedom in translating the dialogue, but Shuchart remained quite close to the source text. In my opinion this makes the dialogue unnatural and not realistic.

Most of the names of the rabbits and that of the warren have been translated differently. Buckthorn is called *Duindoorn* in my translation and *Wegedoorn* in Schuart's. Buckthorn grows in East Asia and North America, as does *duindoorn,* but *wegedoorn* can be found in Europe and is a different subspecies. Toadflax is *Vlasleeuwebek* in Shuchart's text and *Vlasbek* in mine. I thought this sounded better as a name, because it's a bit shorter and easier to pronounce. Hazel has been literally translated into *Hazelaar* by Shuchart, whereas I have chosen to keep it as *Hazel*. The reason I chose to keep the name is again because of the sound, but also because I wanted to keep it the same length to make reading it easier. The name occurs very often. It does not cause problems in pronunciation in Dutch, but the vowel will be pronounced differently than in English. Fiver was translated by us both as *Vijfje*, probably due to its reference to money. A five pound note is a fiver and a five guilder note was called a *vijfje*. The number five is important for the meaning of the name, as is explained in a footnote of the text. Shuchart and I both left the footnotes in. Bigwig is *Kopstuk* in Shuchart's text and *Bollebof* in mine. *Kopstuk* and *bollebof* both mean someone important with authority, as does Bigwig. However, Bigwig gets his name from the tuft of hair on his head, and later on it becomes clear his name has the double meaning of his hair and his role as a leader. *Kopstuk* is probably more clearly a reference to his hair as to his position than *Bollebof*, although I do think that *bollebof* also has that reference (*bol),* but less clearly. Kehaar remains Kehaar in the two translations. This name is not explained in the text and has not really got any resemblance to an English word which might denote its meaning. The name is based on one of the Arabic words for sea (behaar), as Adams points out in his Introduction to the novel (xiv). I translated Chief Rabbit as *Hoofdkonijn* and Shuchart as *Opperkonijn*, which does not really have a difference in meaning. The warren's name, Sandleford, was translated by Shuchart as *Sandelvoorde*. I kept the English name, because I wanted to use foreignization instead of domestication and have the story set in England, not the Netherlands.

The Lapine words are the same in both translations except for the spelling. 'Owlsa' became *Auwsla* with Shuchart and *Ausla* in my text; 'hrair' became *Hrair* with a capital 'h' in Shuchart's text, but remained *hrair* in my translation; Shuchart changed 'U Hrair' into *Oe Hrair,* which I kept as *U Hrair*; 'Hrairoo' became *Hrairoe* in both of the translations. These examples show that Shuchart and I both kept the Lapine words, but changed the spelling to keep the pronunciation of the words similar to the source text.

It is clear that Shuchart also used eye dialect for Kehaar's speech. He has some reoccurring spelling tricks he used, such as replacing 'w' with 'v', leaving out the 'h' at the beginning of words and replacing these with an apostrophe, and using *und* instead of *en*. I used more onomatopoeic spelling to accentuate Kehaar's outlandishness.

Adams' style is very characteristic for this novel. Shuchart stayed closer to the source text and translated quite literally, whereas I chose to be a bit more free so as to be more believable for the target audience that a rabbit would actually say or thinks such things. This can be seen especially in the dialogue.

Adams uses quite a high register, which can feel a bit outdated for a contemporary audience. However, it is very characteristic for his style of writing. When translating, I tried to take the importance of register into consideration and I think the register I used is quite similar to Shuchart's.

6. Conclusion

Using Nord's four categories proved to be an effective way of analysing *Watership Down* and helped me to consider what a fitting translation would be. Not all categories had a lot of translation issues in the chosen passages. Whilst translating excerpts from *Watership Down* it became clear to that the translation problems were mainly text-specific ones. Adams' use of Lapine, the names of the characters and the phonetic speech are all very important elements of the text and make it into the extraordinary tale it is. Other elements also play a big part as well of course, such as the religious symbolism, intertextuality and style of the text. By comparing my translation to a published one, it became apparent that there are different ways to choose to translate. Shuchart used foreignization in the way he formed the sentences, but domestication in the names and culture-specific elements. I tried to domesticize my sentence structure and some of the names where I thought was necessary or desirable. The source text was written almost half a century ago, and the translation appeared not long after, which made both text archaic. I have tried to make the text more accessible for a contemporary audience, but kept some of the outdatedness more as a use of style than anything else. The use of eye dialect and proper names and how to translate these elements have broadened my ideas on translation and the possibilities there are.

Word count: 6545 words

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8. Source Text & Shuchart's Translation

(The layout is as they appear in the novels)

Appendix A – Excerpt Chapter 1: The Notice Board (page 15-17)

The primroses were over. Towards the edge of the wood, where the ground became open and sloped down to an old fence and a brambly ditch beyond, only a few fading patches of pale yellow still showed among the dog's mercury and oak-tree roots. On the other side of the fence, the upper part of the field was full of rabbit-holes. In places the grass was gone altogether and everywhere there were clusters of dry droppings, through which nothing but the ragwort would grow. A hundred yards away, at the bottom of the slope, ran the brook, no more than three feet wide, half-choked with king-cups, water-cress and blue brook-lime. The cart-track crossed by a brick culvert and climbed the opposite slope to a five-barred gate in the thorn hedge. The gate led into the lane.

The May sunset was red in clouds, and there was still half an hour to twilight. The dry slope was dotted with rabbits -- some nibbling at the thin grass near their holes, others pushing further down to look for dandelions or perhaps a cowslip that the rest had missed. Here and there one sat upright on an ant-heap and looked about, with ears erect and nose in the wind. But a blackbird, singing undisturbed on the outskirts of the wood, showed that there was nothing alarming there, and in the other direction, along the brook, all was plain to be seen, empty and quiet. The warren was at peace.

At the top of the bank, close to the wild cherry where the blackbird sang, was a little group of holes almost hidden by brambles. In the green half-light, at the mouth of one of these holes, two rabbits were sitting together side by side. At length, the larger of the two came out, slipped along the bank under cover of the brambles and so down into the ditch and up into the field. A few moments later the other followed.

The first rabbit stopped in a sunny patch and scratched his ear with rapid movements of his hind-leg. Although he was a yearling and still below full weight, he had not the harassed look of most "outskirters" -- that is, the rank-and-file of ordinary rabbits in their first year who, lacking either aristocratic parentage or unusual size and strength, get sat on by their elders and live as best they can -- often in the open -- on the edge of their warren. He looked as though he knew how to take care of himself. There was a shrewd, buoyant air about him as he sat up, looked around and rubbed both front paws over his nose. As soon as he was satisfied that all was well, he laid back his ears and set to work on the grass.

His companion seemed less at ease. He was small, with wide, staring eyes and a way of raising and turning his head which suggested not so much caution as a kind of ceaseless, nervous tension. His nose moved continually, and when a bumble-bee flew humming to a thistle bloom behind him, he jumped and spun round with a start that sent two nearby rabbits scurrying for holes before the nearest, a buck with black-tipped ears, recognized him and returned to feeding.

 "Oh, it's only Fiver," said the black-tipped rabbit, "jumping at bluebottles again. Come on, Buckthorn, what were you telling me?"

"Fiver?" said the other rabbit. "Why's he called that?"

"Five in the litter, you know: he was the last -- and the smallest. You'd wonder nothing had got him by now. I always say a man couldn't see him and a fox wouldn't want him. Still, I admit he seems to be able to keep out of harm's way."*

The small rabbit came closer to his companion, lolloping on long hind legs.

"Let's go a bit further, Hazel," he said. "You know, there's something queer about the warren this evening, although I can't tell exactly what it is. Shall we go down to the brook?"

"All right," answered Hazel, "and you can find me a cowslip. If you can't find one, no one can."

He led the way down the slope, his shadow stretching behind him on the grass. They reached the brook and began nibbling and searching close beside the wheel-ruts of the track.

It was not long before Fiver found what they were looking for. Cowslips are a delicacy among rabbits, and as a rule there are very few left by late May in the neighbourhood of even a small warren. This one had not bloomed and its flat spread of leaves was almost hidden under the long grass. They were just starting on it when two larger rabbits came running across from the other side of the near-by cattle-wade.

"Cowslip?" said one. "All right -- just leave it to us. Come on, hurry up," he added, as Fiver hesitated. "You heard me, didn't you?"

"Fiver found it, Toadflax," said Hazel.

"And we'll eat it," replied Toadflax. "Cowslips are for *Owsla** -- don't you know that? If you don't, we can easily teach you."

  *Rabbits can count up to four. Any number above four is *Hrair* -- "a lot," or "a thousand." Thus they say *U Hrair* -- "The Thousand" -- to mean, collectively, all the enemies (or *elil*, as they call them) of rabbits -- fox, stoat, weasel, cat, owl, man, etc. There were probably more than five rabbits in the litter when Fiver was born, but his name, *Hrairoo*, means "Little Thousand" -- i.e., the little one of a lot or, as they say of pigs, "the runt."

   *Nearly all warrens have an *Owsla*, or group of strong or clever rabbits -- second-year or older -- surrounding the Chief Rabbit and his doe and exercising authority. Owslas vary. In one warren, the Owsla may be the band of a warlord; in another, it may consist largely of clever patrollers or garden-raiders. Sometimes a good storyteller may find a place; or a seer, or intuitive rabbit. In the Sandleford warren at this time, the Owsla was rather military in character (though, as will be seen later, not so military as some).

Appendix B – Excerpt Chapter 23: Kehaar (page 199-201)

The three of them found Kehaar back in his lobby. It was full of droppings, messy and malodorous. Rabbits will not excrete underground and Kehaar's habit of fouling his own nest had always disgusted Hazel. Now, in his eagerness to hear his news, the guano smell seemed almost welcome.

"Glad to see you back, Kehaar," he said. "Are you tired?"

"Ving 'e still go tired. Fly liddle bit, stop liddle bit, everyt'ing go fine."

"Are you hungry? Shall we get you some insects?"

"Fine. Fine. Good fellas. Plenty beetle." (All insects were "beetle" to Kehaar.)

Clearly, he had missed their attentions and was ready to enjoy being back. Although he no longer needed to have food brought to the lobby, he evidently felt that he deserved it. Bigwig went to get his foragers and Kehaar kept them busy until sunset At last he looked shrewdly at Fiver and said,

"Eh, Meester Liddle Von, you know vat I pring, ya?"

"I've no idea," replied Fiver, rather shortly.

"Den I tell. All dis peeg 'ill, I go along 'im, dis vay, dat vay, vere sun come up, vere sun go down. Ees no rabbits. Ees nodings, nodings."

He stopped. Hazel looked at Fiver apprehensively.

"Den I go down, go down in bottom. Ees farm vid peeg trees all round, on liddle hill. You know?"

"No, we don't know it. But go on."

"I show you. 'E not far. You see 'im. Und here ees rabbits. Ees rabbits live in box; live vid men. You know?"

"Live with men? Did you say 'live with men'?"

"Ya, ya, live vid men. In shed; rabbits live in box in shed. Men pring food. You know?"

"I know this happens," said Hazel. "I've heard of it. That's fine, Kehaar. You've been very thorough. But it can't help us, can it?"

"I t'ink ees mudders. In peeg box. But else ees no rabbits; not in fields, not in voods. No rabbits. Anyvays I no see 'em."

"That sounds bad."

"Vait. I tell more. Now you 'ear. I go flying, oder vay, vere sun go middle of day. You know, dis vay ees Peeg Vater."

"Did you go to the Big Water, then?" asked Bigwig.

"Na, na, not near so far. But out dis vay ees river, you know?"

"No, we haven't been so far."

"Ees river," repeated Kehaar. "Und here ees town of rabbits."

"On the other side of the river?"

"Na, na. You go dat vay, ees peeg fields all de vay. Den after long vay ees come to town of rabbits, ver' big. Und after dat ees iron road und den river."

"Iron road?" asked Fiver.

"Ya, ya, iron road. You not seen heem -- iron road? Men make heem."

Appendix C – Excerpt Hoofdstuk 1: Het mededelingenbord (page 9-11)

De sleutelbloemen waren uitgebloeid. Aan de rand van het bos, waar het terrein open werd en afliep naar een oude haag met daarachter een doornige greppel, waren nog maar een paar verblekende lichtgele plekken tussen het bingelkruid en de wortels van eikebomen te zien. Aan de andere kant van de haag zat het hooggelegen deel van het veld vol konijneholen. Op sommige plaatsen was het gras helemaal verdwenen en overal lagen hopen droge keuteltjes, waardoorheen niets anders dan jacobskruid wilde groeien. Honderd meter verder, aan het einde van de helling, stroomde de beek, hooguit negentig centimeter breed, half verstopt door dotterbloemen, waterkers, en blauwe beekpunge. Het wagenspoor ging er bij een baksteenen duiker doorheen en liep tegen de tegenovergelegen helling omhoog naar een hek met vijf spijlen in de doornhaag. Het hek gaf toegang tot een laan.

De zonsondergang in mei kleurde de wolken rood, maar het zou nog een half uur duren voor het schemer werd. De droge helling was bezaaid met konijnen – sommige zaten bij hun holen aan het dunne gras te knagen, terwijl andere verder naar beneden gingen om paardebloemen of misschien een dotterbloem te zoeken die de anderen niet hadden opgemerkt. Hier en daar zat er een rechtop op een mierenhoop om zich heen te kijken, de oren omhoog en de neus in de wind. Maar een merel die ongestoord aan de rand van het bos zong, maakte duidelijk dat daar niets verontrustends was en in de andere richting, langs de beek, was alles duidelijk zichtbaar, leeg en stil. Er heerste vrede in de kolonie.

Bovenaan de berm, vlakbij de wilde kers waar de merel in zat te zingen, was een kleine groep holen bijna verscholen achter braamstruiken. In het groene halflicht, bij de ingang van een van deze holen, zaten twee konijnen naast elkaar. Tenslotte kwam de grootste van de twee naar buiten, glipte onder dekking van de braamstruik langs de berm en zo de greppel in en omhoog het veld in. Enkele ogenblikken later volgde de andere.

Het eerste konijn bleef op een zonnige plek staan en krabde zijn oor met snelle bewegingen van zijn achterpoot. Hoewel hij pas een jaar oud was en zijn volle gewicht nog niet had

bereikt, had hij niet de gekwelde blik van de meeste 'zelfkanters' – dat wil zeggen de gewone konijnen in hun eerste jaar die, omdat zij óf geen aristocratische ouders, óf geen buitengewone grootte en kracht bezaten, door de ouderen op de kop worden gezeten en zo goed mogelijk – vaak in het open veld – aan de rand van hun kolonie leven. Hij zag eruit alsof hij zijn eigen boontjes kon doppen. Hij had iets slims en levendigs toen hij rechtop ging zitten, om zich heen keek en met beide poten over zijn neus wreef. Zodra hij zich ervan had vergewist dat alles in orde was, legde hij zijn oren in zijn nek en begon zich aan het gras te goed te doen.

Zijn metgezel scheen minder op zijn gemak. Hij was klein, en had grote starende ogen en de manier waarop hij zijn kop ophief en omdraaide, duidde niet zozeer op behoedzaamheid als wel op een soort voortdurende, zenuwachtige spanning. Zijn neus was voortdurend in beweging en toen een hommel zoemend naar een distel achter hem vloog, sprong hij op en draaide zich zo plotseling om dat twee nabijzijnde konijnen naar hun holen renden voordat de dichtstbijzijnde, een rammelaar met zwarte punten aan zijn oren, hem herkende en verder ging met eten.

'O, het is Vijfje maar, die de bromvliegen weer achterna zit,' zei het konijn met de zwarte punten. 'Vooruit, Wegedoorn, wat was je aan het vertellen?'

'Vijfje?' vroeg het andere konijn. 'Waarom heet hij zo?'

'Vijf in het nest, je weet wel: hij was de laatste – en de kleinste. Je snapt niet dat hij nog niet te grazen is genomen. Ik zeg altijd: een mens zou hem niet kunnen zien en een vos zou hem niet willen. Maar toch, ik moet toegeven dat hij erin schijnt te slagen het kwaad te ontlopen.'*

Het kleine konijn kwam dichter bij zijn metgezel, traag wippend op lange achterpoten.

'Laten we een eindje verder gaan Hazelaar,' zei hij. 'Weet je, er is iets vreemds met de kolonie vanavond, hoewel ik niet precies kan zeggen wat het is. Zullen we naar de beek gaan?'

'Goed,' antwoordde Hazelaar, 'dan mag je een sleutelbloem voor me zoeken. Als jij er geen kunt vinden, kan niemand het.'

Hij ging voorop de helling af en zijn schaduw strekte zich achter hem op het gras uit. Zij kwamen bij de beek en begonnen vlak naast de wielsporen van het pad te knagen en te zoeken.

Het duurde niet lang of Vijfje vond datgene wat zij zochten. Sleutelbloemen zijn een delicatesse bij de konijnen en in de regel zijn er eind mei nog maar heel weinig over, zelfs in de buurt van een heel kleine kolonie. Deze had niet gebloeid en zijn vlakke waaier van bladeren was bijna niet te zien onder het lange gras. Ze begonnen er net aan toen twee grotere konijnen van de andere kant van de nabijzijnde waadplaats voor het vee eraan kwamen rennen.

'Sleutelbloem?' vroeg de een. 'Goed – laat die maar aan ons over. Vooruit, schiet op,' voegde hij eraan toe, toen Vijfje aarzelde. 'Heb je me soms niet gehoord?'

'Vijfje heeft hem gevonden, Vlasleeuwebek,' zei Hazelaar.

'En wij zullen hem opeten,' antwoordde Vlasleeuwebek.

'Sleutelbloemen zijn voor *Auwsla** - weet je dat niet? Zo niet, dan kunnen we het je gemakkelijk leren.'

---

* Konijnen kunnen tot vier tellen. Elk aantal boven de vier is *Hrair* – 'een hoop', of 'duizend'. Ze zeggen *Oe Hrair* – 'De Duizend' – waarmee alle vijanden (of *elil*, zoals zij ze noemen) van konijnen bedoeld worden – vos, marter, wezel, kat, uil, de mens enz. Waarschijnlijk waren er meer dan vijf konijnen in het nest toen Vijfje geboren werd, maar zijn naam *Hrairoe* betekent 'kleine duizend', nl. het kleintje van een groot aantal.

* Bijna alle kolonies hebben een *Auwsla*, of groep sterke of knappe konijnen – twee jaar of ouder – die het Opperkonijn en zijn wijfje omringen en gezag uitoefenen. Auwsla's variëren. In de ene kolonie kan de *Auwsla* de troep van een krijgsheer zijn; in een andere kolonie kan hij voornamelijk bestaan uit slimme verkenners of tuin-stropers. Soms wordt er een goede verteller in opgenomen, een ziener, of intuïtief konijn. In de kolonie van de Sandelvoorde was de Auwsla nogal militair van karakter (hoewel, zoals we later zullen zien, niet zo militair als sommige andere).

Appendix D – Excerpt Hoofdstuk 23: Kehaar (page 186-187)

Met hun drieën troffen zij Kehaar weer in zijn portaal. Het zat vol met uitwerpselen, rommelig en stinkend. Konijnen doen hun behoefte niet onder de grond en Kehaars gewoonte om zijn eigen nest te bevuilen had Hazelaar altijd met afkeer vervuld. Nu, in zijn verlangen om zijn nieuws te horen, scheen de mestgeur hem bijna welkom.

'Blij je weer te zien, Kehaar,' zei hij. 'Ben je moe?'

'Vleugel vorden nog moe. Vliegen endje, houden stil endje, alles gaan goed.'

'Heb je honger? Zullen we wat insekten voor je halen?'

'Lekker. Lekker. Goeie Luidjes. Boelveel torren.' (Alle insekten waren torren voor Kehaar). Het was duidelijk dat hij hun attenties gemist had en klaar was om te genieten van het feit dat hij terug was. Hoewel het niet langer nodig was zijn eten naar het portaal te brengen, dacht hij blijkbaar dat hij het verdiende. Kopstuk ging zijn fouragiers optrommelen en Kehaar hield hen tot zonsondergang bezig. Tenslotte keek hij Vijfje sluw aan en zei:

'Eh, mieneer, Kleine, veet je vat iek preng, ja?'

'Ik heb geen idee,' zei Vijfje, nogal kortaf.

'Dan iek vertellen. 'eel die grote 'euvel, iek ga langs 'em, deze kant, die kant, vaar zon opgaan, vaar zon ondergaan. Ies geen konijnen. Ies niks, niks.'

Hij zweeg. Hazelaar keek Vijfje bezorgd aan.

'Dan iek omlaag gaan, omlaag naar grond. Ies boerderij met grote bomen 'elemaal in 'et rond, op kleine h'euvel, Veet je.'

'Nee, dat weten we niet. Maar ga verder.'

'Iek jullie laten zien. 'IJ niet ver. Jullie 'em zien. En 'ier ies konijnen. Ies konijnen die vonen in 'ok; vonen bij mensen. Veet je?'

'Wonen bij mensen? Zei je: "Wonen bij mensen"?'

'Ja, ja, vonen bij mensen. In schuur; konijnen vonen in 'ok in schuur. Mensen pengen eten. Veet je?'

'Ik weet dat dit gebeurt,' zei Hazelaar. 'Ik heb er van gehoord. Dat is mooi Kehaar. Je bent erg grondig geweest. Maar het kan ons niet helpen, wel?'

'Iek denken ies moetters. In gote 'ok. Maar verder ies geen konijnen; niet in velden, niet in bossen. Geen konijnen. Niedergeval iek ze niet zien.'

'Dat ziet er slecht uit.'

'Vacht. Iek meer vertellen. Nou jij 'oren. Iek vliegen ga, andere kant, waar zon gaat midden op dag. Je veet, die kant van Grote Vater?'

'Ben je naar het Grote Water geweest?' vroeg Kopstuk.

'Nee. Nee, bij lange na niet zo ver. Maar aan die kant ies rivier, veet je?'

'Nee, we zijn nooit zo ver geweest.'

'Ies rivier,' herhaalde Kehaar. 'Und 'ier ies stad van konijnen.'

'Aan de andere kant van de rivier?'

'Nee, nee. Jij gaat die veg, ies grote velden overal. Dan na lange veg ies gekomen aan stad van konijnen, 'eel groot. Und daarna ies ijzeren weg und dan rivier.'

'IJzeren weg?' vroeg Vijfje.

'Ja, ja, ijzeren weg. Jullie 'em niet gezien 'ebben – ijzeren weg? Mensen maken 'em.'