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Selling a Story: A Case Study of Five Book Covers for Victor Pelevin's Generation "P"

Malin Podlevskikh Carlström

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Article abstract

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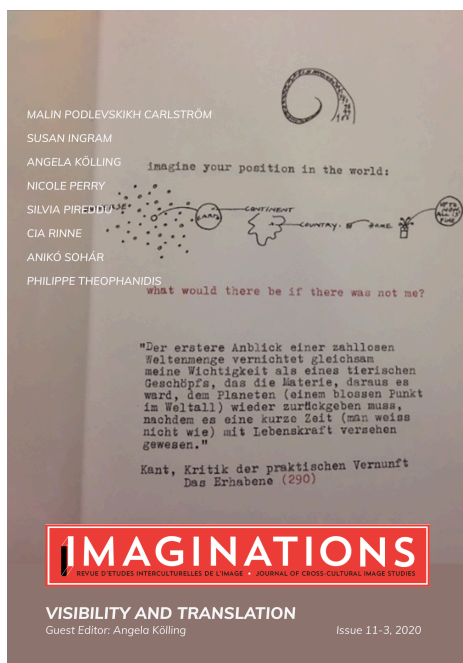
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Cia Rinne, *Das Erhabene* (2011)

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SELLING A STORY: A CASE STUDY OF FIVE BOOK COVERS FOR VICTOR PELEVIN'S GENERATION "P"

MALIN PODLEVSKIKH CARLSTRÖM

In this article, book-cover design is studied in relation to translation and marketing. The discussion is centered on a case study of the Russian, British, American, Danish, and Norwegian editions of Victor Pelevin's Generation "P" (Babylon in the U.K. and Homo Zapiens in the U.S.). The analysis of the book covers focuses on marketing strategy and argues that the cover of a translation affects how a novel is read and understood in the target culture.

Dans cet article, la composition des couvertures de livre est étudiée en relation avec la traduction et le marketing. La discussion est centrée sur une étude de cas des éditions russe, britannique, danoise et norvégienne de l'oeuvre de Victor Pelevin, Generation "P" (Babylon au Royaume-Uni et Homo Zapiens aux Etats-Unis). L'analyse des couvertures de ce livre se concentre sur les stratégies de marketing et avance que la couverture d'un livre en traduction affecte la manière dont le roman est lu et compris dans la culture ciblée.

INTRODUCTION

Whether you are an avid or occasional reader, you have certainly at some point noticed the cover of a book and wondered what that particular cover was intended to communicate. Furthermore, if you happen to be a polyglot and have the same book in several translations, you might also have reflected upon the differences between the covers—which are supposed to communicate and sell the very same book, although in different languages. This article will discuss exactly that: cover design from the

point of view of translation. The aim is to analyze and explain why there is a need to re-cover translations. The analysis and discussion will originate from a case study of the Russian (original), British, American, Danish and Norwegian editions of Victor Pelevin's *Generation "P"* (*Babylon* in the U.K. and *Homo Zapiens* in the U.S.) first published in Russia in 1999 by Vagrius.

In *Re-Covered Rose* (2011), Marco Sonzogni studies cover design as intersemiotic translation, and specifically "how book covers translate the verbal signs of the text into a (predominantly) non-verbal sign-system of culturally encoded images" (4). He claims that two different links exist in cover design: one between text and cover, and another between the cover and the actual or potential reader (4). It is the first link, between the text and cover, Sonzogni analyzed as an act of translation. Here, his aim was to discover how honestly the covers reflect the text (5). In order to analyze the first link in its "pure form," Sonzogni announced a competition for designers all over the world to create a new cover for Umberto Eco's classic *The Name of the Rose* and then based his study on these competing entries.

The present study is different, since it analyses the cover of a published novel and some of its translations to draw conclusions, not about the relationship of the cover to the text, but rather in regard to the marketing strategies behind the cover design. You could therefore say that Sonzogni's second link is of primary interest to me, that is, how a cover gets "tuned" to suit different target readers. In this article, the term "book-cover design" will refer to the book jacket illustration as well as the central verbal paratexts (Genette) available on the cover, specifically the title, the author's name, the translator's name (if available), and the front-cover quotes from reviewers. To summarize, my focus is the first-glance impression a potential reader will receive when looking at a book, for example, when picking it up in the bookshop or library. Therefore, I will be analyzing book covers not from the perspective of graphic design or semiotics, but from the point of view of marketing and translation.

A paratextual element that often becomes transformed in translation is the title. The title is of special significance as is how it stands

in relation to the front cover illustration and narrative. As Nicole Matthews observes in the introduction to *Judging a Book by Its Cover*, book covers are an essential part of how books are read, borrowed, sold, and become or fail to become popular: “Narratives are understood in relation to paratextual elements of books, and especially book covers” (xi-xii). Similarly, in his 2012 TED talk, book-designer Chip Kidd emphasizes that, “all stories have in common that they all need to look like something; that they all need a face in order to give the reader a first impression about what he or she is about to read” (02:25). This quote illustrates the importance of a cover—it is the face of the book. It does not, however, explain why the cover design needs to look different in different countries—a question that will be addressed over the course of this essay.

BEHIND THE COVERS

Throughout history, textual material has been composed, transmitted, and preserved in various ways using different methods and materials. From a historical perspective, printing on paper is a rather new technique, established in Europe in the 15th century. Before the 1820s, all books left the printer’s as a bunch of loose sheets, and it was up to the buyer or retailer to decide whether they wanted them bound into expensive leather covers or not. Around 1820, cloth started to replace leather as the favored cover material. Cloth was very much cheaper than leather, and eventually this led to books starting to reach the public already bound in cloth covers. Towards the end of the 19th century, hand-bound books became history, and machine-binding revolutionized the book industry, making books more affordable (Steinberg 140).

Sigfrid Henry Steinberg explains that the book jacket is a by-product of the publisher’s binding; the first jackets appeared in the mid-19th century, but became common only towards the end of the century. The possibilities of using the jacket and the cover as a marketing tool were discovered rather late: the first blurb appeared only in 1906 (140). Around 1930, when the pocket book emerged, new printing techniques transformed the book into something affordable, and the

cover started to function as an advertisement with the purpose of marketing a product and attracting consumers. All verbal and non-verbal information on the cover of a book—the title, illustration, names of the publisher, author, etc.—belongs to the category of the paratext. This paratext is what finally turns a text into a book; it also has enormous potential to influence the reading and reception of a text (Genette 1-2).

Paratexts can be either peritexts, which are found in (or on) the same volume as the text, or epitexts, which stand in relation to the text, but are placed elsewhere, such as reviews and interviews (5). Genette compares the paratext with a threshold—a place from which the reader can choose whether he or she wants to enter or not. The aim of the peritext is always to get the reader to look forward to reading the book (2). Another important aspect discussed by Genette is that while the text is unchangeable for the most part—fixed in time and space—the paratext can be modified and adapted to suit different groups of readers, for example, in marketing.

In discussing marketing strategies behind book publications, it is important to analyze three important steps: segmentation, targeting, and positioning (Phillips 19). During the segmentation, the publisher decides which groups of consumers to target. The segmentation can be geographic, demographic, psychographic (categorizing consumers based on their interests), or behavioral (examining how often consumers buy books) (Phillips 20-21). Based on the segmentation, marketing decisions are made in regard to such things as product format (e.g., hardcover or paperback), price, place of distribution, and method of promotion (22). The last step, positioning, is about positioning the product in the mind of the consumer. To do this, the marketing strategist tries to “imply” the nature of the experience that the product can offer (23).

THE METONYMIES OF COVER DESIGN

The exact same translation of Pelevin’s *Generation “P”* by Andrew Bromfield was published in Britain and the U.S. by two

different publishing houses (Faber & Faber and Penguin), each of which used different titles and cover designs. However surprising this might seem, such a practice is common. Adrian Shaughnessy even claims that studying the way different publishers around the world modify book jackets might give us an insight into national characteristics. As Shaughnessy observes, “books are culturally sensitive things: imagery that might have a subtle resonance in one country can appear meaningless gunk in another; the one-size-fits-all approach, common in global design, just doesn’t seem to wash when it comes to book covers” (Shaughnessy 18). In acknowledging that books are culturally sensitive objects, it becomes reasonable to assume that the marketing of a book will have to cater to the target culture. Furthermore, the mere fact that a book is a translation is valued differently in various parts of the world.

According to Itamar Even-Zohar, translated literature—depending on the state of the literary system—may hold either a peripheral or a central position in “the literary polysystem” (46-47). Drawing on Abram de Swaan’s theory of a “world language system,” Johan Heilbron similarly conceptualizes what he calls a “world system of translation” (12). Using a sociological framework, Heilbron shows that this system is “hierarchical, and ... comprises central, semi-peripheral and peripheral languages” (14). He concludes that the system is unevenly distributed and dominated by one “hyper-central” language: English (14). Lawrence Venuti even goes so far as to accuse Anglo-American culture of demanding fluent translations and invisible translators, of having a low tolerance for cultural otherness, and finally, of being “xenophobic at home and imperialistic abroad” (Venuti 13). Within this framework, a translated work intended for an Anglo-American audience will downplay the cultural otherness of the original source text. The cover, for example, might emphasize a certain theme over another to reach its target audience. I claim that this choice is of great importance for how a book will be read and understood.

Maria Tymoczko’s notion of metonymies of translation helps explain this phenomenon of paratextual framing. According to Tymoczko, metonymy, or substituting an aspect of an entity for the whole, is something translators are very often involved in: “Those special

rewriters called translators grapple with the metonymic aspects of literature all the time” (46). She further explains that translation is “always a partial process,” and that translations are essentially representations of source texts in which only “specific segments or parts” have been highlighted (282). She continues, “It is the essence of translation to transpose aspects of parts of a text and a culture, and that very partiality of translation gives it flexibility, allowing it to be partisan” (290). Relating this concept to the cover design of translations clarifies the importance of what these designs do. A cover that echoes one particular theme of a novel may end up emphasizing that theme over others, thus contributing to the partiality of the act of translation that Tymoczko associates with metonymy. Thus, the cover designer will, consciously or unconsciously, choose an aspect of the novel that will be especially appealing to the target audience or, at least, easier to relate to literary system of the target culture.

THE NOVEL BEHIND THE COVER

Pelevin’s *Generation “P”* is a story about the young generation’s loss of identity after the collapse of the Soviet Union. The protagonist, Vavilen Tatarsky, is a member of Generation “P”—the generation which, due to the Soviet economy, only had access to one brand of cola growing up. The question broached by the novel is how one can market things to a generation that grew up without rival brands or advertising. After failing to become a poet and a translator, Tatarsky adapts to the new situation by taking a job in a typical Russian *laryok*, a kiosk, selling cigarettes and alcohol, but meets an old friend who is in the advertising business, and eventually ends up working as a copywriter. His job involves the positioning of Western products for the Russian market. Different cultures need different advertising—just as with book covers.

How the media affects and controls us is another important theme in the novel. As the familiar reality disappears, post-Soviet Russia becomes flooded with endless TV commercials and soap operas. Having contacted the spirit of Che Guevara through a Ouija board, Tatarsky learns that by watching television, man becomes trans-

formed into Homo Zapiens, the zapping man, who is constantly trying to zap between channels in order to avoid commercials. In this state, the viewer becomes a remotely controlled television program, fulfilling the function of one cell of the mammon, or the ORANUS, the one and only purpose of which is to ingest and eliminate money.

In his aim to become a successful copywriter, Tatarsky consumes fly agaric mushrooms and LSD and, during the hallucinations that follow, scribbles down new advertising ideas in his notebook. He begins to realize that there is something going on behind the scenes of his reality, and he begins desperately looking for answers. In his hallucinations and in the real world, he discovers cryptic references to Babylonian mythology, and in the final part of the novel, he becomes a living god, the worldly husband of the goddess Ishtar.¹

THE COVER OF THE RUSSIAN SOURCE TEXT

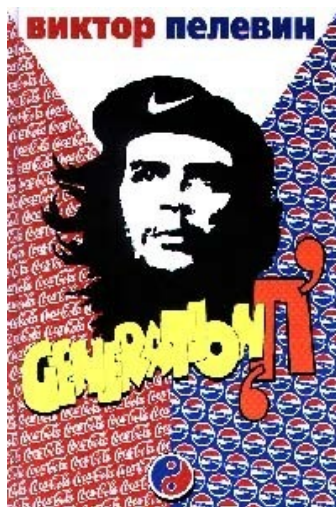


Figure 1. The cover of the first Russian edition of Pelevin's *Generation "P"*. Cover design by A. Cholodenko.

The Russian source text was published as a hard cover by Vagrius publishing house in 1999, and has thereafter been followed by at least thirty-seven printed editions. On the cover of the first edition of Pelevin's *Generation "P"*, there are many symbols, all of which are represented in the narrative. Che Guevara holds a central position, wearing a military beret with a Nike logo instead of the usual red star. The background has been divided into three fields, with Coca Cola logos filling the left part of the design and Pepsi logos the right part. The author's name is written in two colors, red and blue, on a white background. At the bottom of the cover, a yin and yang symbol is depicted in the same colors, emphasizing the symbol's resemblance to the Pepsi logo.

If we study the front cover paratexts in detail, we notice that the author's name is written in Cyrillic letters, while the book's title is written using both Latinate and Cyrillic letters. This fact has been widely discussed by critics and scholars, and has been said to offer the reader a clue as to how to interpret the title and what the letter "П" actually stands for. The explanation given on the first pages of the novel is that *P* stands for Pepsi, but it subsequently becomes obvious that it can also mean *pizdetz*, meaning failure, fuck-up, or fiasco. It has also been noted that the word "Generation" is written in Latin script, while the letter "П" is a Russian letter. This is said to signal that it refers to Russia's very own failure, or fallen generation (Murikov). But, apart from the Russian author's name and the use of Cyrillic letters, there is nothing on the cover that specifically alludes to Russian culture. In other words, the novel's Russian character is not part of the positioning. Instead, the cover resembles a collage, where the design, typeface, colors, and use of brand logos allude to a globalized popular culture. When it comes to segmentation, it is reasonable to assume that its references to popular culture might appeal more to a younger audience.

THE NORWEGIAN COVER

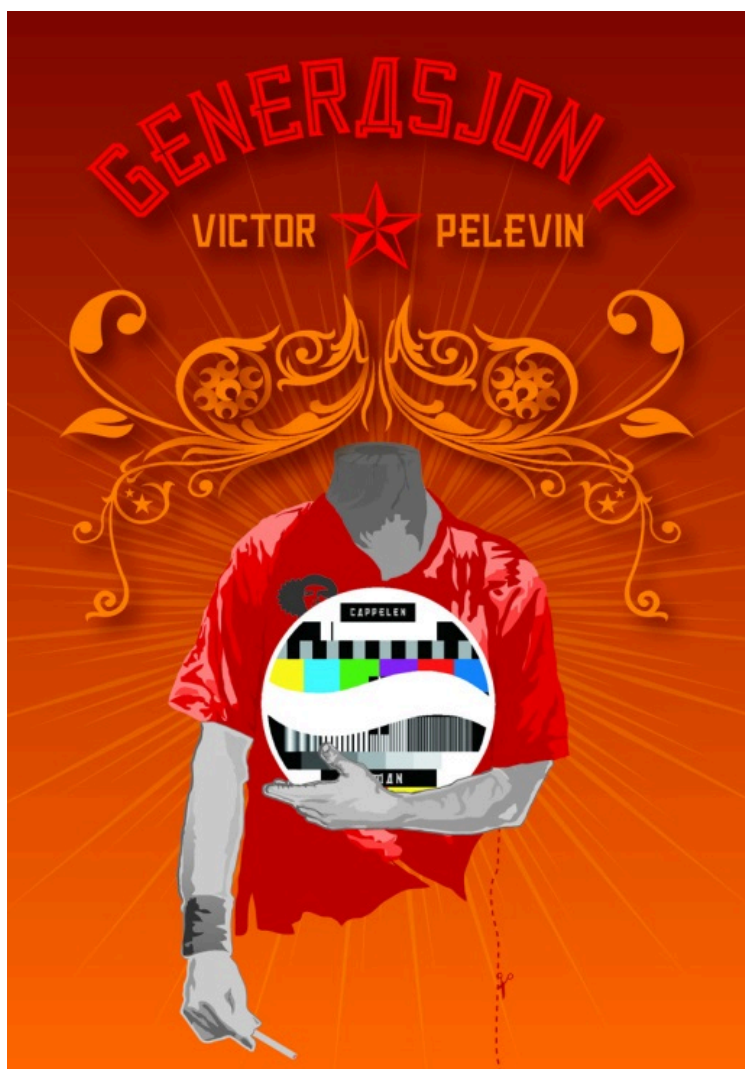


Figure 2. The cover of the first edition of the Norwegian translation of Pelevin's Generation "P" (Generasjon P). Cover design by Robin Snasen Rengård.

Generasjon P was published by Cappelen's publishing house in 2003, translated by Isak Rogde. The first edition was a hard cover with jacket, followed by a softcover edition published by Cappelen Damm in 2009. The front cover illustration shows a young man in a red t-shirt wearing a wristband and holding a cigarette in one hand. In his other hand he is holding a television test screen against his upper torso. In the upper part of the test screen, which resembles either a Pepsi logo, or a vague yin and yang symbol, the name of the publishing house can be discerned. The Che Guevara image on the t-shirt is partly hidden behind the test screen. Both the Che Guevara image and the Pepsi logo were represented on the Russian cover as well, which indicates that the Norwegian cover designer was influenced by the original cover.

The colors of the cover are also symbolic, using different shades of red (associated with Russia and the communism of the Soviet Union). Interestingly, a traditional Russian ornamental pattern combined with small stars holds a central position of the cover. A red star can also be seen between the author's first name and surname. The title is a literal translation of the Russian title and is depicted using an uncommon typeface. The letter "a" in *Generasjon* has been altered into a Cyrillic "Д", further emphasizing the cultural otherness of the novel.

Judging by the imagery of the front cover, with its young, informal smoker at the centre, it can be presumed that the publishing house is aiming at a younger readership. However, we must also not forget the effect the Russian cultural symbols on the cover might have for the targeting of the readers. It is obvious that this novel is a translation. When it comes to the metonymical aspects of this cover design, two paratexts are of particular importance: the title and the illustration. The title, as in the original, focuses on the novel central's preoccupation with the generation growing up in a post-Soviet reality. The non-verbal paratext emphasizes the very same facet of the narrative: what we can see is a young, smoking man whom the reader will unconsciously associate with the protagonist—a member of generation "P"—which further accentuates this particular aspect of the narrative.

THE DANISH COVER

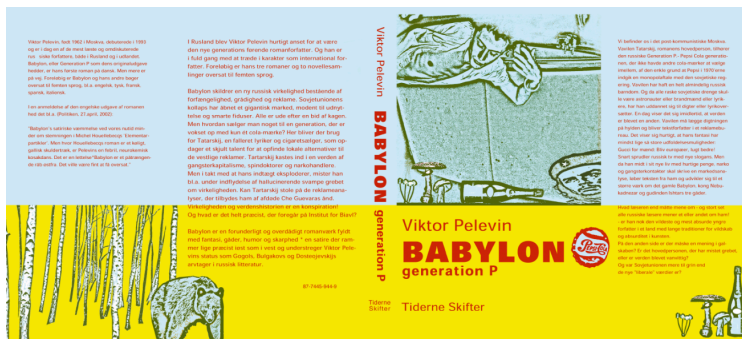


Figure 3. The cover of the Danish translation of Pelevin's *Generation "P"* (*Babylon generation P*). Cover design by Llustura Copenhagen.

The Danish edition of Pelevin's *Generation "P"* was published in 2003 as *Babylon generation P* by the publishing house Tiderne Skrifter, translated by Jan Hansen. The cover is of the French flap type, a paperback with flaps serving as extensions of the front and back covers. The front cover illustration depicts a young man lying down outside, surrounded by bottles and different kinds of mushrooms. Che Guevara is also represented on the cover, but here with a star on front of his beret instead of a Nike logo. The coloring is quite subtle, with a gray nuance for the central illustration, combined with a yellow background on which the verbal paratexts are printed in red, next to a partly visible Pepsi cap. Two of these symbols—Che Guevara and Pepsi—are directly linked to the original Russian cover, while the rest of the front cover imagery represents the narrative in some way. However, if we take into consideration the extension of the cover design to the back cover, we see a bear and some birch trees. The birch trees are indeed represented in the text, in a Sprite slogan adapted for a Russian audience, but they are also a symbol for Russia. The bear, however, is not represented in the novel at all, but is used as a stereotypical symbol for Russia in most parts of the world.

The cover design of this translation draws on what is typically Russian, even if this is less visible than it is on the Norwegian cover. The bear and the birch trees are more subtle signals than the use of a Cyrillic letter. Even so, the Danish translation is positioned as a Russian novel, and the cover design seems to suggest that it is an exciting and exotic read for a younger readership. The cultural otherness of the novel and the fact that this is a translation is clearly part of the marketing of the Danish edition of *Generation "P"*.

From the metonymical point of view, the Danish cover is similar to the Norwegian. It depicts a young man, presumably the protagonist, in combination with the phrase *generation P*. It follows that the generational theme is present on this cover as well, but, in addition to this, another facet of the narrative is highlighted by the non-verbal paratext, namely the use of alcohol and hallucinogenic substances (mushrooms). The verbal paratexts also foreground more than one theme, since the translation uses a double title: *Babylon generation P*, which accentuates the theme of Mesopotamian mythology. This is also seen on the cover of the British translation published in 2000, with the title *Babylon*.

THE BRITISH COVER

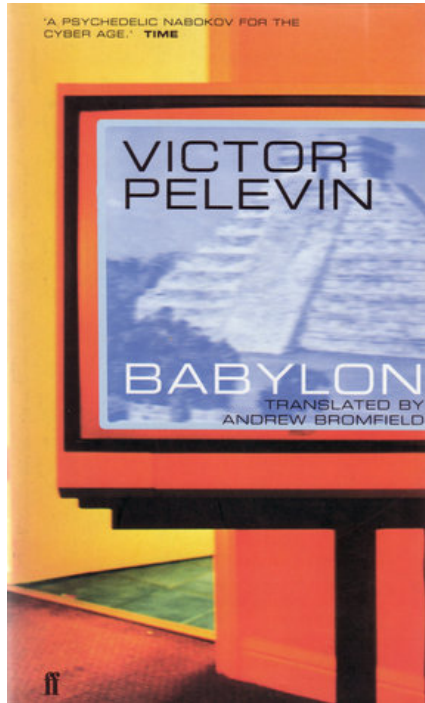


Figure 4. The cover of the British edition of Pelevin's *Generation "P"* (*Babylon*). Cover design by Pentagram.

The British edition of Pelevin's *Generation "P"* was translated by Andrew Bromfield and published by Faber and Faber in the year 2000 as a trade paperback with an illustrated jacket. What we can see on this cover is a bright room without any specific cultural references, in the middle of which a television screen transmits an image of an ancient pyramid-like construction. The color scale encompasses orange, red, green, yellow, and gray, and does not awaken any particular associations.

The cover design differs from the two covers previously studied in two ways. Firstly, there is no resemblance to the Russian cover at all.

Secondly, when it comes to the metonymy of the cover design, both the verbal and non-verbal paratexts foreground one of the themes of the novel that is not specifically Russian, namely Mesopotamian mythology. The original Russian original title has been replaced with *Babylon*, which, together with the imagery, confirms the close ties between title and cover design. The original title, which referred to a typically Russian experience, has been sacrificed for a more universal topic. However, more than one theme is represented on this cover. The television in the middle of the room highlights another of the more universal themes of *Generation "P"*—the media theme.

The British edition is the only one on which the name of the translator is available. Andrew Bromfield is of British origin, and already had a firm reputation as a translator of Russian literature, which might be why his name is used as part of the marketing strategy. There is one more verbal paratext on the front cover, namely a citation from a *Time* review: "A Psychedelic Nabokov for the cyber age." The two noun phrases "psychedelic" and "cyber age" signal a targeting of a younger generation of readers, while the name of another author, "Nabokov," is more difficult to analyze. Although Nabokov is a Russian author, he wrote his most celebrated novels in English after emigration. Considering the effect of these paratexts, I conclude that the book is positioned as something fresh, modern, and related to world literature, and also that the targeting is focused at a rather wide, broad-minded audience.

Finally, a trade paperback with a jacket is a rather rare format for a first edition. A plausible reason for choosing not to publish the book as a hardcover is that a trade paperback is cheaper. Pelevin is both foreign and relatively unknown to British readers, which makes it a risky publication from a financial perspective. A cheaper paperback edition might result in more people being willing to take a chance with a new author.

THE AMERICAN COVER

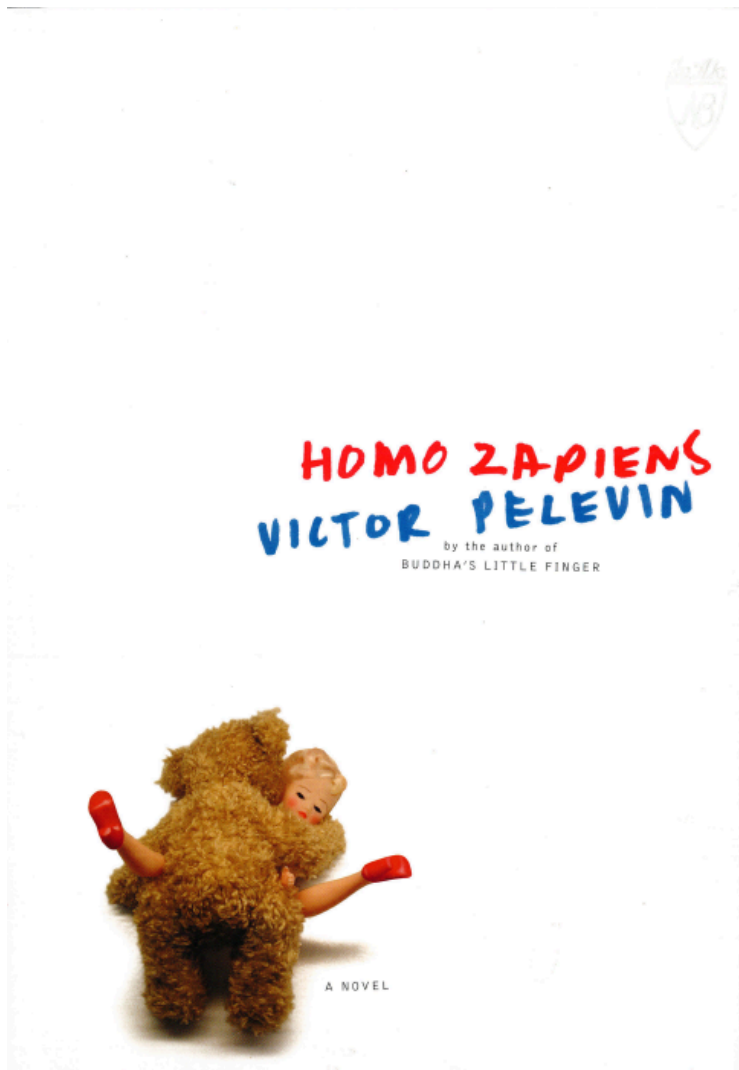


Figure 5. The cover of the first American edition of Pelevin's Generation "P" (Homo Zapiens). Cover design by Darren Haggar.

The first American edition of Pelevin's *Generation "P"* was translated by Andrew Bromfield and published in 2002 by Viking Penguin, in a hard cover edition with jacket. On a white background, one can see a teddy bear and a doll in red shoes having sexual intercourse. The colors are the same as on the original Russian cover—white, blue, and red—but the distribution of the colors is very different. Interestingly, on the Russian cover the colors were connected to the Pepsi logo, but here, without any reference to Pepsi, the colors might instead bring the flag of the Russian federation to mind. There are, of course, many other countries that use the same colors in their flags; but still, in combination with the teddy bear, it is possible to interpret the colors as a subtle symbol of Russia.

The bear has been used as a symbol for Russia since the 17th century. During the 1980 Olympic Games in Moscow, the Russians themselves used the bear as a symbol, but instead of a dangerous brown bear, they let a bear cub, Misha, serve as the mascot of the Olympics. This was an intentional move to turn this unflattering image into something cute and cuddly, a way to improve the Russian image.

How can this cover design possibly be interpreted, then? In the novel, the antagonist plays around with American values and commercials, adapting them to the Russian reality. It is therefore possible to interpret the teddy bear as a symbol for Russia and the Barbie-like doll as a symbol for the U.S.A. But what we do not get on this cover is a representation of something exotic or foreign; instead, we are presented with an edgy, or even shocking, image, which might imply a geopolitical satire. From a commercial perspective the cover design is easy to explain. A foreign, not very well-known author, a risky publication that needs to be noticed—of course, the cover design has to be unusual.

Beneath the title and the author's name we find a paratext conveying information about earlier work by the same author: "by the author of Buddha's Little Finger", which is also connected to the marketing strategy. Paratexts such as "[Title of the new book] by the author of [the author's previously successful book]" are quite common and not limited to less well-known authors. To illustrate, even the cover of

Stephen King's 2016 bestseller *End of Watch* informed the reader that the book was written by the author of *Mr. Mercedes* (2014) and *Finders Keepers* (2015). Apart from attracting those who read and appreciated the mentioned titles, such statements imply that the author in question is acclaimed and established.

When it comes to the metonymical facets of the cover design, one aspect is of particular importance: *the title*. The publisher chose not to keep the title *Generation "P"*, despite the fact that the title is an allusion to *Generation X* by Canadian author Douglas Coupland. The British title, *Babylon*, was also rejected. Instead, the U.S. publisher distributed the novel as *Homo Zapiens*, a title that refers to the media theme of the novel. This theme, like the Babylonian reference, is not specific to Russia, but instead a common theme in dystopian literature. In combination with the novel's rather shocking cover art, the bizarre nature of the novel is emphasized.

CONCLUSION

Translation utilizes paratextual material as an instrument of adaptation, trying to convince potential readers to choose a particular book. Publishers in different countries do, however, analyze their particular markets in different ways, and use varying techniques in order to position a book in the mind of the particular target audience.

The Norwegian and the Danish translation were published with the same title as the Russian original, although the Danish version also used the British title, *Babylon*. The same translations also put a young man at the center of the front cover illustration, and since the protagonist of the novel is a young man, it can be assumed that the reader will associate the image on the front cover with him. Consequently, the Danish and Norwegian cover designs emphasize the generational theme of the novel, the experience of the 1960s generation, and the sociological difficulties in Russia during the 1980s and 90s.

The British edition uses the title *Babylon*, and the front cover design is based on two of the more universal themes of the novel, namely Babylonian mythology and control by television and media. The Babylonian theme is represented in both the cover art and the title, which results in this theme becoming the central one. By emphasizing the Babylonian theme, the generational theme is automatically downplayed, which I claim is the result of a conscious strategy in the marketing of this novel. I base this on the fact that the very part of *Generation "P"* that provides a sociological background for the novel, i.e. the first chapter (called "Generation 'P,'" just as the novel), is significantly shortened in the British and American editions (25% of the first chapter has been omitted), which downplays even further the specifically Russian context of the novel.

On the American cover, there is no strong connection between the title and the cover art. The title highlights the media theme: *Homo Zapiens* refers to human beings becoming a cell in the mammon while zapping between channels—the most fantastic and absurd theme of the novel. The American cover art thus also downplays the specifically Russian context of the story, since it uses a different title, in combination with a cover design that takes its inspiration from outside the narrative.

These basic conclusions can be related to Tymoczko's concept of metonymy. She explains that, in translation, "certain aspects or attributes of the source text come to represent the entire source text in translation" (55). Analyzing cover design using this framework makes it possible to understand the effect it can have on the reading and reception of a novel. The particular theme or facet highlighted by means of cover design is very likely to become associated with the entire novel, and thus become the face of the book, the aspect the reader will remember.

Some cover designs will highlight the fact that the text is translated and others will downplay it. In this respect, the Norwegian cover design stands out, with its obvious references to Russia. The Danish design also uses Russian symbols, but they are subtler than those on the Norwegian cover. On the British cover, no connections to Russia

can be made, but instead, the name of the translator is available on the front cover. The American cover uses symbols so vague that they are probably only noticeable if you specifically look for them. This aspect is interesting in relation to the segmentation of the market. Who will be interested in buying this book? The Norwegian translation explicitly uses the novel's Russian essence in its marketing, thus narrowing the target audience. The targeted readership is probably people who might be familiar with Russian literature, or who, at least, are not opposed to reading Russian literature. Russian literature has a reputation for being heavy and difficult, and a Russian book could theoretically scare people away. The U.S. edition is, on the other hand, aimed at a broader audience. The novel is marketed as something new and fresh, related to popular culture. Economically, the U.S. publication might be a less risky project, even if one has to take into consideration the different attitudes towards reading foreign literature in Norway and the U.S.

Having discussed the translator's invisibility in the introduction to this article, I find it important now to comment also on the invisibility of the cover designer both in this essay and on the book market at large. The name of the cover designer may often be found on a book's copyright page, together with other relevant information about the edition. However, as illustrated by two of the covers I have analyzed in this article, one sometimes find a reference to a company instead of the name of an individual designer. I find this to be indicative of the fact that the artistic expression of the cover designer is generally neglected on the book market. As this article mainly focused on the link between the book cover and the potential reader, I too have paid little attention to the cover designer as an artist. Instead, the cover design has—together with other front cover paratexts—been evaluated in relation to the marketing strategy behind the publication. Luckily, Anikó Sohár's contribution to this issue of *Imaginations* highlights the link between text and cover design in a way that makes the cover designer the prime focus.

In his TED talk from 2012, Kidd specifically addresses the responsibility of the book designer, claiming that, "The book designer's responsibility is threefold: to the reader, to the publisher, and most of

all, to the author. I want you to look at the author's book and say, 'Wow, I need to read that'" (Kidd 08:01). As a conclusion, I would like to relate this claim to the different literary systems. In order for the cover to have such an effect, it has to appeal to the target audience. Therefore, the cover needs to look different in different countries. As I mentioned earlier, the Anglo-American and Scandinavian literary polysystems are governed by different norms, to which all agents involved in the translation and marketing of a book have been subjected. Unconsciously, through their agency, they continue to confirm these norms and either to downplay or emphasize the foreign nature of a translation.

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IMAGE NOTES

Figure 1. The cover of the first Russian edition of Pelevin's *Generation "P"*. Cover design by A. Cholodenko.

Figure 2. The cover of the first edition of the Norwegian translation of Pelevin's *Generation "P"* (*Generasjon P*). Cover design by Robin Snasen Rengård.

Figure 3. The cover of the Danish translation of Pelevin's *Generation "P"* (*Babylon generation P*). Cover design by Llustra Copenhagen.

Figure 4. The cover of the British edition of Pelevin's *Generation "P"* (*Babylon*). Cover design by Pentagram.

Figure 5. The cover of the first American edition of Pelevin's *Generation "P"* (*Homo Zapiens*). Cover design by Darren Haggard.

NOTES

1. For a fuller analysis of the plot, see Sofya Khagi's "From Homo Sovieticus to Homo Zapiens: Viktor Pelevin's Consumer Dystopia." □