

# TO BE TRANSLATED OR NOT TO BE

**PEN / IRL REPORT ON THE INTERNATIONAL  
SITUATION OF LITERARY TRANSLATION**

Esther Allen (ed.)



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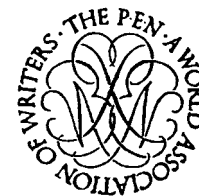
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# Foreword

**Paul Auster**

Dostoevsky, Heraclitus, Dante, Virgil, Homer, Cervantes, Kafka, Kierkegaard, Tolstoy, Hölderlin, and scores of other poets and writers who have marked me forever—I, an American, whose only foreign language is French—have all been revealed to me, read by me, digested by me, in translation. Translators are the shadow heroes of literature, the often forgotten instruments that make it possible for different cultures to talk to one another, who have enabled us to understand that we all, from every part of the world, live in one world.

I would like to offer a salute and a declaration of thanks to all these men and women, these translators, who toil so selflessly to keep literature alive for everyone.

## Presentations

### Translation and Linguistic Rights

**Jiří Gruša**

President of International PEN, London

Since its foundation in 1921, International PEN has worked to promote translation and dialogue between all literatures. Among the committees of International PEN, along with the Writers in Prison Committee and the Women Writers Committee, we have a very active Translation and Linguistic Rights Committee, coordinating various initiatives by PEN federations throughout the world.

The very name of the committee explains our vision: translation goes together with linguistic rights. The patient work of translators moves forward together with the promotion of the right of all linguistic communities to be treated as equal. PEN is committed to an understanding of translation wherein all literatures, no matter how they are defined or what their place may be in any description of a globalised world, enrich one another.

The present report is an important analytic tool. It shows clearly that the English-speaking cultures should open themselves and increase the number of translations into English if they want to be a real bridge between literatures. But the report also contains important examples of good translation-related practices in and between various languages. The debate about “English as an invasive species” and the promotion of good translation practices both delineate the path for International PEN’s work today and in years to come.

# Participating in the Translation Debate

**Josep Bargalló**

Director of Institut Ramon Llull, Barcelona

The Catalan poet Joan Vinyoli woke up one day and rushed to set down in writing the verse that had come to him in his dreams: “and all the pearls became eyes”. That is the last stanza of *Cançó de mar* (Song of the Sea) one of the beautiful poems which this poet wrote towards the end of his life. Only later, after re-reading it, did he realize that the dream echoed Ariel’s song in Shakespeare’s *The Tempest* (Act I, Scene II). Poetry is in a state of constant translation in the hands of poets who read each other and are moved by verses from one literature or another. Translation is the lifeblood which sustains and nurtures literatures.

One of the Institut Ramon Llull’s missions is to broaden peoples’ knowledge of the work of Catalan writers—from medieval classics to contemporary works—by supporting the translation of their works. Our task requires an analysis of the exchange among literatures around the world and is a subject of constant discussion with similar cultural institutions throughout Europe. One of the main challenges faced by European literatures is translation into English. Recognizing the need to take a close look at translation policies on an international scale, the Institut Ramon Llull decided to commission the study which follows here and, coincidentally, has been published in the year that Catalan culture is the guest of honor at the Frankfurt Book Fair.

We are very grateful to Esther Allen for taking on the job of directing the study; to all who contributed to each section, for their excellent work; and to International PEN which brought to the project the rich experience of its many centers. The report is already making an impact on the discussion about translation within the literary community. I hope that this debate continues around the world and that Catalan participation within it will be what we have always aimed for: to be one more voice, clear and unique, making itself heard within the greater dialogue on literature.

## Introduction

**Esther Allen**

Center for Literary Translation, Columbia University, New York

**Carles Torner**

Humanities Department, Institut Ramon Llull, Barcelona

In Act I, Scene III of *Richard II*, the Duke of Norfolk is banished from England—sent into exile “never to return.” Curiously, his first thought on hearing this harsh sentence pronounced is not of family or friends but of the English language, the only language he has spoken in the forty years of his life. To leave England, in 1595, was to leave English. Norfolk contemplates going forth into a world where his speech will be unintelligible, his very words cast into a dark dungeon, his aging mind incapable of beginning anew with some other language:

*Within my mouth you have engaol'd my tongue,  
Doubly portcullis'd with my teeth and lips,  
And dull, unfeeling, barren ignorance  
Is made my gaoler to attend on me.  
I am too old to fawn upon a nurse,  
Too far in years to be a pupil now:  
What is thy sentence, then, but speechless death,  
Which robs my tongue from breathing native breath?<sup>1</sup>*

In the 400-odd years since Shakespeare wrote these lines, the terms of Norfolk's lament have been almost wholly reversed. Today, the speaker of English has a better chance of being understood in more places across the globe than the speaker of any other language. Today, it is the person who does not speak English who risks exclusion—not merely social exclusion but exclusion from the ability to survive in the global economy: “speechless death” indeed.

Since 1921, when the PEN Club was founded in London, the transmission of human thought across linguistic and national boundaries has been among its central concerns. “Literature, national though it be in origin, knows no frontiers, and should remain common currency among nations in spite of political or international upheavals,” reads the first line of the PEN Charter, which adds: “PEN stands for the principle of unhampered transmission of thought within each nation and among all nations...” In that spirit, International PEN and the Institut Ramon Llull of Barcelona, with the collaboration of a number of writers, translators, cultural diplomats and specialists in the field of translation, assembled the present report in order to ponder what might be done to perpetuate the age-old conversation that is literature and promote the free and ready circulation of literary works across the globe at a time when, to paraphrase the Irish writer Colm Toibín, the world’s richest language, in economic terms—English—is also one of its most impoverished when it comes to taking in the literary wealth that exists beyond it. Rather than acting as a true *lingua franca* to facilitate communication among different languages, English all too often simply ignores whatever is not English, mistaking the global reach and diversity of the world’s dominant language for the world itself.

This report therefore begins with the assessment of the unprecedented global scope of English and the current state of literary translation in the English-speaking world and particularly in the United States that will be undertaken in the first chapter. Then, by contrast and as context to the situation of English, the second chapter comments on responses from PEN Centers across the globe to a questionnaire about literary translation sent out by International PEN. To provide further points of comparison, the report presents in the third chapter six case studies from different parts of the world to describe what could be called the “translation economy” of each region: the Netherlands, Argentina, Catalonia, Germany, China and France. The subsequent chapter on experiences on literary translation describes the successful initiatives of a number of PEN Centers to address the need for more translation into English, as well as significant efforts by other institutions, both public and private, to engage with this issue in ways that can make a difference. Finally, the conclusions try to summarize the main findings of the report and offer a general view of literary translation in today’s world. Three distinguished writers, Paul Auster, Narcís Comadira, and Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o, have contributed literary depth to what might otherwise have been a lamentably technocratic document by composing texts on the subject of translation especially for this report.

Our heartfelt thanks to the generous community of people across the world who have participated in meetings, conferences and panel discussions on this report and whose energy, intelligence and erudition have contributed to it greatly: Marc Dueñas, Larry Siems, Caroline McCormick, Kata Kulavkova, Roberto Calasso, Elisabeth Pellaert, Amanda Hopkinson, Raymond Federman, Boris Akunin, Steve Wasser-

man, Sònia Garcia, Misia Sert, Yana Genova, Alexandra Buchler, Kate Griffin, Siri Hustvedt, Ma Jian, Francesc Parcerisas, David Damrosch, and, in memoriam, Yael Langella.

#### NOTE

<sup>1</sup> Nicholas Ostler, who cites this passage in his study of the language history of the world, *Empires of the Word* (New York: HarperCollins, 2005) points out that when Shakespeare wrote this speech, there was only a single British colony, the one founded by Sir Walter Raleigh in Roanoke, Virginia in 1586, the fate of which was unknown to anyone in England at that point (p. 477).



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# 1. Translation, Globalization, and English

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**Esther Allen**

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## 1.1 English as an Invasive Species

While estimates of the number of English speakers vary, one frequently-cited figure for the number who speak it as a first language is 400 million. In the Welsh ecolinguist David Crystal's account, the number of those who speak it as a second language is also around 400 million.<sup>1</sup> When those two figures are added to the rather more nebulous number of people who are currently learning English and have achieved a minimal level of competence the total is well beyond a billion. Indeed, while it is common knowledge that Mandarin Chinese is the first language of the greatest number of people on earth (also well over a billion), that no longer seems to be a wide enough reach for the Chinese themselves. In a speech given in Beijing in 2005, Gordon Brown, the UK finance minister, predicted: "In 20 years time, the number of English

speakers in China is likely to exceed the number of speakers of English as a first language in all the rest of the world."<sup>2</sup>

Whether or not Mr. Brown's prophecy comes true, it's clear that a variety of factors—ranging from the expansion of the British Empire which began just after Shakespeare wrote *Richard II* and continued over the course of the 17<sup>th</sup>, 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, to the development in the United States of the technology that made the Internet possible—have conjoined to make English the seemingly indispensable language of globalization as we know and experience it today. In addition to being spoken in its birthplace in the UK, English is the primary language of the United States, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Ireland and more than two dozen other countries, as far flung as Nigeria, Jamaica, and Fiji. And in a dozen countries more—such as the Philippines, India, and South

Africa—English plays an official role in government alongside one or more other languages. More than 85% of the world's international organizations use English as an official language. But it is the recent expansion of English as a second language in the European Union that attests, perhaps more compellingly than any other statistic, to the language's current status and future growth. In 1999, David Graddol noted that since 1990, English-language competence on the European continent had risen sharply, to the point that over 100 million people, almost a third of the European Union's population, were speaking it as a second language.<sup>3</sup> Graddol's finding that in 1994 10% of European continentals over the age of 55 knew some English while 55% of those between 15 and 24 did, speaks volumes about what can be expected for the future.

The current position of the United States as the world's economic and military superpower has clearly played a role in the global consolidation of English, as has the seemingly infinite appeal in the global marketplace of US cultural products. However, as Nicholas Ostler extensively documents in his "language history of the world," *Empires of the Word*, not every empire is successful at imposing its language on the regions over which it holds sway, and US imperial power alone may not be quite enough to explain the unprecedented spread of English. Several linguists have theorized that this global appeal may have to do with factors internal to the language itself—its comparative simplicity, to begin with. "English inflec-

tions are tidy and relatively easy to learn compared with heavily inflected languages and those that have other complex morphological variations," writes Edward Finegan,<sup>4</sup> who goes on to point out that in the United States, 88 of the hundred most frequently written words are monosyllables. On the other hand, the vast absorptive capacity of English's lexicon, which throughout the history of the language has been incessantly ingesting words from hundreds of other languages, has also been identified as a possible source of its power—a hypothesis that should perhaps give pause to those who seek to protect other languages from an influx of English words. Furthermore, several linguists have conjectured that there may be a fundamental link between the Subject-Verb-Object (SVO) grammatical structure—which is characteristic not only of English but also of a number of other languages in widespread use, such as Chinese, French, Russian and Spanish—and the basic processing mechanisms of the human brain. In this theory, SVO languages would be inherently more processable than other kinds of languages, and therefore more useful and appealing to a wider variety of speakers.

Still, the most obvious explanation for the current might of the English language remains the current might of the United States of America. The linguist and translator Michael Henry Heim has offered another way of thinking about that connection by positing that the global appeal of US language and culture emerges out of the country's history.<sup>5</sup> Heim points out

that the internal culture of the United States, with the presence, from the nation's beginning, of people from across the globe—Africans, native Americans, immigrants from all parts of Europe and Asia—made it "a harbinger of global culture, a globalized culture before its time." In order to assimilate so many, the United States had to develop a common language and culture—"common," Heim laments, not only in the sense of intelligible to all, but also in the sense of what would be intelligible to the lowest common denominator. Ostler, however, offers a different and less nation-specific explanation, declaring that from the Reformation to the present, historically and culturally, "English is associated with the quest to get rich, the deliberate acquisition of wealth, often by quite unprecedented and imaginative schemes. This quest has sometimes had to struggle with religious and civic conscience, and the glories of patriotism, but has largely been able to enlist them on its side. In general, it has been the ally, rather than the rival, of freedom of the individual. English has been, above all, a worldly language."<sup>6</sup>

In an article delivered as the 2002 St. Jerome Lecture in London's Queen Elizabeth Hall, which she dedicated to the memory of the late W.G. Sebald, Susan Sontag mused on the fate of the many young people in India who work in "outsourced" call centers for IBM, American Express and other giant corporations, fielding queries in English from consumers in the United States who have dialed a toll-free number, often without realizing that their call was

going through to New Delhi, Bombay or Bangalore.<sup>7</sup> Not only must the call center workers have a near-perfect command of English, they must also become accomplished imposters, able to fake every aspect of a "normal" North American identity that would be identifiable over the telephone. "[T]hese cheerful voices had first to be trained for months, by instructors and by tapes, to acquire a pleasant middle American (not an educated American) accent, and to learn basic American slang, informal idioms (including regional ones) and elementary mass culture references (television personalities and the plots and protagonists of the main sitcoms, the latest blockbuster in the multiplex, fresh baseball and basketball scores, and so on), so that if the exchange with the client in the United States becomes prolonged, they will not falter with the small talk and have the means to continue to pass for Americans." Many anxiety-riddled seekers of technical support in the United States can testify that not all call center workers in India have been driven to these lengths of impersonation; it is possible to dial in to an Indian call center and realize that one is speaking with an Indian. Still, it is clear that the widespread use of English India inherited as part of the mixed legacy of its colonial history has given it a real edge in the current global economy.

The prosperity that knowledge of English can bring has not gone unnoticed in many parts of the world. "If we combine our academic knowledge with the English language," Puntsag Tsagaan, Mongolia's Minister of Education told the New York

*Times* in early 2005—not long after Mongolia’s newly-elected government had announced it was getting rid of the Cyrillic alphabet inherited from Soviet domination and making Mongolia a bilingual country, with English as its second language—“we can do outsourcing here, just like Bangalore.” South Korea has gone to great expense to establish six “English villages” inhabited primarily by native speakers of English, where students pay for a total immersion experience. Meanwhile, citing as its model the Netherlands and Scandinavian countries, where bilingualism with English is nearly universal, Chile has embarked on a plan to make itself bilingual with English within a generation.<sup>8</sup> Called “English Opens Doors,” the Chilean government’s program, announced in 2003, makes English education mandatory from 5<sup>th</sup> grade onwards and seeks to ensure that all graduating students have a decent, basic command of English.<sup>9</sup> Spanish, like Chinese, is among the top five most widely spoken languages on the planet, and it’s a further key indicator of English’s global meta-domination that it has become necessary not only to people who speak languages of limited diffusion, but also to those who speak the world’s major tongues. In painfully sharp contrast to the Chilean drive for bilingualism is the “English only” movement in the United States, where a vociferous group of nationalists is eager to claim that English is under some kind of threat from minority communities within the US that speak Spanish, Chinese or other languages.<sup>10</sup>

Bilingualism in and of itself is no threat to the existence of a language, whatever the nationalists may say; many examples of routinely multilingual societies whose members have moved with ease through several languages for centuries can be cited. And yet something is now threatening the existence of languages across the globe to a degree unprecedented in human history. To explain this situation, the standard post-colonial assumptions about language and political domination may turn out to be less useful than a new paradigm arising from the natural world. Ecolinguistics, the new field that has arisen in response to this crisis, takes its metaphors from biology rather than politics, and studies language communities rather than nation-states. For the ecolinguists, the global system of human languages is best viewed as an ecosystem—and a terrifyingly imperiled one within which fully half the species are endangered. David Crystal reports that of the 6,000 languages currently in existence, half will have died out within the next century. “It turns out,” he writes, “that 96% of the world’s languages are spoken by just 4% of the world’s people.”<sup>11</sup> Only 600 of the world’s languages are *not* presently in danger.<sup>12</sup>

This crisis has aroused a great deal of concern in the communities where the imperiled languages are spoken, among linguists, and among certain international organizations. International PEN and its Translation and Linguistic Rights Community are proud to have been among the primary forces behind the 1996 “Universal Declaration of Linguistic Rights”—also known as the “Barcelona Declaration”

after the city where it was signed—which, taking as its model the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights, seeks to “encourage the creation of a political framework for linguistic diversity, based upon respect, harmonious coexistence and mutual benefit.”<sup>13</sup>

Yet such initiatives, valuable as they are, have had limited impact on the population at large, particularly within the English-speaking world. Language is generally acknowledged to be humankind’s greatest achievement, and each language embodies a human community’s unique perception and experience of the world, all of it lost forever when the language is lost. Nevertheless, people are consistently far more worried about the preservation of animal species or paintings, statues and buildings than they are about the preservation of other peoples’ languages. The Greeks coined the word *barbaros*—“barbarian”—to refer to all who did not speak Greek and whose languages were deemed by the Greeks to be a single, undifferentiated, incoherent stammer: a “babble.” It seems always to have been true that most people have a very difficult time valuing languages they themselves do not speak. The infinitely complex shimmer of logic, music, allusion, tradition and idiosyncrasy that constitutes a language for its own speakers is, from the outside, pure gibberish or, worse still, the indecipherable secret code of an enemy. Myths in many cultures view language diversity itself as a kind of punishment and depict an idyllic pre-Babel universe of monolingualism and peace. Such myths retain their

influence. “Most people,” Crystal notes, all too correctly, “have yet to develop a language conscience.”

The demise of half the world’s languages cannot be blamed on the rise of English alone, for many languages of wide diffusion including Spanish, Portuguese, Russian, Chinese and Arabic have supplanted smaller local languages across the globe. However, there has never before in human linguistic history been anything quite like the current ascendancy of English, and there is no telling where it could lead. “Will the influence of English be so strong that it will permanently change the character of all other languages? And could English kill off other languages altogether? A world in which there was only one language left—an ecological intellectual disaster of unprecedented scale—is a scenario which could in theory obtain within 500 years,” Crystal warns.

This forecast may not seem quite as menacing as other, more immediate threats to the planet such as global warming. Yet when we move the discussion of this issue from the world itself into the world of literature, the monolingual dystopia feared by those who are concerned about vanishing languages is much more nearly upon us. It is particularly painful to observe that when it comes to literature the global language does indeed behave more like an invasive species than a lingua franca, resisting and supplanting whatever is not written in itself, speaking in the loudest of voices while failing to pay much attention at all to anything said in any other language. The preamble

to the Universal Declaration of Linguistic Rights calls for “respect for the ecological balance of societies and for equitable relationships between all languages and cultures.” But as the global power of English is compounded year by year, the inequity of its relationship to other languages becomes increasingly problematic. In a paper recently presented at an International PEN gathering, the Slovene writer Andrej Blatnik asked: “Where to export? In the UK, only 2% of the books on the market are translations, in the US 3%. But in Turkey it is 40%, in Slovenia 70%. Only when the voice of someone else is heard can “free choice” begin. Who loses from these statistics? Those who do not have a choice or those who cannot be chosen?”<sup>14</sup>

## 1.2 World Literature and English

Literary writers have long strived to free themselves from the constraints of national and linguistic boundaries and participate in a global conversation without political, linguistic, geographic or temporal limits. For many, this attempt lies at the very heart of the meaning of the word “literature.” In 1827, Goethe remarked to his youthful amanuensis Eckermann, “National literature is now a rather unmeaning term: the epoch of world literature is at hand, and everyone must strive to hasten its approach.”<sup>15</sup>

Linguistic plurality is an essential component of this idea of literature. Literary scholars notoriously find it difficult to agree, but if there is one point on which

they do converge it is the crucial importance to literature of traffic among different languages. The Russian literary theorist Mikhail Bakhtin viewed what he called “polyglossia”—the interaction of different languages— as fundamental to the origins of literary thinking itself, and particularly crucial to the development of that most heterogeneous of modern genres, the novel: “Only polyglossia fully frees consciousness from the tyranny of its own language...”<sup>16</sup> Other critics from Raymond Williams to Jorge Luis Borges have had other ways of putting it, but all agree that circulation among different languages via translation is the very lifeblood of literature. “Left to itself,” Goethe went on to say to Eckermann, “every literature will exhaust its vitality if it is not refreshed by the interest and contributions of a foreign one.”<sup>17</sup>

Such movement among languages must depend on translation and the work of translators. Whatever the success of a given educational system in promoting multilingualism, few people will master as many as three or four languages in their lifetimes, much less the 600 or so not currently endangered, or the 3,000 that are predicted to survive the contemporary mass extinction, so any defensiveness about reading literature in a language other than that which it was originally written is highly misguided. Attitudes towards, support for, and interest in translation within a given literary community are a crucial indicator of that community’s willingness to belong to what Pascale Casanova, in an important recent book, has called *La république mon-*

*diale des lettres*.<sup>18</sup> Casanova’s metaphors are taken from economics rather than biology: in her account, each language is a kind of currency, and these currencies clearly have very different values on the global literary marketplace. She is one of the first literary critics to fully address, from the perspective of language, “the unequal status of the players in the literary game and the specific mechanisms of domination that are manifested in it.”<sup>19</sup>

Because of its position as the global language, the second language of choice across the planet, the situation of English within this global linguistic economy or World Republic of Letters is unlike that of any other language. A work translated into English does not simply reach an audience of native speakers—it reaches a global audience. Therefore, a work translated into English has a much greater chance of going on to be translated into many other languages. And even without such subsequent translation, a work originally written in or translated into English will have access to the largest book market on the globe, and can be read by more people of different linguistic backgrounds, nationalities and cultures than a work in any other language. English is the world’s strongest linguistic currency. The question of translation into English therefore affects not only the English-speaking world but the entirety of world literature. This is strikingly admitted by Pascale Casanova herself in her introduction to the English translation of her book: “I am pleased that this book, aimed at inaugurating an *international literary criticism*, should itself

be internationalized through translation into English. In this way, its hypotheses will be able to be scrutinized in a practical fashion, and its propositions debated at a truly transnational level, by the various actors in international literary space.”<sup>20</sup> Though she doesn’t say it in so many words, her meaning is clear: those who seek access to a “truly transnational level” of discourse can gain it only via English.

From this perspective, the grave and oft-noted failure of English to take in literary works from other languages via translation becomes all the more crucial. English’s indifference to translation is not merely a problem for native speakers of English who thus deprive themselves of contact with the non-English-speaking world. It is also a roadblock to global discourse that affects writers in every language, and serves as one more means by which English consolidates its power by imposing itself as the sole mode of globalization. For those of us who still care about literature, the threat thus posed is a fearsome one. If world literature, in Goethe’s sense of the term, comes to consist entirely, or even primarily, of literature written in English, then is there really such a thing as world literature anymore?

A knee-jerk anti-globalization posture all too often encountered within universities in the English-speaking world blames the English language per se for this situation, and views those who translate into or out of English as agents of the language’s imperial hegemony. This kind of thinking is worse than silly—it is potentially extremely harmful. The real issue is

not the English language itself, or its global scope, but the cultural forces within the language that are resistant to translation. The difficulty of crossing between languages—what International PEN President Jiří Grůsa has called “the pain of communication”—is something the English-speaking world has been rather successful at avoiding: it’s so much easier and more practical to remain monolingual and let the rest of the world learn your language than to take on all the trouble, effort and expense involved in multilingualism and translation. Far from being agents of English’s imperial hegemony, the translators who work into and out of English have taken the difficulty of linguistic diversity upon themselves, thereby making it possible for people to continue to read and write their own languages without losing access to that lion’s share of the global conversation which now takes place to English. By using the global lingua franca as a medium to connect different languages rather than a replacement for all other languages, translators are helping solve the problem of the world dominance of English, not perpetuating it.

The very difficulty of finding reliable figures about what is translated into and out of the language is symptomatic of the obstacles that literary translation faces in English. In many countries across the world bookstores and book reviews revolve around two categories—works produced nationally and those brought in from other languages and cultures. And, as the various case studies and responses from PEN Centers around the world included in this report will attest,

many governments have agencies that keep close tabs on the number of their books translated into other languages as well as the number of books translated into their own languages. In contrast, the major English-speaking countries increasingly tend to disregard altogether the category of what was originally written in languages other than English. Bowker, the primary collector of statistics on the publishing industry in the United States, stopped publishing statistics on translation when it switched from one database to another in the year 2000. That is to say, it continued to publish figures for children’s books, home economics, religion, sports, and travel—but ceased to take note of which books originated outside of English.<sup>21</sup>

A news release issued by Bowker in October of 2005 did allude to the issue of translation.<sup>22</sup> According to that report, the total number of new books published in English worldwide in 2004 was 375,000—a rather daunting figure, certainly far greater than the number of books published in any other language. “The English-speaking countries remain relatively inhospitable to translations into English from other languages,” the report stated. “In all, there were only 14,440 new translations in 2004, accounting for a little more than 3% of all books available for sale. The 4,982 translations available for sale in the US was the most in the English-speaking world, but was less than half the 12,197 translations reported by Italy in 2002, and less than 400 more than the 4,602 reported by the Czech Republic in 2003. Almost three quarters of all books

translated into English from other languages last year were non-fiction.” These figures become more vividly illustrative when we remember that while Italy has a population of 55 million, and the Czech Republic of just 10 million, the number of people whose first language is English is close to 400 million.

While the figure of 3% of all published books is already alarming, the situation is in fact much more serious than that statistic would indicate. The vast majority of the translations included in this category are non-fiction works of a non-literary nature (computer manuals, etc.), and while such forms of exchange are certainly valuable, when the figures for the literary world are viewed separately, a far starker picture emerges. In 2004, the total number of adult literature and fiction titles in translation published in the United States was 874.<sup>23</sup> And even that figure is misleading. A 1999 study of translation by the National Endowment for the arts gathered its figures from reviews published in all the country’s literary magazines, no matter how small. The NEA study found that of a total of 12,828 works of fiction and poetry published in the United States in 1999 (as reported by Bowker), only 297 were translations—that is, only a little over 2% of all fiction and poetry published, and far less than 1% of all books published. A closer look at those 297 titles further reveals that the list includes many new translations of classic works. While such retranslations are unquestionably a vital aspect of literary culture, one would have to subtract the newly translated Homers, Tolstoys and

Stendhals from the total number of translations published in order to gain a true picture of how overwhelmingly the odds are against any living literary writer who does not write in English having his or her work published in English.

In his 1995 book *The Translator’s Invisibility: A History of Translation*, Larry Venuti found that from the 1950s on, the percentage of translated books in the United States has been, on average, 2%-4% of all books published each year, with an upsurge to 6%-7% during that 1960s.<sup>24</sup> That upsurge bears out Eliot Weinberger’s contention that the United States has been most interested in translated literature during its period of post-colonial cultural formation in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and during later periods of widespread discontent with its own culture and government such as the 1960s and, perhaps, the present moment.

The truly alarming dimensions of the problem emerge with the most striking clarity in a study published in July 2006 by the Center for Book Culture which focused on fiction alone, from the modernist period to the present, excluded retranslations and anthologies, assembled figures for the last five years, and then broke them down country by country. Here it’s clear that the odds against being translated into English that confront individual writers in flourishing literary cultures such as Argentina are almost hopeless: out of the hundreds of writers who populate the country’s vibrant literary environment, fewer than one per year (and not necessarily a living one) will see one of his or her books translated into English.<sup>25</sup>



## Translated Fiction Published in the United States, 2000-2006

Country: Language	Translated to english in last 6 years	Average per year
Albania: Albanian	3	0.5
Argentina: Spanish	5	0.8
Belgium: Flemish	1	0.2
Bosnia & Herzegovina: Bosnian	1	0.2
Brazil: Portuguese	7	1.2
Bulgaria: Bulgarian	1	0.2
Chile: Spanish	6	1.0
Croatia: Croatian	6	1.0
Cuba: Spanish	12	2.0
Czech Republic: Czech	12	2.0
Denmark: Danish	5	0.8
Ecuador: Spanish	1	0.2
Estonia: Estonian	1	0.2
Finland: Finnish	1	0.2
France: French	52	8.7
Germany/Austria/Switzerland: German	36	6.0
Greece: Greek	8	1.3
Hungary: Hungarian	7	1.2
Iceland: Icelandic	1	0.2
Italy: Italian	39	6.5
Latvia: Latvian	0	0
Lithuania: Lithuanian	1	0.2
Macedonia: Macedonian	1	0.2
Mexico: Spanish	8	1.3
Netherlands: Dutch	18	3.0
Norway: Norwegian	12	2.0
Peru: Spanish	2	0.3
Poland: Polish	13	2.6
Portugal: Portuguese	6	1.0
Romania: Romanian	3	0.5
Russia: Russian	29	4.8
Serbia and Montenegro: Serbian	8	1.3
Slovak Republic: Slovak	1	0.2
Slovenia: Slovene	2	0.3
Spain: Catalan	2	0.3
Spain: Spanish	12	2.0
Sweden: Swedish	7	1.2
Turkey: Turkish	6	1.0
Uruguay: Spanish	4	0.7

Source: Center for Book Culture, [http://www.centerforbookculture.org/context/no19/translations\\_5.html](http://www.centerforbookculture.org/context/no19/translations_5.html)

The most complete source of information about literary translation into English is the journal *Annotated Books Received*, which can be consulted on-line at [www.literarytranslators.org/abr.html](http://www.literarytranslators.org/abr.html). Published by the American Literary Translators Association (ALTA) and the Center for Translation Studies at the University of Texas at Dallas, *Annotated Books Received* started out in 1983 as a section of *Translation Review*, ALTA's scholarly journal, which listed literary translations of all kinds from any language into English published in the previous year. In 1994, ALTA began publishing the list as a separate supplement to the *Review*. *Annotated Books Received* offers little in the way of statistical analysis, but rather contains complete information about every published, book-length literary translation that ALTA has become aware of, be it fiction, literary theory, poetry, drama, letters, or some other form of literary scholarship. Published twice a year, *Annotated Books Received* is by far the best source for detailed information about what is being translated into English. A quick glance at the most recent edition, Volume 11, No. 2, for 2005, bears out the dim prospects for translation into English of the hypothetical Argentine novelist cited above. Under Spanish, ABR lists a grand total of five translations, three of them works by classic, long-dead writers, one a volume of poetry by a young Spanish poet, and last, *The House of Paper*, a novel by Argentine Carlos María Domínguez, published by Harcourt. And that's it.

A more hopeful outlook emerges from an intriguing recent study done by Michele

Maczka and Riky Stock of the German Book Office in New York City which tracked only the figures for translations reviewed in the influential US publishing industry magazine *Publisher's Weekly*, convincingly deemed by the study's authors to be the most accurate reflection of "what is significant on the [US] book market today."<sup>26</sup> They were told by *Publisher's Weekly's* editor-in-chief, Sara Nelson, that the magazine pays special attention to translation, reviewing 60% of all translated books submitted, as opposed to only 50% of all fiction, and 25% of all non-fiction. "In 2004," Maczka and Stock found, "there were 132 translated titles reviewed out of a total of 5,588 reviews (about 2%)." In a surprising and encouraging shift, however, that number rose to 197 out of 5,727 (about 3.5%) in 2005—an increase of 50%.<sup>27</sup>

English is far from being the only language to have a problematic relationship with translation. A recent article in the *Korea Times*, an English-language publication, lamented that Korea had failed to adopt the "massive cross-cultural project" which Japan systematically pursued during the Meiji Restoration in the 1860s, leaving Korea's advance into modernity far behind Japan's.<sup>28</sup> *Are Translators Traitors?* a new book by Korean scholar and translator Park Sang-il, deplores the "shameful" quantity and quality of translations in Korea—two problems from which English could certainly also be said to suffer. Moreover, much recent writing about the Arab world, most particularly a 2002 report issued by the United Nations Development Programme, has focused on the paucity

of translation into Arabic and the need for a great deal more of it. However, in the Arab world, translation is widely viewed as a key step towards modernization, as the many initiatives undertaken by a variety of Arab governments to support translation, documented in a report on translation in the Arab world by the Next Page Foundation, attest.<sup>29</sup> Meanwhile, in Korea, Park Sang-il fears that “indifference to the importance of translation could impoverish the cultural ground [of Korea] and in the end threaten the viability of our mother tongue.”

English, by contrast, does not, for the moment, face any such threat if it largely ignores most other languages. As we’ve noted, translation into English means that a book is more likely to be translated into many other languages, as well,<sup>30</sup> making the issue addressed in this report a matter of great concern to the segment of the global literary audience that wishes to remain interconnected with as many different language groups as possible. But what does English itself lose or risk by its failure to translate? Aside from the self-evident political and social dangers to an empire that fails to pay attention to the rest of the world, an increasing provincialism also poses a threat to the literature of the United States. At a panel discussion organized by PEN American Center to address issues of translation and globalization, Roberto Calasso the distinguished mythographer and director of the Italian publishing house Adelphi Edizioni, 50%-70% of whose list consists of translations, pointed out some very serious literary

consequences of such indifference to literatures not written in English.<sup>31</sup> The Austrian writer Thomas Bernhard has had an enormous impact on generations of writers all over the world, including English-speaking writers. And yet, Calasso noted, only a limited number of Bernhard’s many works are available in English, and much of his work, including some essential books, has yet to be translated. English-speaking writers are therefore in the situation of being superficially influenced by a writer to whose work they have only limited access.

This brings us to a key aspect of the problem of translation into English: the American university’s devaluation of translation as a form of literary scholarship. Translation has been among the most fundamental scholarly activities for millennia, but many contemporary American universities do not view it as a sufficiently significant or original form of endeavor. This trend away from translation has had some remarkably perverse consequences. It’s a far safer career move for a US academic to write, in English, a monograph on an author whose work has never been translated into English than to translate that author’s work into English. Faculty members who continue to publish translations sometimes do so under pseudonyms, for fear of seeing their scholarly reputations tainted, or simply leave the translations off their curricula vitae when career achievements are being evaluated. Other scholars who publish “too many translations” may fail to receive tenure or even to gain employment at all. “The great

scandal of translation,” said translator and critic Gayatri Spivak at a 1994 Columbia University conference titled “Translation Matters” “is the obliteration of the figure of the translator.”

“The Academy [in the United States] has made it perfectly clear that translations are virtually worthless when it comes time for tenure and promotion,” translator Alyson Waters, managing editor of *Yale French Studies*, recently stated in an interview with French translator Elisabeth Peellaert.<sup>32</sup> The situation, Waters adds, may be changing with the growth of the field of Translation Studies, though for the moment a literary scholar in the United States is far better off writing about translation-related issues than actually practicing literary translation itself. The American Literary Translators Association has addressed the situation by publishing a useful pamphlet called “Translation and Tenure” to help junior faculty members gain respect for their work as literary translators among their colleagues.<sup>33</sup>

In recent years, even some university presses, which had been among the best sources of translations in literature and the human sciences, have announced that they will no longer publish translations, or are severely cutting back on the number of translations they publish. While this has had an impact on literary translation, it has led to a particularly troubling situation in the social sciences. Not only within the United States, but across the globe generally, social scientists have come under ever-increasing pressure to write in English, whatever their first language might be—

the same pressure to which their colleagues in the “hard” sciences succumbed some time ago. Concerned about the situation, the American Council of Learned Societies launched the Social Science Translation Project which brought together translators, editors and social scientists to discuss problems arising from the translation of social science texts. The group has now issued a series of guidelines for the translation of social science texts, as well as a document titled “A Plea for Social Scientists to Write in Their Own Languages.”<sup>34</sup> Noting that “social science concepts and the terms used to convey them are shaped by the characteristics of the language in which they are originally produced and, consequently, by the cultural and historical experience of the users of that language,” the “Plea” deplores the “increasing homogenization and impoverishment of social science discourse” resulting from “the growing hegemony of a single language.”

Writing to one of the leaders of the ACLS Social Science Translation Project in response to the “Plea,” Bente Christensen, a vice-president of the International Federation of Translators and a member of Norwegian PEN wrote, “Here in Norway, we fight to have some university books written in Norwegian and not only in English. The students do not really understand what they read. I have seen that many times. They repeat the concepts in English, but when I ask them to explain what it is in Norwegian, they get confused.” “When we speak English,” Amin Maalouf told an audience at the International PEN Congress in Tromsø, Norway in

2004, “we sometimes feel that our words our superficial, that the meaning does not go very deep. For any writer or anyone who sets out to compose a written document of any kind, the choice of language is deeply personal and unique; many writers have chosen to express themselves in languages other than their native tongue for a wide variety of reasons. However, not only literary writers, but increasing numbers of people across the globe are pressured to carry out the most important aspects of their academic and professional lives in a language that is not fully theirs, because otherwise their work would simply be ignored.”<sup>35</sup>

There have been a number of positive trends with regard to the publication of literary translation in the United States over the last two or three years (as the very recent figures from *Publishers Weekly* mentioned in the study by the German Book Office above show), and much will be said about them in the fourth chapter of this report. But there is also a deeply entrenched tendency within many sectors of the US publishing industry to view literary translation as unsaleable. “America Yawns at Foreign Fiction” read a memorable headline in the *New York Times* on the subject of the US reception of translated literature.<sup>36</sup> Of course, literature itself is faring none too well within the US book market these days; literary fiction and non-fiction and, especially, poetry, often seem to be little more than a kind of fringe on the margins of the vast machine that churns out massive numbers of “book-shaped objects” (to quote Steve

Wasserman, former editor of the *Los Angeles Times Book Review*) that have little or no lasting cultural value. Literary translation is the narrowest of fringes on the edge of that fringe, and while there are some publishing houses that have maintained an admirable degree of commitment to it, many other houses avoid it or view it as a kind of charitable endeavor, at best.

The translated book that does get published then faces the problem of reviews and marketing. Only in rare instances involving Nobel Prize winners or writers whose global renown is fully consolidated have publishers in the English-speaking world invested the kind of pre-publication advances in translated books that make them then commit large amounts of money to promoting them after publication. The first-time novelist who writes in English may well have a publisher with a half-million dollar investment to recover, and therefore a book tour, extensive advertisements, and all the other perks that may (or may not) push a book to the top of bestseller list. But the novelist whose work is coming out in English translation for the first time is very unlikely to be given any of those marketing and publicity resources. And while some reviewers are merely nervous about discussing translated books because they don’t have access to the original language the books were written in, others feel no qualms about expressing an attitude of open disdain to the practice of literary translation itself. In an article in the highly regarded literary and cultural magazine *The Atlantic Monthly* titled “Why we review the books

we do,” Benjamin Schwarz, book review editor of the magazine, mentions that *The Atlantic* publishes few reviews of translated books.<sup>37</sup> Anticipating a charge of “parochialism,” Schwarz acknowledges that this is “half-right”: “We tend to focus on prose-style in our assessment of fiction. It’s obviously far more difficult to do so when reviewing literature in translation, because both the reviewer and the reader of a work encounter not the author’s writing but the translator’s rendering of it. Hence we run fewer pieces on translated works.” The prose style of some translations is indeed flawed, but then so is the prose style of many works originally written in English; the use of such a pretext as grounds for paying less attention to world literature is highly suspect, to say the least. Roberto Calasso has described much of contemporary US culture as a “lethal mixture of provincialism and imperialism,” and such an attitude on the part of book reviewers can serve as an excellent example of what he means.

But that is far too grim a note on which to conclude. The English-speaking world, particularly in its major cities, is by no means the monolingual place that a reader with no experience of it might imagine after reading this report. Amanda Hopkinson, director of the British Centre of Literary Translation, points out that children show up in the London city schools speaking more than 350 different languages at home. Anyone who has ever ridden the New York subway has plunged into an environment probably as multilingual as any on earth. But if that same subway

rider goes back up to the street and strolls into a bookstore, she’ll find little there that can help her win entry into the alien tongues that were ringing in her ears a few seconds earlier—almost everything there will have been written in English. The challenge, for the English-speaking world, is not to become multilingual—we already are, and beyond Mikhail Bakhtin’s wildest dreams—but to translate the polyglossia of our schools, streets and subways onto our bookshelves.

There are many translators, editors, publishing houses, agents, teachers, academics, institutions, and organizations that remain deeply committed to bringing international writing into English. There is a lot to do, but there is also a lot to build on. The level of translation into English seems to have reached an extreme low point from which there was nowhere to go but up, but the pendulum does seem to be swinging back towards translation with surprising momentum. A very encouraging number of new initiatives have emerged in the last few years from outside and within the English-speaking world, particularly within the United States, and the results are already making themselves felt. So many people are now committed to making the globe’s linguistic invasive species into a means by which languages can communicate with each other that there must surely be very good news to come. International PEN and the Institut Ramon Llull respectfully submit this report to that large community of bridge-builders, hoping it will be useful to them in the task we are all jointly undertaking.



## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> David Crystal, *The Language Revolution* (Cambridge, UK: Polity, 2004), p. 8.

<sup>2</sup> Reported in "New Dawn in a Shared Language," by Andrew Yeh, *The Financial Times*.

<sup>3</sup> See Graddol, "The Decline of the Native Speaker," in Graddol, David and Ulrike H. Meinhof, editors, *English in a Changing World* (Milton Keynes: Catchline, 1999), pp. 57-68; cited by Ostler, op. cit. p. 516.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. his article "English," in *The World's Major Languages*, ed. Bernard Comrie (Oxford University Press, 1990), pp. 79-82.

<sup>5</sup> In a speech titled "Passive Imperialism," delivered to the Global Fellows Program of the International Institute at the University of California at Los Angeles, on November 23, 2004.

<sup>6</sup> *Empires of the Word*, p. 517.

<sup>7</sup> "The World as India: Translation as a passport within the community of literature," *Times Literary Supplement*, June 13, 2003.

<sup>8</sup> All the information in this paragraph is taken from James Brooke, "For Mongolians, E is for English, and F is for the Future," *New York Times*, February 15, 2005.

<sup>9</sup> See [www.foreigninvestment.cl](http://www.foreigninvestment.cl)

<sup>10</sup> For a particularly egregious example of such thinking, see Samuel P. Huntington, *Who Are We?* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2004),.

<sup>11</sup> *Language Revolution*, p. 50.

<sup>12</sup> Two excellent sources of further information about languages on the verge of extinction are the website of the Foundation for Endangered Languages, based in the UK ([www.ogmios.org](http://www.ogmios.org)) and the website of the Endangered Language Fund, based in the US: [www.ling.yale.edu/~elf/](http://www.ling.yale.edu/~elf/)

<sup>13</sup> See [www.linguistic-declaration.org](http://www.linguistic-declaration.org)

<sup>14</sup> Translated by Maja Visenjak-Limon.

<sup>15</sup> Cited from Eckermann's *Gespräche mit Goethe in den letzten Jahren seines Lebens* (1835) by David Damrosch, in *What is World Literature?* (Princeton University Press, 2003), p. 1.

<sup>16</sup> Mikhail Bakhtin. *The Dialogic Imagination*, ed. By Michael Holquist, trans. By Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1992, p. 61.

<sup>17</sup> Damrosch, op. cit., p. 7.

<sup>18</sup> Editions du Seuil, 1999; English translation, Harvard University Press, 2004.

<sup>19</sup> Casanova, 352.

<sup>20</sup> Casanova, XIII.

<sup>21</sup> For example, see the statistics on US Book Production on Bookwire, one of Bowker's portals: [www.bookwire.com/bookwire/decadebook\\_production.html](http://www.bookwire.com/bookwire/decadebook_production.html)

<sup>22</sup> "English-Speaking Countries Published 375,000 New Books Worldwide in 2004," Bowker News Release. October 12, 2005, New Providence, New Jersey. Media contact: [dteague@teaguecommunications.com](mailto:dteague@teaguecommunications.com)

<sup>23</sup> Personal communication from Andrew Grabois of Bowker, March 9, 2005.

<sup>24</sup> (Routledge, 1995). See also Venuti's *The Scandals of Translation: Towards an Ethics of Difference* (Routledge, 1998), for slightly more recent statistics.

<sup>25</sup> The data appeared in the 5<sup>th</sup> of a series of commentaries on the difficulties of funding translation into English by John O'Brien of the Dalkey Archive Press, published in *Context: A Forum for Literary Arts and Culture*; [http://www.centerforbookculture.org/context/no19/translations\\_5.html](http://www.centerforbookculture.org/context/no19/translations_5.html)

<sup>26</sup> "Literary Translation in the United States," in *Publishing Research Quarterly* (June, 2006).

<sup>27</sup> Further general statistical information about the global translation economy and English's place in it is provided by UNESCO in its *Index Translationum*, which provides cumulative bibliographical information on books translated and published in about one hundred of the UNESCO member states since 1979.

<sup>28</sup> "Is Korean Language Doomed?" by Kim Ki-tae, *The Korea Times*, January 20, 2006.

<sup>29</sup> "Lost or Found in Translation: Translations' support policies in the Arab world," a report commissioned by the Next Page Foundation in Sofia, Bulgaria, gives an extremely helpful context to the aforementioned UNDP report and takes serious issue with some of the figures it cites. See [www.npage.org/news/arabrep.html](http://www.npage.org/news/arabrep.html).

<sup>30</sup> See, in this respect, the comments on the importance of translation into English made by many PEN Centers (in response to the International PEN Questionnaire on Translation and Globalization) in Chapter 2 of this document.

<sup>31</sup> The panel took place in April of 2006, as part of PEN American Center's second annual international literary festival, PEN World Voices: The New York Festival of International Literature. Participants on the panel were Roberto Calasso, of Adelphi Edizione in Italy, Boris Akunin, the well-known detective novelist and former deputy editor of the Soviet and post-Soviet magazine *Foreign Literature*, Amanda Hopkinson, head of the British Centre for Literary Translation at the University of East Anglia, Richard Howard, a distinguished translator from the French into English, Elizabeth Peellaert, a distinguished translator from English into French, and Raymond Federman, a scholar and writer. The panel was moderated by Steve Wasserman, former editor of the *Los Angeles Times Book Review*.

<sup>32</sup> Published in *To My American Readers*, a free magazine published by the French Cultural Services, the Villa Gillet of Lyon and PEN American Center on the occasion of the 2006 PEN World Voices: The New York Festival of International Literature. See [www.frenchbooknews.com](http://www.frenchbooknews.com)

<sup>33</sup> See <http://literarytranslators.org/promo.htm>

<sup>34</sup> See [www.acls.org](http://www.acls.org)

<sup>35</sup> For an extensive and very useful discussion of the effects of globalization on translators working primarily outside of the literary and academic worlds, with special emphasis on minority languages, see Michael Cronin's excellent *Translation and Globalization* (Routledge, 2003).

<sup>36</sup> Written by Stephen Kinzer, the article was published on July 26, 2003.

<sup>37</sup> *The Atlantic Monthly*, January/February 2004.

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## 2. Literary Translation: The International Panorama

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**Simona Škrabec.** *Literary critic, translator and member of the Catalan PEN Center*

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The previous chapter covers the situation regarding literary translation in English-speaking countries, with particular reference to the United States. By contrast, this chapter gives an overview of the main trends in literary translation internationally, although it takes into consideration the problem discussed in the first chapter, namely the decline in translations from other languages into English.

The argument to be developed here is based on questionnaire replies received by PEN International from PEN centers around the world. The replies received from the UK, Australia, New Zealand, and to some extent the Philippines furnish complementary information on the complex situation in the English language publishing field. With regard to the thriving free market for books in Asia, apart from the report on China, the only other data received are from Japan and these are of a general nature. The ques-

tionnaire replies enable a comparison to be made between the reports on France, The Netherlands, and Catalonia with the data furnished by the Flanders PEN center and opinions from countries in Central and Eastern Europe (Lithuania, Hungary, Slovenia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, and Macedonia). In addition, some of the comments by the San Miguel de Allende PEN Center (Mexico) shed light on the situation in South America (contained in the report on Argentina). All replies from PEN centers to the questionnaire on translation may be read in their entirety on the website Diversity ([www.diversity.org.mk](http://www.diversity.org.mk)).

### 2.1 Projection abroad

#### **The lack of statistics**

One of the main differences in the replies received from the centers concerns the

availability of statistical data. It is surprising that several centers state they do not have reliable data on which works have been translated into foreign languages. It is worth considering this issue since the lack of information is not attributable to negligence by the questionnaire respondents.

The main reason for this dearth of information is the lack of appropriate bodies for gathering and publishing such data. However, one can also understand why certain bodies in other countries do not enjoy the importance they do in most European States. The countries lacking data are Mexico, The Philippines, and New Zealand. Mexican literature is written in Spanish, while New Zealand literature is written in English. That is why promoting the literatures of these two countries abroad is not solely undertaken by local governments, given that the languages in which they are written makes it easy for them to reach wide audiences without having to resort to translation. Furthermore, the authors do not necessarily have to seek publishing houses in their own countries. This means that agreements to translate their works may be reached abroad, thus greatly complicating data-gathering on translations for these countries.

This raises a thorny issue. Can one say that Mexico and New Zealand have their own literary cultures? There are many literary cultures throughout the world that share languages, however it is often difficult to establish their bounds. The subject tends to be highly politicised, raising issues of cultural identity. It also poses practical problems—for example, can an author

long “exiled” in Europe and who has published most of his works abroad be said to form part of the literary tradition of his native country? It is not surprising that many governments simply duck the issue when drawing up statistics.

In the following section, the clear-cut responses made by the UK and Australian PEN Centers regarding the domestic market for books in English will help clarify some of the issues in this immense monolingual market.

In the Philippines, the issue is more complex given that the country has various local languages and a big literary output in both English and Spanish. Producing statistics in such a complex linguistic context would be a nightmare for government. On the other hand, the lack of reliable data in Mexico, New Zealand and The Philippines can also be explained by the fact that these countries tend to take less part in literary exchanges than is the case in Europe.

#### **European literary promotion abroad**

In Europe, the attitude towards literary promotion abroad is completely different. The Belgian government provides highly detailed statistics on literary output in Flemish and the promotion of Flemish works abroad. Slovenia takes a similar stance, providing a detailed catalogue on the Internet of all the country's works published abroad.

The responses by PEN centers allow one to produce a map showing the frequency of literary exchanges, which is confirmed in the six cases studied in the second part of this chapter. Europe, with almost thirty

languages, is the area with the strongest links when it comes to world literature. These exchanges are complemented with frequent translations into Chinese and Japanese (Asia's main languages) and into those in Indo-China (e.g. Vietnamese, Malay, and Korean) and some Indian languages. There are no translations into African languages and—surprisingly—none of the PEN centers mentioned a work translated into Arab.

#### **English as a “useful intermediary”**

This situation is very different for English-speaking authors, who do not need to translate their works to reach a mass market. One should also bear in mind that in many countries where English is not an official language, a rising number of readers spurn translations and buy books in the original English. This is particularly true in The Netherlands. It is also so to a lesser extent in Scandinavian countries. Even so, a best-selling novel in English has reasonable prospects of being translated into thirty languages and—if it is a runaway hit—into non-European languages too.

Lithuania's PEN Center highlighted an occurrence that while common, is seldom so clearly illustrated as in this country's case. Most of the nation's literary translations into English are made in Lithuania. All the questionnaire respondents stated that they considered translation of works into English as key to their country's projection abroad but that access to the English-language book market appeared practically impossible. The expression “useful intermediary” used by Lithuania's Laimantas Jonusys thus seems particularly appro-

priate. Books are translated into English despite their slender chances of ever reaching English-speaking readers. Rather, the aim is get the attention of intermediaries who might foster their translation into languages (such as French and German) that are much more open to foreign writers.

#### **The lack of English translators**

An even more important factor determining the poor showing of the literature from smaller nations on the international scene is the dearth of people capable of competently translating from the foreign language into English. This is illustrated by the lack of questionnaire responses covering the great languages of European literature (French, German and Italian). Put baldly, there is a clash between minority languages on the one hand and the all-pervading presence of English on the other. It is small wonder then that the Macedonian PEN Center complaint of the lack of translators was mirrored by the English PEN Center's comments regarding the urgent need to train translators in minority languages.

The presence of modern languages in the UK is so sparse that Amanda Hopkinson, Director of the British Center for Literary Translation, considers there are “languages in danger of immediate extinction”. Universities around the UK have scrapped various languages from their philology departments. Translators of Greek and Latin were educated at private schools. By comparison, the vast majority of translators who have sufficient command of modern languages are either the offspring

of immigrants or Britons who have spent a long time abroad. According to the UK PEN Center, there is no chance of attaining sufficient command of foreign languages in British schools and universities—something that is cause for great concern.

### **The imbalances caused by subsidies**

The differences between the European countries that took part in the survey are notable. The economic problems faced by Macedonia mean the nation lacks the subsidies needed to promote its literature abroad. Foreign publishing houses expect translation to be funded by the country of origin. Europe's poorer countries have been forced to face the unpleasant truth that the market for literary translations mirrors a nation's economic clout rather than its publicising skill or the intrinsic merits of its literature.

## **2.2 Acceptance of translated literature**

### **The internal structure of English-speaking markets**

The proportion of translated works as a percentage of the whole varies considerably among countries. As noted in the first chapter, there are very few translated works in the United States. In the UK, the most optimistic statistics indicate 6% of books are translations but this includes technical and non-fiction translations. Literary translation only makes up 2% of total output.

In Australia, things are even worse. Barbara McGilvray and collaborators in

Sydney indicate that fewer than half a dozen books are translated each year. The President of the New Zealand PEN Center noted that readers and even literary critics are often unaware that they are reading a translation, given that the fact is not highlighted. Furthermore, many of the books sold in the country are published in the UK, US, or Australia and most of the literary works found in New Zealand's bookshops and libraries were also published abroad. New Zealand publishers exert practically no influence over literary translation policies.

The Australian respondents also noted the pitiful state of literary publishing in the country. The Australian market for translated works is dominated by imports from the US and UK. Furthermore, the Free Trade Agreement between Australia and the US has opened the floodgates to dumping, with American booksellers selling remaindered items very cheaply. The same American approach to bookselling is found—albeit in a milder form—elsewhere in the English-speaking world. It is fostered by publishing house alliances and multi-national firms. Sometimes the relationship is a reciprocal one—for example the case of “Penguin India” or Heinemann's short-lived “Africa Series”. However, more often than not it involves joint printing, re-packaging, and world-wide distribution.

The English PEN Center confirms the practice of selling the same book at different prices. Books are sold at full retail price in wealthy countries and are later dumped in poorer nations. In South Africa,

British encyclopedias are dumped at a tenth or a hundredth of their original price to prevent the appearance of pirated versions on the black market.

Both the publishing and retail sides of the book business in English-speaking world are dominated by conglomerates and chains. Two multinationals—the German Bertelsmann group and the French Hachette group have the lion's share of the publishing market. Both groups focus on best-sellers. Authors receive vast sums for such works. However, there is also a new trend in the UK—non-author best-sellers. For example, even a firm like Bloomsbury has stooped to publishing ghost-written autobiographies of football players and fashion models. This is the “literature” of the masses with a vengeance and nothing, it seems, can detain its juggernaut career through the industry. The most translated works are detective stories or tales of an erotic, even pornographic nature. One should note here that such works are not considered great literature but rather exotic foreign variations on a theme.

The Greek and Latin classics are being republished in English, often in new translations. An example of this is the Macmillan series or the collections published by Oxford University Press and Penguin. This interest is partly explained by the fact that Plato and Marc Aurelius are not around to insist on authors rights, making the publishing of these works a lot cheaper. On the other hand, the teaching of Latin and Greek has undergone a dramatic decline and so there is no longer any market for such works in their original languages.

In the Australian PEN Center's view, this aspect is of key importance. Australian readers have a strong herd instinct but the book business—particularly in the case of independent publishers—depends on readers acting as individuals. Accordingly, the market gives translated poetry and literature short shrift.

### **The complexity of post-colonial countries**

Another feature of English-speaking countries, particularly Commonwealth ones, is their complex ethnic make-up. The New Zealand PEN Center drew attention to this aspect. Whatever their origin, immigrants are expected to learn English. However, Maori is the country's other official language. Accordingly, there are translations between English and Maori. The government has also assumed responsibility for publishing textbooks in Samoan, Maori Kuki Airani in the Cook Islands, and in the Tongan and Niuean languages. However, only a very small proportion of this material may be considered to be of a literary nature.

The Chinese community living in New Zealand publish their own newspaper and have recently brought out English translations of Chinese poetry. The Croatian community has published a small number of literary texts in Serbo-Croat and English. This situation, in which a dominant language co-exists with others—including native ones—in a society shaped by constant immigration is also to be found in many other countries with a colonial past.

In Britain, a similar situation can be found in London's primary schools in

which some 350 languages are spoken in the city's playgrounds. There is also growth in the writing and publication of poetry among immigrant communities in their languages of origin, and renewed interest in Britain's other native tongues although in the case of Scots Gaelic, the focus is mainly on the spoken language. However, literary translations are on the rise for Welsh and these are supported by the Welsh Language Society (*Cymdeithas yr Iaith Gymraeg*) in the form of subsidies for writers, translators, and publishing houses bringing out works either solely in Welsh or in bilingual format.

In this context, one should note the comments made by Isagani Cruz, National Secretary-General of the PEN Center in The Philippines. Literary texts in French, German, Japanese, Malay, Spanish, Thai, and other languages are routinely translated into Philippine local tongues. However, translation to and from English did not begin on any large scale until American colonial rule came to an end. Many key English literary works were then translated into local languages, particularly Tagalog. Translations from English picked up again after the Second World War. English was also the bridging language providing access to other works of literature. An example here is the translation from English to Tagalog of Saint Exupéry's *Le Petit Prince*, which proved a bestseller.

The first translations to English were made by Americans, such as the one of Rizal's *Noli Me Tangere*, written in Spanish—which is the most popular work in

The Philippines. By contrast, there are few translations into English of Philippine literary works written in local languages. This is because very few English-speaking specialists who can read those languages. Thus the cultural traffic is very much one-way. Whereas Philippine readers have read a great deal of English literature, there are few if any British and American writers who have read any Philippine works.

#### **Europe: interest in the literary setting**

The other extreme of the foreign literature spectrum can be found in small and medium-sized European nations. In Bosnia-Herzegovina, Flanders, Hungary and Macedonia, almost half of the new books published each year have been translated. The main feature here is that most of the translated works were published by small firms with fewer than 150 new titles a year and in which the number of copies sold is always fairly modest.

In Lithuania, with a population of a little over 3 million, the average print run is 2,000—although some bestsellers reach 30,000. In Slovenia, with just 2 million inhabitants, print runs of translated books may lie anywhere between 20 (poetry collections) to 25,000 (*The Da Vinci Code*). Most fiction titles sell between 1,000 and 1,500 copies, and 400-600 copies for quality fiction. However, short print runs are not confined to small countries. Lucina Kathmann, Secretary of Mexico's San Miguel de Allende PEN Center noted that very few books are sold in general and that editions seldom exceed 3,000 copies.

Kata Kulavkova, President of PEN International's Translation and Language Rights Committee in Macedonia noted a positive feature of these tiny literary markets. Translations of universal literature follow a strategic plan aimed at filling libraries. This approach is of key importance for publishers since demand from libraries helps offset the impact of short print runs on book prices.

Kulavkova's analysis is also applicable to other small and medium-sized European countries in which policies fostering translations are of key importance in advancing and enriching the national language. Translations also open a window on the world, spreading knowledge of foreign literatures, cultures and traditions. The educational function performed by literary translations explains the practice of publishing fragments by contemporary foreign writers in magazines, the press, and other media.

János Benyhe, Secretary-General of the Hungarian PEN Center and a renowned literary translator, noted that his country had a long tradition of high-quality translations. Hungary in particular epitomises a fundamental trait of all translations. The fact that Magyar does not belong to the Indo-European family of languages has meant translation into and out of the language requires a considerable amount of literary re-creation. The challenge for translators is thus much greater than for, say, a translation from English to German or from French to Italian. The best Hungarian writers have spent a great deal of effort in translating the world's greatest

works of literature. Happily, there is currently something of a boom in literary translation in Hungary.

#### **Europe's linguistic patchwork**

Clearly, English-speaking nations are not alone in borrowing from other cultures and languages. However, mainland Europe is even more complex in this regard and in some cases ethnic factors can have a decisive impact on policy decisions regarding the import and export of literary works. Once again, the Macedonian case is highly instructive. Government subsidies are shared out on an ethnic basis and in accordance with previously agreed criteria rather than on the basis of literary merit.

When national literature is spoken of in Macedonia, this covers not only works in Macedonian but also in Albanian. It is not always clear whether it only covers works written by Albanian speakers in Macedonia or whether it also embraces ethnic Albanians in Kosovo and Albania itself. The government's equitable share-out of subsidies means that over 25% of the budget is automatically earmarked for translation into and out of Albanian. This means the subsidy available for translating into and out of Macedonian is proportionally reduced. Promotion of Macedonian works abroad is likewise affected.

The Belgian government also provides government support for two literatures. Both extend beyond Belgium's frontiers—in the case of French, it embraces one of the world's richest literary traditions, while Flemish is part of the Dutch-speaking area that extends into the Netherlands.



According to Isabelle Rossaert of the Flemish PEN Center, without access to the Dutch market the Flemish publishing industry would be confined to a very small area. While there are tensions between the Walloon (i.e. French-speaking) and Flemish literary communities, they are much weaker than in Macedonia where two languages contend for a very meagre budget.

According to Ferida Đuraković, the state of the book market in Bosnia-Herzegovina is disastrous. The market is very small and publishing books in short print runs is very expensive. Moreover, people can barely scrape enough money together to buy text books, let alone literary works. Publishers are trying to broaden their markets to embrace other Serbo-Croat speaking countries (Croatia, Serbia, and Montenegro). However, since all these countries are economically and politically in much the same situation, the immediate prospects for such a strategy are poor. Publishers in the region have taken timid steps to widen markets.

Before the Yugoslav Civil War, Bosnia-Herzegovina had an association of literary translators that worked fairly well in the country. The association fell apart during the war and translators now act on their own initiative. There is no State plan for carrying out literary translations of important works. Furthermore, the civil war has left deep scars and poor-quality translations are made by groups or individuals with an ideological and/or ethnic axe to grind. Only a few good translations surface abroad (of works by Miljenko Jergović, Dževad Karahasan, Abdulah Sidran, Meša

Selimović and Mak Dizdar). The State provides no support whatsoever.

The Bosnia PEN Center argues that Bosnia-Herzegovina is an invention of the Dayton Peace Accords, which are merely an attempt at nation-building. Accordingly, no government strategy can realistically be expected regarding languages, national literatures, or free markets. Political factors make literary exchanges with neighbouring countries and with the rest of the world well-nigh impossible.

### **The position of literary translators**

Although translated works are not always bestsellers, an excellent network of libraries in Macedonia and similar countries ensures that such works will be available to readers for decades. It also means that translations are of a very high quality and that translators enjoy social prestige, even though their work is often poorly paid.

Here, one should note that the position of translators is not so very different in the UK. Amanda Hopkinson in London commented: “Most of us do not change and continue translating well despite being badly treated”. Even so, translators in Britain are in an enviable position if we compare them with their counterparts in Australia. The questionnaire response from that country noted: “Translation is generally considered necessary for providing services to immigrants. Accordingly, over the last half century it has gained a social services slant.”

In her case study of the situation in France, Anne-Sophie Simenel states that translators can expect to earn 2,925-3,375 Euros for a

150-page work, as an advance against an average royalty of 2%. In Britain, 4,423 would be paid for the same work and in Australia 3,700. Translators working in Holland could, according to the figures supplied by Bas Pauw in his case study, expect up to 6,712 Euros for that same 150 pages, between the standard fee from the publisher and a translation grant available to them. Figures for other countries are 2,100 Euros (Slovenia); 1,300 Euros (Macedonia); 1,000 Euros (Hungary) and 945 Euros (Lithuania). Thus rates vary widely.

### **Present challenges**

All the PEN Centers replying to the questionnaire agreed that the international climate is now more receptive towards their literary works. Some of the centers noted that bodies promoting the nation's literature abroad had decisively contributed to extending the country's sphere of influence. The Lithuanian PEN Center stressed that this broadening of horizons played an important role in changing the political climate in Europe ending The Cold War; facilitating the EU entry of former Communist countries; and changing perceptions of Eastern Europe.

Despite some serious concerns, the PEN center replies are generally optimistic. Even so, the globalisation of book markets bodes ill for literary works. All too often, the interest in the literary output of other countries is little more than a taste for the exotic. Members of the Australian PEN Center dryly noted that “The UK and US cast a long shadow over Australia's pastures” and that this was why Australians

were only interested in works with “a big dose of Australian landscape”.

A similar phenomenon applies to works from Eastern Europe. Most of the books published in the United States speak of the victims of Communism, censorship and repression, and the economic slump in Eastern Europe that followed Soviet withdrawal. “There's no point in importing love stories or other frivolous fare from far-off lands no matter how well they are written because we've got plenty of that stuff here”, ironically noted Andrej Blatnik, Secretary of the Slovenian PEN Center.

The English PEN Center notes the increasing number of translations but in the fiction field these include best-sellers like the Harry Potter or the Miss Marple series. Translation of English essays or poetry is much more sporadic. For example, the works of Andrew Motion, a renowned contemporary English poet, have never been translated.

Which country has greater choice—the UK in which only 2% of books are translated from other literatures, or Brazil where translations account for almost 90% of the books published? Neither extreme seems desirable. British readers live in a country in which it is very hard to find translated works and discover a foreign culture. On the other hand, Brazilians read authors from many countries but their own writers are not translated into many foreign languages. Despite the progress made, mutual ignorance is likely to last for a long time yet. One can therefore say that the need for literary translation is as great as ever and in some cases is an acute one.

## The following took part in the survey:

**AUSTRALIAN PEN CENTERS:** Barbara McGilvray (head of the group replying to the questionnaire, Sydney PEN Club); Ivor Indyk, Nicholas Jose, Andrew Riemer, Chip Rolley and Julie Rose (Sydney PEN Club); Judith Rodriguez (Melbourne PEN Club)

**BOSNIA HERZEGOVINA PEN CENTER:** Ferida Đuraković

**ENGLISH PEN CENTER:** Amanda Hopkinson, Director, British Center for Literary Translation, University of East Anglia (UEA).

**FLEMISH PEN CENTER:** Isabelle Rossaert

**HUNGARIAN PEN CENTER:** János Benyhe, Secretary General

**JAPANESE PEN CENTER**

**LITHUANIAN PEN CENTER:** Laimantas Jonusys

**MACEDONIAN PEN CENTER:** Kata Kulavkova, President of the Translation and Language Rights Committee, PEN International

**NEW ZEALAND PEN CENTER:** John C. Ross, President

**THE PHILIPPINE PEN CENTER:** Isagani Cruz, National Secretary

**SAN MIGUEL DE ALLENDE PEN CENTER (MEXICO):** Lucina Kathmann, Secretary

**SLOVENE PEN CENTER:** Andrej Blatnik, Secretary

## Questionnaire

This was the questionnaire sent to the PEN centers:

1. To what degree are your writers being translated into other languages?
2. Into which languages are they being translated?
3. What percentage of the books published in your country each year are literary translations from other languages?
4. What is the state of the publishing industry in your country, and how large is the market for translated books?
5. What is the history of translation in your country, and how is it now viewed? Is the amount of translation, both into and from your languages, growing or decreasing?
6. Do translated works enjoy greater or lesser prestige than works originally written in the languages of your country?
7. How are translators treated? Is literary translation considered an art or a mechanical task?
8. What is the level of remuneration for literary translators in your country?
9. What are the criteria for paying translators—for instance, are rates of payment for translation between the languages within your country different than for translation from/into the so-called big languages?
10. Does your government have a policy of encouraging literary translation, both into and out of your country's languages?
11. Is there any form of independent organization, such as a foundation, supporting the translation of your national literature/s?
12. Do you believe the international climate is becoming more or less favorable for the reception of your writers?
13. How important is it to your writers' careers to be translated into English? To what extent are they being translated into English?
14. Please identify some works of your country's literature, both classical and contemporary, which have not been adequately translated into other languages, and which you believe should be translated.
15. Please provide any examples you have of good practice with relation to the circulation of literature in translation both into and out of your language.
16. Are there any prizes or awards for literary translations?
17. Is there any interest in your country in the bilateral/ multilateral publication of translated books, for example among publishers internationally?
18. Is there a mechanism in your country for promoting reciprocal translations with another country?
19. Is there any form of support from the book industry for translation, such as bookshops specializing in foreign literature, or special provision for reviewing and/ promoting translation within the media?
20. How many members of your PEN Centre are translators?



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## 3. Six Case Studies on Literary Translation

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This chapter describes and analyses practices in six countries (The Netherlands, Argentina, Catalonia, Germany, China, and France) regarding literary translation. They are five states and a nation without state: Catalonia, a case similar to that of Flanders in the PEN centers questionnaire.

### 3.1 The Netherlands

**Bas Pauw**, *Foundation for the Production and Translation of Dutch Literature, Amsterdam*

#### **Translation of Dutch literature into other languages**

Although a huge repair move was made in the past fifteen years, and although the situation is very different in a lot of countries, Dutch authors are in general still relatively invisible in the international Republic of Letters. Exceptions can and should

be made for a few authors (Cees Nooteboom, Harry Mulisch, Arnon Grunberg are fairly well-known authors internationally) and for a country like Germany, where Dutch literature has penetrated very successfully—especially since the Dutch-language *Schwerpunkt* at the Frankfurter Buchmesse in 1993, and the start of the Foundation for the Production and Translation of Dutch Literature in 1991, that is actively promoting Dutch literature abroad.

Despite this relatively low profile of Dutch literature throughout the world, the spread in number of languages is quite large. It is hard to think of a major language in which no translation of a work of Dutch literature is available. The *Diary* of Anne Frank is probably one of the most widely translated books of the world. Dutch philosophers Erasmus and Spinoza are also well-known worldwide, but they wrote in Latin rather than in Dutch.

### Translation of works from other literatures into Dutch

It is difficult to know the percentage of literary translations from other languages among the books published each year in the country. There are no exact, recent figures about this relation. The last year for which reliable and detailed figures were published, was 1996. In that year, 651 works of Dutch fiction were published: novels, stories and novellas. In the same year 774 works of translated fiction were published by Dutch publishers. Detectives and thrillers are not included in these figures. These figures are provided by the Stichting Speurwerk betreffende het boek (Foundation for Book Research), based in Amsterdam ([www.speurwerk.nl](http://www.speurwerk.nl)). It can normally be quoted a number of 45% of translated fiction, related to original fiction.

Translated works may enjoy a little more prestige than literature written in Dutch originally. This may have to do with the fact that translation of foreign literature works as a filter: only the best makes it to the Dutch market, in translated form. Yet in recent years the Dutch seem to realise that their literature is not necessarily of much lesser quality than the ‘big’ international literatures surrounding them—such as the French, the German or the English/American.

Literary translation is considered neither an art nor a task, but rather a highly valued skill, as well as a profession. Many literary translators in the Netherlands can live from their work, although the revenues are not too great; many translators in other countries have to have other supplement-

ary jobs. The job done by the literary translator is not always mentioned in reviews of translated fiction, unless in a negative sense.

Our leading writers are scarcely producing any literary translations themselves—this was different in the sixties and seventies. There are leading poets who also produce poetry translations.

### Financial support for translation

The financial support for translating Dutch literature is provided by the above mentioned Foundation for the Production and Translation of Dutch Literature, based in Amsterdam and funded by the Ministry of Culture and Education.

The Foundation actively promotes Dutch literature abroad and provides financial support for foreign publishers wishing to publish a work of Dutch literature. This involves fiction, quality non-fiction, poetry and children’s literature. Provided a few conditions are met, the Foundation can subsidise up to 70% of translation costs. These conditions have to do with the quality of the literary work at hand, the quality of the translator and the quality and stature of the publisher. This translation policy is the body of our support program; there are a few other “tools” that we use and that are strongly linked to this:

- presence at all important book fairs (Frankfurt, London, Bologna), an excellent network with all publishers of literature worldwide and a strong commitment to maintain and extend this network;

- the Writers’ Program, supporting Dutch authors appearing abroad (literary festivals, stages and promotion tours);
- the Visitors’ Program, in which 8 to 10 publishers per year are invited to come to Amsterdam for a few days and meet Dutch literary publishers;
- organization of literary manifestations abroad, to raise the international visibility and profile of Dutch authors;
- English-language publications in which new Dutch literary titles are presented: *Books from Holland and Flanders*, *Quality Non-fiction from Holland* and *Children’s Books from Holland*; these are published twice a year;
- a good, informative and up-to-date website, where all kinds of information can be found on Dutch literature and where a large database of all translations of Dutch literature can be accessed;
- the Foundation runs a Translators’ House where five translators of Dutch literature at a time can live and work for a period of one or two months at the invitation of the Foundation. The Translators’ House also organises regular workshops for literary translators, devoted to a specific target language and led by an experienced translator, with the aim of sharing experiences and promoting contact between translators.

More information on this policy and the activities of the Foundation can be found at [www.nlpvf.nl](http://www.nlpvf.nl).

As for support for translation into Dutch: there is no support for Dutch

publishers who wish to publish a contemporary work of foreign literature (unless they turn to similar institutions abroad, such as the Goethe Institut/Inter Nationes, Svenska Institutet etc.).

There is however support for translators who are translating a work of literature into Dutch: they can apply for translation grants and travel grants. An average translation grant amounts to 2,500 per 30,000 words, depending on the quality of the translation and the quality of the original work. The grants complement the fee the translator gets from the publisher, which is a standard fee of 0,059 Euros per word. These translation subsidies are issued by the Foundation for Dutch Literature, a different foundation that also provides grants for authors. For more information: [www.fondsvoorletteren.nl](http://www.fondsvoorletteren.nl)

### Acceptance of Dutch writers abroad

The dominance of Anglo-Saxon literature in the international book trade is obvious and seems to be growing still. For the Dutch market this means that publishers are more inclined to publish the umptieth representative of English-language *chick lit* than a German masterpiece novel. This mechanism is certainly visible in other countries as well, and that would of course diminish the opportunities for Dutch literature being translated elsewhere.

However, we do feel that foreign interest in Dutch literature is still rising—partly maybe as a result of the efforts made in the past twelve years. Major publishers in countries like France, Germany, Italy, Scandinavia are proud to publish

Dutch authors—not singular novels, but their oeuvre. In Eastern European countries there seems to be a growing resistance to the dominance of English in literary translation, and some publishers are more interested in translating from smaller European literatures. New and exciting markets such as China and (to a lesser extent) India are showing great interest in all foreign culture—including Dutch literature.

It can be said that in the present international climate it is almost impossible for a literary author writing in a smaller language to find an international readership on his or her own strength—without a powerful literary agent, or without an institution that is providing financial support and a certain context, and draws international attention to the book or the author in the first place.

### The importance of being translated into English

With 16 million Dutch-speaking people in the Netherlands and 6 million in Flanders (the Dutch-speaking part of Belgium), Dutch is actually one of the larger language areas in Europe. Still, a German translation of a Dutch novel increases the potential readership of its author almost fivefold—for an English translation this is even much more the case. An English translation of a Dutch novel will be noticed by other international publishers and thus act as a bridge to further translation.

Apart from this, an English translation has obviously more prestige than, with all due respect, a translation into Lithuanian.

It opens up the ‘International Republic of Letters’ to the author. There is the possibility of a review or being noticed in one of the magazines through which the Republic communicates: the *Times Literary Supplement*, the *New York Times Review of Books*, the *New Yorker* etc.

Quite a few Dutch-language books have been published in the UK and US in recent years: works by, among many others, Tim Krabbé, Arthur Japin, P.F. Thomése, Peter Verhelst, Renate Dorrestein. Dutch quality non-fiction has been particularly successful in recent years. But very few of the important authors writing in Dutch today have found a ‘house’, in the sense of an English or American publisher that will publish their oeuvre and their next work: maybe only Cees Nooteboom, Harry Mulisch, Hugo Claus, Margriet de Moor.

### Dutch literary works waiting for translation

As stated above, contemporary Dutch fiction is relatively well translated into other languages. But there are a few classical Dutch novels of the twentieth century that would have certainly made their way into world literature, had they been written in English.

*Max Havelaar* is the classical novel of Dutch literature, written in the late 19th century by Multatuli. Set in former Dutch colony Indonesia, it is a fierce indictment of Dutch colonial politics. It is also a thoroughly modern novel, that has changed the shape of the Dutch novel drastically. Although published in Penguin Classics, it has never received the international acclaim it deserves.

The work of eminent Dutch novelists Louis Couperus (1863-1923) and Simon Vestdijk (1898-1971) has scarcely been translated into other languages, and by small publishers only.

Post-war Dutch literature is dominated by the ‘Great Three’: Willem Frederik Hermans, Gerard Reve and Harry Mulisch. In addition to these, Cees Nooteboom, Jan Wolkers and Hella Haasse are often mentioned. Of these, Nooteboom, Mulisch, Wolkers and Haasse are quite well translated. The works of Hermans and Reve however are hardly translated at all; and yet there is no doubt that their work ranks among the best literature written in the 20th century. It is only now (ten years after his death) that German and English translations of Hermans’ work are being published, with reasonable success. The exquisite prose of Gerard Reve (often considered to be ‘untranslatable’), who has a huge following in the Netherlands and Flanders, unfortunately remains a hidden gem to the rest of the world.

Perhaps the negligence of Dutch poetry is even more poignant. Recently J.M. Coetzee translated and introduced a volume of Dutch poetry, with major Dutch post-war poets such as Gerrit Achterberg, Hans Faverey and Rutger Kopland: *Landscape With Rowers* (Princeton University Press 2003).

But the work of pre-war poets Martinus Nijhoff (1894-1953) and J.H. Leopold (1865-1925) is still to be discovered by the international poetry-reading community. Joseph Brodsky, who had a close Dutch friend who introduced him to the work

of Martinus Nijhoff, was highly impressed and he included one of Nijhoff’s longer poems in his famous crash-course of *must-read* international poetry: ‘the stunning *Awater*’.

One can be a little more at peace with the fact that Leopold is hardly translated, given the fact that his poetry seems almost impossible to translate—so much so that Robert Frost’s somewhat exaggerated statement that ‘poetry is what is lost in translation’ suddenly seems true. Leopold’s poetry deals almost exclusively with the possibilities and the boundaries of the Dutch language; comparable maybe to the way James Joyce’s *Finnegan’s Wake* investigates the English language.

## 3.2 Argentina

**Gabriela Adamo**, editor and director of the *Buenos Aires Book Fair “Publisher’s Week”*, *Fundación Typa*, Buenos Aires

### Publishing and translating

Publishing in Buenos Aires, like Mexico City, had its golden years between the end of the 1940s and early 1960s. The Franco dictatorship had obliged Spain’s best publishers to seek refuge on this side of the Atlantic, where they set up publishing houses and began to bring out the most outstanding Spanish-language writers along with the major writers of Europe and the United States. Faulkner, Baudelaire, Malraux, Virginia Woolf, Genet, Greene and Henry James, among many others, were translated in Latin America before Spain<sup>1</sup>.

This would be unthinkable today. The military dictators and economic crises that devastated Latin America over decades eventually led to the ruin of local publishers, while Spain's recovery and its entry as a full member into the European Economic Community meant that it would become a new leader—at least in commercial terms—in the world of Spanish-language books. In the domain of translating, the competition is very lopsided because Spanish companies not only have more resources (the devalued currencies of different Latin-American countries compete with the euro when bidding for translation rights) but they are also geographically and “psychologically” closer to their English, French and German peers.

Similar conditions hold in reverse. In evaluating what books originally written in Spanish might be translated, many first-world publishers turn to Spanish catalogues and critics. It is not surprising, then, to note how desperate Latin-American writers are to see their works published in Spain, which they regard as the only real gateway into the international world.

Whatever Latin America's level of culture, a great number of people in the international publishing world still see it merely as the big backyard of Spain. This is not the place to go into all the ins and outs of the question or to gauge the degree of responsibility of each party in creating this situation. There is no doubt that the low professional standards that for many years were the order of the day in Latin-

American publishing houses and, in particular, the indifference of the governments of these countries to cultural matters, has had much to do with the fact that the aforementioned golden age should have undergone such drastic transformation.

However, this is, perhaps, the place to assert that not all is lost, that Argentina's literary and publishing domains are still notable for their great vitality, both in terms of quality and their degree of sensitivity. This is a field that needs work and support through long-term intelligent projects, but there is still time for a very good response to this kind of stimulus.

The Argentine publishing market is shaped by a few big transnational houses and an increasing number of independent undertakings with variable future possibilities. There are still a few medium-scale companies and these, as has already happened in Europe and the United States, are destined to be swallowed up, sooner or later, by one of the “big fish”.

The “big fish” dominate the market, which is why their business policies enormously influence the existing offer. Until 2001, before the devaluation, it was very easy for them to import books from Spain, which meant that the offer was ample and varied (though of course the bookshops were flooded with books and remaindered items that could not be sold in the metropolis). After the devaluation and the new exchange rates these books became extremely expensive and the imports stopped at once. This created a kind of natural zone of protection that enabled

an increased presence of small publishers (that had previously been virtually unable to find a space for presenting their books) and obliged the “big fish” to focus more on local production (contracting more writers, translators, correctors, etc.).

In this situation, buying translation rights and translating within Argentina once again became an attractive option, as the statistics reveal. Of the 16,638 titles published in 2004, 2,318 were translations. This is almost 14%. The most translated language is evidently English (with 1,139 titles), followed a long way behind by French (331), German (207) and Japanese (147). It is surprising that Japanese should be ahead of Italian (a scant 116 titles) if one recalls the close cultural bond that has always existed between Argentina and Italy. Yet, in general, this is a rich and varied field since the list of translated languages is very long, including Danish, Hindi, Basque, Hebrew, Czech and even Chinese<sup>2</sup>.

### **Translators, between prestige and invisibility**

The Argentine reader does not shrink from translations but, on the contrary, has always admired and felt close to foreign literature, especially that coming from Europe. In fact, as the writer and translator Marcelo Cohen has noted, “the fact that some first-rate international writers sell better in Argentina than in Spain (Ian McEwan and Bernhard Schlink, for example), suggests that tradition survives in the form of the independence of local readers *vis-à-vis* international mandates”. One might imagine that this is closely

related to the great number of immigrants who gave shape to today's population of Argentina and who have kept in touch with their languages of origin over several generations without hurrying into a United-States style melting pot. Here the different groups have cherished their traditions and maintained their customs for a long time, forming clubs, schools and even “their own” hospitals, thus fostering respect for, and curiosity about, what was thought and written in their countries of origin.

Thanks to these readers who, because of their family situations, grew up in the habit of reading in two languages or at least hearing them in their everyday surroundings, a lot of good translators have appeared.

Argentina has a considerable list of writers who, at some point in their careers, also engaged in translation. Jorge Luis Borges is, without a doubt, the most famous of these. To him we owe Faulkner's *Las palmeras salvajes* (*The Wild Palms*) and Kafka's *La metamorfosis* (*Metamorphosis*), among other versions. José Bianco, Victoria Ocampo and María Rosa Oliver belong to the same generation. The tradition is still alive today with writers like César Aira, Marcelo Cohen and Esther Cross, *inter alia*. The importance of having translators who are at once major references in the cultural domain—and who therefore awaken interest in the authors they translate—is very well described in Patricia Willson's book *La Constelación del Sur*. There is also a strong link between translation, literary criticism and academia. Almost

all today's translators of literary texts or essays are highly trained and they spend a good part of their time in the university or engaged in their own lines of research. It is clear that nobody regards translation as a mechanical activity.

Though it might seem logical to think that translators should have a privileged position in Argentina's cultural milieu, this is far from being the case. Here, translators fulfil to the letter the mission of making themselves invisible, not existing and not pestering. They are hardly ever mentioned in the book credits (and never on the cover) and there are very few bibliographic notes that even mention their names. Neither do the critics include in their texts any evaluation or commentary about the quality of the translation<sup>3</sup>.

The situation is even more serious when it comes to working conditions. In general, translators are very badly paid, they do not sign contracts with their publishers or, if they do, they must accept very tough conditions such as ceding author's rights. This means that the publisher can reprint the translation as often as deemed necessary, or sell it to be used in other countries or in other formats without the translator receiving any payment at all.

In Argentina there is no translators' union or association that might struggle for these rights so there is little hope that the situation will change in the near future. Marcelo Cohen asserts that translators "have always been quite badly treated". This situation became worse in the 1980s and 1990s when "mistreatment and slackness became even more rife under

the pretext of economic problems while they were covered up by the fact that journalists and cultural critics turned a blind eye to the effective, material importance of translation".

### **Lack of state support**

To this we might add the almost zero support given by the state to publishing activities so that there are very few subsidies for writers and publishers in the country and none at all for translators. Neither are there prizes or competitions of any kind that might represent some sort of encouragement, if only "psychological". On certain occasions, this absence has been explained away by the fact that translations involve long processes, while local public policies and marketing strategies are geared to seeking high impact in little time. This explanation obviously has nothing to do with any truly cultural evaluation.

This lack of support is also confirmed in efforts to make Argentine writers known outside the country. For a start, there are no statistics about books by our writers translated into other languages. There are only incomplete lists produced by people or institutions concerned and they are always limited to more or less direct contacts. What appears to be the case is that, of the few Argentine works that have been translated, the majority have appeared in French and Portuguese (in Brazil) and then, perhaps, in German or Italian. The general perception is that it is very difficult to break into the Anglophone market although of course everyone agrees

that this is the ultimate goal because, after this, possibilities for all the other languages are opened up.

For any writer, translation of his or her work is very important. It makes them known outside the country, brings in some extra income, confers prestige and confidence to keep on writing and publishing, and makes travelling possible along with contacts outside the country, among other benefits. If these results are essential for anyone, they are even more so for artists who work in peripheral countries like Argentina.

Perhaps the difficulties in achieving these translations can be summarised in the fact that Latin-American publishers do not have foreign rights departments. In other words, nobody is systematically occupied with international promotion in the publishing houses. Neither are there any high-powered literary agents working in the region. The most important agents are in Spain. In general, this is due to the fact that the overheads of this work are very high and the results minimal. It is possible that a "cultural question" is also at work here since it is not customary to promote our own products seriously and for any sustained period of time. Needless to say there is no organic, state-organised activity of international promotion that might compare with what is being done in Brazil and Mexico (translation subsidies and travel grants for authors, etc.).

### **New initiatives**

I should like to mention two exceptions, in the form of new initiatives that have

appeared in recent years, which offer reasons for minimal optimism:

1) The work of a group of publishing companies that have created a joint foreign rights office called *Letras Argentinas*. They have produced their first catalogue with a view to publishers in other countries, have attended the Frankfurt Book Fair and are organising other promotional strategies.

2) The programme "Semana de Editores" (Publishers' Week), which is organised by the TyPA Foundation. Four years ago, it began an annual tradition of inviting ten international publishers to Buenos Aires so they can gain a first-hand acquaintance with Argentine literary life in the hope that they would then actively promote translation of Argentine works on their return to their countries.

Both initiatives are long-term wagers and full of difficulties but there is no doubt that specific activities such as these are the only really effective ways to make the literature of a country known in the rest of the world. The hope of those of us who are working at this is that there will soon be more translations of Argentina's classic twentieth-century writers—Roberto Arlt, Rodolfo Walsh, Leopoldo Marechal, Silvina Ocampo, Antonio Di Benedetto, Juan José Saer, to mention only a few—and of those who are now at the peak of their production—Marcelo Cohen, Rodolfo Fogwill, Abelardo Castillo, Hebe Uhart, Eduardo



Belgrano Rawson and others. As for the younger writers, there are many promising people among them. The best way to confirm this is to walk around the always-abundant Buenos Aires bookshops.

### 3.3 Catalonia

**Carne Arenas** and **Simona Škrabec**, *translators and members of the Catalan PEN Center*

Catalonia, with approximately seven million inhabitants, is an autonomously governed country within the Spanish State. The language of the territory, and now its official language, is Catalan (a foundational Romance language of the European imaginary), which coexists in a bilingual system with the official language of Spain, Castilian<sup>4</sup>. Although the population of Catalonia is small, Catalan is the most widely-spoken minority language in Europe, since it has more than twelve million potential speakers if the population of the Valencia region and the Balearic Islands (within Spain), North Catalonia (in France), Alguer (in Sardinia), and Andorra (an independent country with Catalan as its only official language) are included in the count.

The inhabitants of Catalonia know both languages, in particular in recent years when the official status of Catalan in schools has meant that almost all the country's youngest inhabitants are equipped with oral and written linguistic skills. It also means that the two languages are constantly influencing one another. However, the fact that the official language of the Spanish State is Castilian

ensures that its influence in all spheres is very great.

A significant factor in the situation of the book in Catalan is the fact that the publishing industry, both in Catalan and in Spanish, has traditionally been concentrated in Catalonia, and especially in Barcelona. Barcelona is the major publishing centre, not only in terms of publications in Catalan, but of also Spanish letters in general.

#### Translation of Catalan literature into Spanish

It is not surprising, then, that many Catalan publications end up in Spanish translation. According to the *Index Translationum*, of all the translations from Catalan, 91% are into Spanish. According to TRAC<sup>5</sup> files, a little over 200 titles from all genres were translated from Catalan to Spanish between 1998 and 2003. There are more literary works translated into Spanish than into all the other languages put together. By far the greater part of prose works translated into Spanish is published in Catalonia.

Translations into Spanish represent only part of the Catalan literary canon. Translations of the classical writers are few and far between, while modern classics account for 23% of translations into Spanish. This means that the greater part of translations into Spanish consists of works by living writers (77%). In many cases, these are authors of children's books, genre novels and people with a high media profile. Again, there are writers who engage simultaneously with both literatures and who usual-

ly publish their new books in both Catalan and Spanish. Moreover, towards the 1990s, some publishers that normally published in Catalan began to produce simultaneous Catalan and Spanish versions of the works of their authors.

Only a few contemporary Catalan writers among those who are most translated into Spanish also have an international presence, such as Mercè Rodoreda. Appearing on the Spanish scene is no guarantee of international renown. Neither is the reverse always true, since a work might be translated into other languages with very little or no resonance in the other languages of Spain (like in the cases of Baltasar Porcel and Jaume Cabré). Contrary to what might be expected, Spanish does not function as a springboard for the introduction of a book into the literatures of other languages. Neither does translation into Spanish mean that a work originally written in Catalan will necessarily be accepted as part of the Spanish-language literary system.

#### Translation of Catalan literature into other languages

Between 1998 and 2003, books written in Catalan were translated into twenty-four different languages. If we confine ourselves to translations of Catalan literary works that are included in the TRAC archive, it is a notable fact that English scrapes into third place after French and German. Among recent literary translations we find, furthermore, quite a lot of books in English, although published in Catalonia itself. The aim is to use English

as a bridging language but there is no reason to believe that books translated into English have subsequently led to any interest in Catalan literature in other languages, as is confirmed by the example of the translation of *Tirant lo Blanc* into English. Although the English version of this classic chivalresque novel led to an indirect translation into Finnish, no other Catalan writer has been translated in Finland. All the other translations of *Tirant lo Blanc* have been done by people with a good knowledge of Catalan language and literature, who have not needed to work with a bridging version in another language. French and German translations of Catalan literary works, however, brought out by major publishers, have given significant momentum to the promotion of Catalan literature in other languages.

Many translators of works written in Catalan have become ambassadors for Catalan literature in their own countries. With their work as translators or as university teachers they have decisively contributed towards the introduction of Catalan literature into other cultures. These translators always work directly from the Catalan and their translations are being introduced into more cultures as new specialists discover the Catalan literary heritage.

A change in promotional strategies, however, is highly visible with narrative. Both private publishing houses and public initiatives launch specific literary works, novels or, sometimes, short stories collections onto the international scene which are solid enough to function without knowing the cultural context in

which they were created. In this case literary works act as true ambassadors. The novels of Mercè Rodoreda were the first to offer a new and different image of Spain to many readers around the world, but many other emblematic works have followed the same way; the civil war portrayed in Jesús Moncada's *The Towpath*, translated into around fifteen languages, or even Quim Monzó's short stories that show the dehumanized life of big cities.

In the sphere of literature aimed at a wider public, we find successful sales strategies, in particular when foreign publishers acquire translation rights for a work that is seen as a best-seller in international book fairs or when it is promoted as such by literary agents –as in the case of *Cold skin*, by Albert Sánchez Piñol.

Apart from these two models of exportation, in recent years we have also seen an example of promotion abroad based on the exportation of simultaneous anthological selections in a number of languages, but this seems to have had little effect. The distributional channels that these editions have are too limited to arouse any interest among the general public and, in the case of poetry, anthologies can even constitute an extra barrier in the overall reception of the poet. In any case, they serve more to prove the existence of a culture than to facilitate the discovery of a literature.

### Universal Literature on the Catalan Scene

After 1975, when the dictator Franco died, the number of titles published in Catalan progressively increased along with the

number of publishing houses that brought out works in this language. In the 1960s very few publishers brought out books in Catalan, while the rest published only in Spanish. The democratic transition gradually established, though not without difficulties, a situation of normality where it can be said that the Catalan language has consolidated its niche in the Spanish book market.

For the publishing business in Catalonia, books in Catalan represent 27% of all published titles, 15% of the total number of copies produced and 15% of the total turnover (*Informe de comercio interior* [Internal Trade Report], Gremi d'Editors de Catalunya [Publishers Association of Catalonia], 2004). One major factor in the increased number of books being published in Catalan was the introduction of the language into the educational system, both as a subject to be studied and as the language of instruction. Literature represents around 20% of all publications in Catalan, which is comparable with the situation of most other languages with a consolidated publishing sector.

Statistics are needed so that we might gauge the extent of the presence of universal literature in Catalan. The TRAC catalogue offers figures pertaining to Catalan works translated into other languages, but there is no project of providing a detailed account of translations in the inverse direction.

### The Reception of Translated Works in Catalonia

In Spain, translated authors are very well received by readers and enjoy great pres-

tige among scholars. To this circumstance we need to add the media fanfare that accompanies most best-selling writers in today's globalised world.

Awareness of the importance of the literary legacy from other cultures for the enrichment of one's own culture is very present among translators and scholars as well as in the daily newspapers, where there are frequent articles about new books from abroad being incorporated into the literary scene.

Although this has opened up the horizons towards many languages, with translators who have no need of any bridging language, there are still some languages and cultures that are missing in Catalan translation. There is quite a good presence of foreign fiction, and even poetry, but this cannot be said of more philosophical works or essays, which Catalan readers continue to read in Spanish because they do not appear in Catalan translation.

Literary translation enjoys great prestige in the world of letters because, in this milieu, everyone is aware that foreign writers offer basic material for the evolution of Catalan language.

### The Literary Translator<sup>6</sup>

"The Spanish book market", writes Peter Bush, "has a tradition of being very open to translations. This fact, however, hides the conditions which have made it possible for a great deal of translators to work for publishers used to publishing a lot of translations. This tradition is based on tight deadlines, low pay, no pay-rises, and dreadful contracts (or sometimes even no

contract), and all this within an economy where the cost of living has risen sharply due to Spain's increased integration into the world economy."<sup>7</sup> These poor conditions of work for translators are still a reality in Catalonia today.

This does not mean that the translation in general is no longer regarded as prestigious, but rather that two ways of working as a translator coexist. Some translations are seen as mechanical, and some are put on a level with creative work and considered as such by the general public. Traditionally, Catalonia has had very good literary translators, mainly writers or university professors.

Since the 1980s and 1990s, with the introduction of university degrees in translation, many graduates with a theoretical background have joined the ranks of literary translators. Translation has become more and more professional, bringing about a standardization in the field, although there is still no professional association of translators and the few existing associations are not very solidly established. With the appearance of the 1987 Intellectual Property Law, translators' rights were fixed and publishers now tend to respect the contracts they draw up with translators more or less seriously.

Normally, the translator appears in the credits of the book and, in the case of famous authors, his or her name might also appear on the cover. Translations tend to be reviewed in the media, in particular if the book is one of the canonical works of universal literature or if the author is well-known. Frequently the reviews mention

the name of the translator in the details supplied about the book but little mention is made of the quality or otherwise of the translation. Translators see this as a sign that their work receives little recognition.

### Grants and other forms of support

The Government of Catalonia's policy includes moves for strengthening the presence of the Catalan language and for encouraging publishing, distribution and circulation of books in Catalan (Linguistic standardization law, 1986). In accordance with this regulation, the Department of Culture has established different lines of financial assistance to publishing in Catalan within a framework of dialogue and cooperation with representatives of the publishing sector. In 2004, this financial assistance went to some 1,500 titles, or a little under 20% of all the books published in Catalan.

Apart from this support, the Department of Culture offers grants for Catalan-language publications of special cultural interest and financial assistance is also conceded to entities for activities related with books, organisation of book fairs, or participation in international book fairs. The Institute of Catalan Letters (ILC), created in 1987, is an autonomous body that comes under the auspices of the Department of Culture. The Institute, the aim of which is to make Catalan-language works and their authors better known, organises promotional campaigns and exhibitions and it has created several grants for literary creators, scriptwriters and scholars. Every year since 1993 it has announced

grants for translations into Catalan, for publishers and translators alike.

In 2002, the Ramon Llull Institute (IRL) was created with the task of promoting Catalan literature in other countries. Each year it provides grants to foreign publishers for the translation of Catalan works and for initiatives related with promoting and making Catalan literature known beyond the borders of the Catalan-speaking area – such as participation at the main international book fairs, support for Catalan writers to travel abroad (festivals, symposia, stages), organization of literary events abroad, English-language publications to promote Catalan titles and authors, and so on.

### The Catalan Literary Canon Seen from Abroad

Among the least developed areas in the Catalan literary system is that of literary criticism and, in general, theoretical attention to the literary legacy of the country. There is a solid academic body but the results of university research hardly ever reach the wider public. At the other end of the scale, the authors of reviews that appear each day in the media have to confine themselves to a space that rarely exceeds two pages written in an easy-to-read style. The critics' attention is strictly focused on the latest publishing releases and any overall view is notable in its absence.

The other significant factor to bear in mind is the influence of the general tendencies of the international literary market. As with other literatures, the main Catalan export in the field is novels. The most representative works of Catalan po-

ets are still far from being known in other countries. The Catalan essay is practically unknown abroad. Neither is there any knowledge of reference texts about works that have been translated from Catalan. Plays cannot be considered under this heading because their international diffusion is based on stage productions rather than printed texts. Indeed, contemporary Catalan playwrights have achieved a good presence in theatres of other countries.

In general, most of the works exported have been books by contemporary writers along with some twentieth-century classics. There is also a considerable number of translations of works from the classical period of Catalan literature, especially the novel *Tirant lo Blanc*, which might be seen as a key work in the European context of its times.

In any case, it is a good thing to bear in mind one feature of exchanges between small literatures: there is rarely a second chance. An indifferently translated work of Shakespeare can soon be replaced in any corner of the world, but a poor translation of Mercè Rodoreda is unlikely ever to be corrected. It is therefore very important for translators to be able to work in decent conditions in keeping with their task, and with the facilities they need.

### Catalonia's Presence in the International Context

It was not until the last twenty-five years and the recovery of self-government with the reestablishment of the Generalitat [Government] of Catalonia in 1980, that Catalan culture, too, has been able to start

to make itself known abroad, since the Spanish State has tended, and still tends, to exhibit only Spanish-language culture and literature outside the country. In recent years some major publishing fairs have shown interest in Catalan culture and publishing and have expressly invited Catalonia to be represented (Guadalajara 2004 and Frankfurt 2007). These fairs are very important in terms of providing openings abroad and as a platform for making Catalan literature better known.

Since their creation, both the Institute for Catalan Letters (Institució de les Lletres Catalanes, ILC) and Ramon Llull Institute (Institut Ramon Llull, IRL) have always been present at any cultural and literary events outside the country, acting as mechanisms for promoting Catalan literature as well as receiving influences from other countries.

## 3.4 Germany

**Riky Stock**, director of the German Book Office at New York

### Introduction

German is spoken in Europe mainly in Germany, Austria, and the German-speaking parts of Switzerland. It surpasses every other language on the European continent, apart from Russian, in terms of number of native speakers (95 million in Europe, 120 million worldwide). It is the mother tongue for approximately 24% of the EU's citizens.<sup>8</sup>

As most of the publishing houses, and especially all the large houses, are based



in Germany and therefore most German-language authors—including Swiss and Austrian ones—are published in Germany, this report will concentrate on the German market and will often refer to German-language books from Germany, Austria, and Switzerland as German books.

In Germany, where the year 2005 saw 89,869 new titles produced and estimated resulting revenues of 9.16 billion Euros, reading is ranked eighth as a leisure activity after listening to music, watching TV, reading newspapers, going to restaurants, partying with friends, barbecuing, and driving the car.<sup>9</sup> Germany has a population of 82.5 million.<sup>10</sup> Approximately 500 million copies are printed each year, which averages out to about 6.5 books per German per year.<sup>11</sup>

This report provides information about the degree to which German writers are being translated into other languages and to what extent literary translations from other languages enter the German book market. It explores the perception of translation and translators, the forms of translation funding, and the promotion of German books. It looks at how the international climate has influenced the reception of German writers and how important but difficult it is to translate into English. It also provides examples of noteworthy German authors who have not been translated into English.

### Translations in the German Book Market

Germany is the country with the most translations in the world.<sup>12</sup> Last year, 6,132 translations were published, a 13.4% in-

crease over 2004. Translations make up just 7.9% of all new titles. In 2004, this number was 7.3%. Compared with 1995, when translations were around 14.2%, the impact of translations in the past ten years has drastically declined.

However, the worldwide advance of the English language cannot be stopped, especially not by the translations in the German book market. More than 60% of all translated titles in 2005 came from the English. In 2004, this figure was at 56.8%. Apart from English, French is the second-most translated language. It has been in second place for years, albeit far behind English at only 9.4%. While English and French have long led the rankings of the 20 most important translated languages, the other positions shift from year to year. Italian ranked third for 2005 with 2.7%, but decreased from 3.3% in 2004. Dutch, Spanish, and Swedish are next with just over 2% each. Russian, in seventh place, holds only 1.8%, followed by Latin, Greek, and Danish with less than 1% each.

Translations for children's and young adult titles are still important: 17.2% of all children's and young adult books are translations from other languages. In 2004, this figure was 17.7%.

At a rate of 25.1%, fiction makes up the largest share of translations. In 2004, however, this number was much higher at 40.5%. In total, 13.8% of all fiction titles are translations. The previous year this figure was 20.7%.

The role the translations have so far played in fiction has clearly diminished,

for which the legal argument over compensation between publishers and literary translators, who have been to court over it, is partly responsible. Translations involve a certain amount of risk for publishers while the royalty question is still unanswered. Only for translations from English have numbers increased.<sup>13</sup>

### Tradition and Prestige of Translations and Original German Works

Translations had a place in German literary and publishing history as early as the Middle Ages, and ever since the 18th century, Germany has been known as a classic example of country for translation.<sup>14</sup> Germans are very much aware of the fact that there would not be an international literary community without translations, and translations into German have even enabled some Eastern European writers to gain attention in the rest of the world. Hungarian writer Imre Kertész would not have received the Nobel Prize were it not for the German translation, that gave other countries access to his work.

Because translations play an important role in the literary culture of Germany, all bookstores, even the large chains, stock and display translated works. Magazines and newspapers also promote translations to a wide reading audience by regularly featuring and reviewing the latest titles.

A 2004 survey of German readers found that *The Lord of the Rings* and *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone* ranked in the top ten all-time favorite books among Germans. Only one German book, Thomas Mann's *Buddenbrooks*, reached the top

ten list. The list of the top 100 consisted mainly of foreign titles. This clearly shows what a dominant role English language books play in Germany. Yet, the atmosphere of the 1990s, when German publishers were overbidding each other and paying outrageously large amounts of money in order to secure the rights to a new John Grisham or lesser known American author, is over. In 2000, English titles accounted for 72% of new titles, but by 2005, that figure had dropped by to 61%. Reasons for this shift lay in the difficulty of making a profit when paying such large advances, and an overall drop in sales in the German book market. To make up for this, Germans have instead looked for and invested in publishing new German talent.<sup>15</sup>

In the last couple of years, the role of German-language writers has increased. A glance at the German bestseller lists shows that books by young German authors are selling better and compete closely with young American writers, and not just in terms of literary merit.<sup>16</sup> A couple of years ago, English-language books very much dominated the German fiction list. In 2003, only 25% of the top 100 best-selling fiction titles were German.<sup>17</sup> Now, between 30% and 60% of the fiction bestseller lists are books by English-speaking authors and about the same amount, around 30% to 50%, are books by German authors. 10% to 25% are translations from other languages.<sup>18</sup>

To ensure this widerange of books, the German publishing community routinely organizes internationally oriented events like readings and appearances by foreign

authors. Many cultural organizations also promote literature from abroad by providing funding for translations. These measures help to increase the number of foreign titles that enter the German book market, with special emphasis recently on literature from Africa, Asia, Latin America and Eastern Europe.<sup>19</sup> Fixed book pricing in Germany also helps guarantee this variety because it eases the competitive pressure and allows small publishing houses to take bigger risks.

### Leading Translators and the Art of Translation

As of the 18th century, eminent authors like Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, Johann Gottfried Herder, and Rainer Maria Rilke established the German literary scene as one open to books from other languages, and this continues today. Inheriting the tradition of producing quality translations, some of Germany's best writers have taken up the challenge of translating works of literature, of essentially rewriting others' books to bring them to a wider audience. These author-translators have influenced and advanced the literary scene twofold and have helped to shape the image of translation. In Germany, literary translations are considered to be an art form rather than a mechanical task.

In the field of contemporary literature, some of Germany's leading authors produce literary translations, among them Paul Celan (who has translated from 7 languages into German), Peter Handke (works by Shakespeare, Walker Percy, etc.), Hans Magnus Enzensberger (poems by

various authors and works by Federico García Lorca), and Nobel Prize Winner Elfriede Jelinek (*Gravity's Rainbow* by Thomas Pynchon). Interestingly note, W.G. Sebald, not a translator himself but always a promoter of German literature in the English-speaking world, founded the British Centre for Literary Translation.

Today a new generation of German authors is emerging and has continued its predecessors' work to bring influential books into the German book market. Acclaimed young writer Antje Strubel has earned a solid reputation as a translator for her work on *The Year of Magical Thinking* by Joan Didion, as did the winner of the Ingeborg Bachmann Prize Terézia Mora, who was born in Hungary, for her translation of Péter Esterházy.

Authors of all kinds participate in translating and often translate the same genres they produce themselves. Mirjam Pressler, who is a widely known author of children's and young adult books, has also translated over 300 works for children and young adults, including the diary of Anne Frank. It is not uncommon for poets to translate each other. German poet Ulrike Draesner, who translates poetry from English, also translates professionally. Sometimes translations even inspire new books to be written, as in the case of Ralf Dutli. After translating Ossip Mandelstam, Dutli then went on to write a complete Mandelstam biography.

In the field of popular fiction, the bestselling author of historical fiction, who writes under her pseudonym Rebecca Gablé, uses her real name Ingrid Krane-

Müschen to translate books by authors like Elizabeth George and Patricia Shaw.

It is also interesting to note that there are German publishers, such as Michael Krüger of *Hanser Verlag*, Alexander Fest of *Rowohlt Verlag*, and Joachim Unseld of *Frankfurter Verlagsanstalt*, who have also translated books or poems.

Currently, publishers and translators are engaged in an ongoing debate over the imbalances regarding the required training for translators in Germany and the compensation they receive from publishing houses. The average literary translator does not earn enough money to make a living. They hardly make more than 15 to 20 Euros per page gross with an average of 100 pages translated per month.<sup>20</sup> Former German President Roman Herzog confirmed this in a speech once: "That someone with one of the most important jobs in today's cultural life cannot generally make a living is fundamentally outrageous."<sup>21</sup>

In a recent attempt to improve the situation for literary translators, a lawsuit on behalf of translators was filed against publishers. Translators involved in this ongoing lawsuit are claiming a share of the sales earnings from the books they translated, a share they claim they are entitled to regardless of the edition of the book. In the past, publishers have granted the translator a share of the sales profits only in cases where the book was a bestseller.

Translators achieved a small victory when the district court in Munich decided that in addition to the initial compensation for actually translating a book, translators were entitled to a certain percent-

age of sales earnings starting with the first copy sold. This share ranges between 0.5 and 2 %.<sup>22</sup>

Some publishers criticized this court decision, which in their eyes works to undermine the variety of the German book market. By forcing publishers to pay the translators a percentage of the profits, German publishers argue that this will decrease the resources they could have used to publish other books. As a result, some deserving books might not be published or translated. The fact that there is a public discussion, however, shows that translators are becoming recognized. The overall situation for translators has improved, and some publishers have started providing translator biographies in their catalogues and putting the translator's name on the book cover.

### Supporting Translations and Promoting German Books

There are two different kinds of translation funding available: grants for which publishers can apply and grants especially for translators. For translations into German, there are organizations and ministries of culture located in the countries in which the title originated, that offer funding. Examples of such organizations include the IreCompany Literature Exchange in Ireland, the Polish Book Institute, and the Finnish Literature Information Centre (FILI) in Finland. These grants are usually offered only to publishers for the translation of a specific title.

Austria, Germany, and Switzerland all have programs to fund the publication

of German-language books in foreign languages. The grants program of the Goethe-Institut aims to bring important academic writing, high-quality fiction, children's and youth literature, and selected non-fiction works to a non-German-speaking readership. Support is given by way of subsidizing the publisher's translation costs. This program has been in place for nearly 30 years, during which time the Goethe-Institut has given financial support for the publication of about 4,000 books in 45 languages.<sup>23</sup> In Switzerland, Pro Helvetia, the Arts Council of Switzerland, was founded in 1939 and subsidizes the printing or translation of publications dealing with Swiss culture or Switzerland's cultural relations with other countries.<sup>24</sup> In Austria, the Arts Division of the Austrian Federal Chancellery offers financial assistance for translations.<sup>25</sup>

There are also special programs available for publishers that subsidize literature from certain regions, such as the Gesellschaft zur Förderung der Literatur aus Afrika, Asien und Lateinamerika e. V. (Society for the Promotion of Literature from Africa, Asia and Latin America). This program promotes the translation into German of culturally informative literary texts from various Third World regions, and enhances cultural understanding of societies that often receive little international attention. The titles that this program supports have appeared only on a limited basis or not at all in German, and originate from countries that are underrepresented in the German market.<sup>26</sup>

Noteworthy because of its substantial influence in the field of translation is the Literarisches Colloquium Berlin (LCB). The LCB promotes German literature, administers both a writer- and a translator-in-residence program, and serves as a center and facilitator for translators. One of their programs offers a translation grant for publishers interested in fiction from Middle and Eastern Europe. It aims to diversify the selection of books available to German readers by giving lesser-known books a better chance of being read. Since 1993, LCB has subsidized more than 250 titles.<sup>27</sup>

In addition to the programs available for publishers, there are organizations that help give translators a voice within the literary sphere of Germany, Switzerland, and Austria. There are several membership associations and non-profit organizations that support those who translate from or into German, such as the Verband deutschsprachiger Übersetzer (VdÜ) literarischer und wissenschaftlicher Werke e.V. The VdÜ is an association of German-speaking translators that was founded in 1954 to support the interests of translators.<sup>28</sup>

The most important support organization for literary translators in Germany is the Deutscher Übersetzerfonds (DÜF) (German translators fund), a non-profit organization based at the LCB, which offers fellowships and travel grants to translators and organizes workshops and seminars.<sup>29</sup>

The LCB, VdÜ and other institutions such as the Frankfurt Book Fair, Deutsche Akademie für Sprache und Dichtung, Deutscher Literaturfonds e.V.,

Europäisches Übersetzer-Kollegium Nordrhein-Westfalen in Straelen e.V., Dialogwerkstatt Zug, and others offer fellowships, translation prizes, and exchange programs to translators.

The most effective practices in promoting German literature are making personal contacts, establishing networks, and maintaining a continuous presence in the publishing scene of another country. This helps to understand the market, exchange information, bring people together, and facilitate book deals. Simply pitching the perfect book to a suitable publisher is not enough. Books sell better when editors trust someone else's opinion and feel that they will continue to get support once the book has been published. There are several initiatives that promote German books abroad:

#### **The Frankfurt Book Fair**

The Frankfurt Book Fair—organizer of the book industry's most important international trade show—is an affiliated company of the Börsenverein des Deutschen Buchhandels, the German Booksellers and Publishers Association. The Frankfurt Book Fair also has an international department that is committed to promoting German books for translation and helping to create networks in other parts of the world. Its international activities receive funding from the German Foreign Office.

The Frankfurt Book Fair organizes showcases for German books at collective stands in more than 20 countries, and it has created several Book Information Centers across the world. In addition to the German Book Office (GBO) in New

York, offices exist in Beijing, Bucharest, Moscow, and Warsaw. Each office serves as a contact exchange and cultural mediator between the German book trade and that of the office's host country.<sup>30</sup>

The GBO, for example, is a non-profit organization that was founded in 1998 to promote German books in the US. The GBO is based in New York, where it maintains active networks and personal contacts.<sup>31</sup> It also provides information on German titles of specific interest to the North American market.

#### **The Goethe-Institut**

Goethe-Institut e.V. is the Federal Republic of Germany's most important operational partner for the development and implementation of foreign cultural policy. In addition to running a program for translation funding, the Goethe-Institut is the primary organization for teaching and promoting German language and culture worldwide. The Goethe-Institut is represented across the globe by a network of institutes, Goethe centers, cultural associations, and reading rooms. Some institutes maintain libraries of German-language and other German-related materials. The 128 Goethe-Instituts outside Germany offer selected book reviews on their websites and organize readings, seminars, workshops, and exhibitions. Partners of the Goethe-Instituts include public and private cultural institutions, the federal states, local authorities, and the world of commerce. The Goethe-Institut closely works with translators and other cultural mediators. Much of the Goethe-Institut's budget comes

from the German Foreign Office and the German Press Office.<sup>32</sup>

### German Book Prize

In order to promote eminent and well-known names as well as relatively unknown yet talented German authors home and abroad, the Börsenverein des Deutschen Buchhandels (German Booksellers and Publishers Association) created the German Book Prize, which is modeled on the UK's Man Booker Prize. It recognizes the best German-language novel and was awarded for the first time in 2005 to Arno Geiger for his novel *Es geht uns gut*. The 2006 winner was Katharina Hacker for *The Have-Nots (Die Habenichtse)*.<sup>33</sup>

There are numerous other projects, initiatives, and websites promoting translation: *New books in German* is a London-based journal, which features a selection of noteworthy books from Germany in a printed journal and on its accompanying website twice a year. Three thousand copies of the journal are distributed throughout the world.<sup>34</sup> *Litrix.de* presents reviews and sample translations of contemporary German literature on their website. Over the last three years, *Litrix.de* also ran special funding programs for translations into Arabic and Chinese.<sup>35</sup> The previously mentioned LCB also plays an important role in promoting German literature throughout the world. Other such projects include [www.lyrikline.org](http://www.lyrikline.org), an online platform that posts poems and translations into various languages in text and audio formats, and [www.signandsight.com](http://www.signandsight.com), the English version of the German online cultural magazine *Perlentaucher*, which

aggregates cultural and intellectual content from Germany's leading publications. The section "Books this Season" is a selection of the most interesting and talked-about new literature.

### German Literature Abroad

Ever since the 1980s, when publishers all over Europe discovered selling rights as new source of income, Germany has successfully sold titles abroad partly due to the constantly changing political climate—the opening of Russia and China to the West or the economic boom in Korea. When one market becomes saturated with German titles, another market emerges. German publishers are keenly aware of these trends and focus on selling rights in accordance with these changes.

Sales of translation rights for works written in German have increased modestly but constantly over the last ten years. Markets like South Korea, China, and Taiwan have taken a huge interest in German literature and have become some of the biggest buyers. European markets like the Netherlands, Spain, and Italy have traditionally been open to German literature. In perhaps the most surprising change of all, the UK and the US have begun to open their literary doors to some of Germany's titles as well.

In comparison to the one-way street of English and American literature that has been in place for so long, a small path going the opposite direction has materialized. Literature translated from English still plays a central role in the German book market and in Germany's bestseller lists.

While German literature has yet to have quite the same impact in the UK or the US, a steady stream of titles is making its way into these English-speaking markets.

This increase is due in part to a few successful titles that managed to attract attention and introduce English-speaking readers to contemporary German literature. Among these titles are *The Reader* by Bernhard Schlink, thanks to Oprah Winfrey's enthusiastic praise, and *The Emigrants* by W.G. Sebald.<sup>36</sup>

The increased interest in German literature can also be explained by the change in writing. The year 1989 marked the end of East German literature, but the political upheavals marked a turning point for West German literature as well. The end of post-war literature was near, a genre that had been dominated by writers such as Heinrich Böll, Uwe Johnson, and Günter Grass. Their writing had been shaped by the war, by the struggle with the Nazi past, and by a strong moral impulse.<sup>37</sup> When the Nobel Prize was finally awarded to Günter Grass in 1999, the windfall profit of this event favored a young generation of authors, named by the reviewers as "the grandsons and granddaughters of Grass."<sup>38</sup>

This new generation of German writers turned its back on the writing of the post-war generation, as well as on the experimental, postmodernist, and psychoanalytical writing of the '70s and '80s. Before this new kind of renaissance in German literature, German publishers remember their attempts to sell rights to their authors' work in other countries as a "humiliating experience." German writ-

ing was viewed at that time as academic, serious, and indigestible.<sup>39</sup>

The new German novel, according to the *New York Times*, it is "less weighty, more exportable." This generation is represented by Daniel Kehlmann, Julie Zeh, Jenny Erpenbeck, and Ingo Schulze, who have all been influenced by the substantial presence of American culture and literature in Germany today. This generation stands for narrative story telling, a long-missed quality in German literature, and something they have learned from American writers. This has led to more curiosity and exchange on both sides—as evidenced by the remarkable success of the books by Cornelia Funke.<sup>40</sup>

"Younger Germans, writing in the country's leading newspapers, have infiltrated their ranks and become vital conduits of new books. ... At the leading edge of success abroad lie the writers. Once content to write for a small circle of readers at home, they have tuned their antennae toward the rest of world, testing out ideas on publishers with an eye toward eventual sales abroad. (*New York Times*, December 20, 2005)"

With the increasingly more international climate in Europe and Germany, a kind of multicultural literature has emerged that reflects the changing cultural influences in Germany. There are German-language authors who write from the perspective of a particular hyphenated identity such as Terézia Mora, Zsuzsa Bánk, Rafik Schami, and, most recently, Sa a Stani i . These authors have been discovered and embraced by English language publishers.<sup>41</sup>



Currently, the national and international chances for ambitious German-language literature are good, particularly since many young writers no longer write for the limited market of their home countries, but want to succeed abroad. From the outset, they think about the exportability of their book projects.<sup>42</sup>

### German authors in translation

With 7,491 deals in the last year, German publishers have sold more licenses than ever before. Poland, with 604 titles (8.1 % of all the licenses sold), was the top buyer of rights from Germany, followed by the Czech Republic, with 557 titles (7.4 % of all the licenses sold).

English, which in the 1990s often took the 2nd place, ranked 7th in the top ten languages, accounting for 6.2 % of the licenses sold. The other European languages on the top ten list are Russian (4th), Spanish, (6th), Italian (8th), Dutch (9th), and French (10th). Chinese ranked 3rd, and Korean took 5th place.

Children's books led the way—they accounted for approximately 24% of all licenses sold—and were in high demand in Asian countries. Following children's books, the next leading category of licenses sold abroad was self-help, which accounted for about 22% of license sales. These books were of particular interest in Southern Europe and Spain. The demand for fiction declined, and this category took third place to represent about 12% of license deals. The majority of literary licenses went to the Netherlands and Italy.<sup>43</sup>

Recently, interest in German-language literature has climbed, heightened by successes like Daniel Kehlmann's *Vermessung der Welt* and Arno Geiger's novel *Es geht uns gut*. Many publishers have confirmed this small trend reversal in the English-speaking sphere, but which must first be reflected in the statistics for next year.<sup>44</sup>

### German Literature in English

Within the last 25 years, English has become the *lingua franca* of Western civilization. The massive expansion of the Internet in the mid-90s and the dot-com boom in the late '90s accelerated this already rapid change. Recently, no other language has expanded so quickly and at the same time absorbed so little from other languages as American English.

Unfortunately, the English language market is the hardest to conquer. Only about 3 % of all new releases are translations, as an analysis of all titles reviewed in Publishers Weekly in 2004 and 2005 shows.<sup>45</sup> Germany, however, is always among the top three languages, and in 2006, it even led the number of translated titles reviewed in Publishers' World, before French and Spanish.

Despite the difficulties of finding a US home for their books, German publishers share a growing interest in placing their titles on the English-language book market, and with good reason. Translating German titles into English increases the amount of attention an author receives, more than license deals into any other market. It is followed by a nearly 100 % chance of selling of licenses in other markets, and it is *the*

prerequisite for a fiction title to garner the attention of Hollywood film studios.

Jutta Willand, rights director at Eichborn AG, confirms the importance to German writers of English translations: "It is very important for German authors to have their books translated into English. Not only does this allow them to enter the influential English-language market and reach a much larger group of readers, but it also allows them to engage with the worldwide literary avant-garde, whose common language is English."<sup>46</sup>

### Noteworthy and Untranslated German Literature

Most German fiction authors have been translated into at least one other language. However, there are numerous noteworthy German-language authors who have never been translated into English or found a US publisher, such as John von Düffel, Martin Mosebach, Matthias Politycki, Ralf Rothmann, Feridun Zaimo lu, or Ernst Augustin.

On the PEN American Center website, there are recommended titles considered by translators from the German to be of great merit that are not currently available in the United States in English. Suggestions include *Die Serapions-Brüder* by E.T.A. Hoffman, *Die Dritte Walpurgisnacht* by Karl Kraus, and *Spazieren in Berlin* by Franz Hessel.<sup>47</sup>

There are also some forgotten gems that are being rediscovered in Germany and are worth translating, according to Rebecca Morrison, editor of new-books-in-german. One of the books she recommends is *Bergfahrt* by Swiss writer Ludwig Hohl.<sup>48</sup>

In addition to titles that have never been translated, there are a vast number of books that were translated and published in the U.S. but have since gone out of print. Classics like *The Silent Angel*, Heinrich Böll's first novel, are no longer available in bookstores.

Sometimes when a German author does find an American publisher, the books do not sell enough copies (partly because American publishers put little marketing money behind many translations) and the author is dropped. Unfortunately, this bad sales record follows the book, which ends up with no chance of finding a new home.

As previously noted, there is a growing interest in new German literature and in some of the classics, such as books by Hans Fallada or *Der Siebente Brunnen* by Fred Wander, which have been discovered by dedicated American editors and publishers. German books are more than ever influencing cultural life throughout the world and globalizing even extremely self-contained countries such as the US.

## 3.5 China

**Chen Maiping**, writer and translator, founder member of the Independent Chinese PEN Center (ICPC), Stockholm

### Chinese literature translated into other languages

According to the official statistics, China produced about 110,000 new titles in 2003, and 112,857 in 2005. Among the new titles for 2003 there were 10,000 new literary creations and 10,842 for 2005<sup>49</sup> But the

number of those new titles that have been translated into other languages, as far as can be told from an extensive Internet search, was less than 100 in 2003, and almost the same in 2005, though these were mostly literary works. This means about 0.01% of Chinese books are being translated into other languages, and for literary works the figure is about 0.01%. This figure does not include Hong Kong, Macao and Taiwan, which also belong to Chinese literature in the sense of Chinese as language.

China has the largest population in the world and has a long literary tradition, correspondingly it has many writers who produce many literary works each year. The official Chinese Writers Association reported 6,128 members in 2005<sup>50</sup>. But less than 300 of those writers have ever had their work translated into any other language—that is, less than 5%. Many of the Chinese writers now being published in English in the U.S. or in Europe in other European languages, for example, Mo Yan, Su Tong and Yu Hua, are members of the official writers' association. However, there are thousands of other writers who are not members of this official association, particularly dissident writers who have little or no opportunity to publish in China. The works of these writers therefore usually have even less of a chance to reach translators of other languages. Even so, some of the dissidents have also had their works published abroad in Taiwan or Hong Kong, and have even been translated into other languages. Often their works can get more attention as they describe the true history and reality of China,

and thus can be more interesting even from a political perspective. ICPC member Liao Yiwu is one of the dissident writers who now reaches new readers through the French and Japanese translations of his book *Interviews with People from the Bottom Rung of Society*. An English translation of some sections of the book also appeared in the U.S. magazine *The Paris Review* in 2005, and which is now forthcoming from Pantheon in its entirety in an English translation by Wen Huang.

Where the members of ICPC are concerned, about 10% of membership has been translated. Among the 190 members of ICPC today, about 20 writers have had their literary works translated into other languages. Since many of us live abroad in exile, we are translated at a higher rate than most other Chinese writers. ICPC members include some good poets and writers whose works have been translated, such as Liu Binyan (died 2005) and Zheng Yi (in the US), Yang Lian, Yo Yo and Ma Jian (in the UK), Liao Yiwu, Shu Yang and Wu Chenjun (in China), Zeng Zheng and Ouyang Yu (in Australia), Wan Zhi (Chen Maiping in Sweden), Jimbut (Feng Jun in Denmark), etc. The language their work is translated into is primarily English, but they have also been translated into French, German, Swedish, Danish, Japanese, etc. Some of their work has won prestigious international prizes, and has been listed as the most important work from China by *The New York Times* and important media in Europe. Nobel laureate Gao Xingjian is an honorary member of ICPC. He has lived in exile since 1987 but has kept writing in Chinese.

His books are still forbidden in China but widely translated into other languages, particularly since he got the prize in 2000.

Interest in Chinese literature is increasing and this should have something to do with China's fast economic development in the last decade. Penguin has now opened an office in Beijing in order to make contact with Chinese writers directly.

According to an official report, exports of Chinese publications has continued to increase. From 1997 to 2003, the volume of nationwide book exports increased from 2.2 million to 4.65 million copies, with the turnover surging from US\$9.27 million to US\$18.67 million. Exports of newspapers climbed from 200,000 to 800,000 copies, with the value growing from US\$150,000 to US\$980,000. Even exports of electronic publications increased from 907 to 37,534 pieces, representing an increase in value from US\$30,000 to US\$270,000. Although the volume of periodical exports decreased from 2.56 million to 2.21 million copies, the value increased from US\$2.68 million to 3.65 million.<sup>51</sup>

### Reception of foreign literature in China

Regarding the reception of international literature, or more precisely Western literature, it is always connected to the Chinese historical background, to its political situations and social changes, to its own literary tradition. In Chinese cultural history, literature traditionally serves political purposes and so does literary translation. Ever since the Opium War, which Chi-

na lost, interests in learning Western culture has been tremendous in China, and Western literature has been introduced as a tool to study Western culture and convey Western values. Examples: with the introduction of Marxism-Leninism into China in the 1920-1930s, many Soviet or proletarian literary works were translated into Chinese; during the Cultural Revolution from 1966 to 1976, on the contrary, there was a total halt in translation of Western literature; in the 1980s, a lot of Western modernist literary works were translated with the open-reform police and modernization project; nowadays there is more commercial translation following the authorities' market economy policy. The Chinese government has also sponsored translation of the kind of Chinese literature that suits their political propaganda.

Therefore, China imports quite a lot of books from Western languages each year, though not all of them are translated. In 2005, China imported all kinds of foreign books or periodicals (about 553,644 titles and among these 90,189 were literary and artistic works) mostly without Chinese translations. However, more than a thousand of the books are translated, even according to other sources.<sup>52</sup>

Foreign literature has always been more popular in China than local literature, and sells better. This is particularly true now that China has carried out economic reforms and opened to the world to try to catch up with international development. Although China is a signatory to international copyright agreements, pirate copies are a very common problem.<sup>53</sup>

Beijing has held international book fairs for more than ten years now and has been attracting more and more international interest. According to official government reports, the ratio of Chinese books bought at the Frankfurt Book Fair (that is, Chinese books that will be translated into other languages) to foreign language books bought at the fair to be translated into Chinese has changed from 1:10 in the 1980s to 4:5 in recent years. However, this is an official report based on the contracts signed at the Frankfurt Book Fair alone.<sup>54</sup>

Generally, according to the same sources, the ratio is still 1:10 if we refer to the total number of Chinese books being translated into other languages and foreign language books being translated into Chinese each year.

#### **Attitudes toward literary translation and translators**

The attitude toward literary translation changed remarkably in China in the decades following the Cultural Revolution of 1966-1976. Before then, particularly after the Communist Party took power in mainland China in 1949, literary translators were highly respected. There were two reasons for that: first, many good writers and scholars at that time, particularly those who were well educated and could read foreign languages, didn't dare write their own literary works, fearing political persecution. In order to remain faithful to their literary interests, they turned to translating works of literature from foreign languages, which were

relatively safe, particularly if they translated works that Marx or Lenin had praised and approved of such as Shakespeare, Balzac or Pushkin, etc. Many translators during that time were professors of the relevant languages or had previously been writers or poets themselves, such as Yang Jiang and Shen Congwen. The second reason was that the translations were usually of higher quality than today's translation. The translators of that time were good writers and editors who could read the original and were generally very well-educated. Balzac was translated by famous translator Fu Lei, and well received in China and certain Chinese French experts claim that Balzac is even better in the Chinese translation than in the original French.

After the Cultural Revolution ended in the late 1970s and China opened itself to the world through economic reform, the general climate for literary writing grew more favorable. Interests in Western literature are especially great among young generations. But, literary translation is not so prestigious nowadays as before. Again, there seem to be two reasons for this. The first is that translation has become far too commercialized. Many books are translated not for their literary value but because they are bestsellers in the West. *The Da Vinci Code*, for example, appeared in Chinese translation earlier than many other Western languages. The Harry Potter books are published in China almost simultaneously with their publication in the Western countries. The other reason is that translators and editors are not always skillful users of the Chinese language and are generally

not so well educated as before. They work more for commercial reasons than out of literary interest. However, some translators are very professional and their translations do have high literary quality, particularly those published by traditionally good publishing houses such as Shanghai Foreign Literature Press, etc. Each year's winner of the Nobel Prize for Literature will usually be popular in China and will immediately appear in Chinese language.

Unfortunately, the quality of literary translations is very uneven nowadays. Some can be quite bad. I have seen many bad examples in my quite wide reading of Western literature in Chinese translation. Therefore, not many translators of literary works have a national reputation as literary writers any longer. If translation was once considered an art, now it is more a commercial activity. There are few successful literary writers or poets who will engage in literary translation. On the other hand, those who are less successful in their own literary writing may do some good work in translation. For example, Li Li, a poet living in Sweden, also a member of ICPC, is not at all famous as a Chinese poet, but his translation of Swedish poet Tomas Tranströmer became a success and won a translation prize in 2005.

Because the Communist Party paid attention to propaganda, there was an official institute in Beijing as early as the 1950s. The Foreign Language Bureau (FLB) employed foreign experts to translate Chinese literature into other languages as a kind of propaganda. Only works approved by the government could be

translated. FLB also published a quarterly literary journal titled *Chinese Literature* in various foreign languages. There are also several official literary magazines and publishing houses which contributed particularly in publishing foreign literary works in Chinese translations. Recently, the Chinese government also set up a foundation to issue grants to support foreign scholars who translate Chinese literary works into their language. In Taiwan, there is also a foundation which supports the translation of Chinese literature from Taiwan into other languages. As part of the process of economic reform, the government provides less money in support of the translation of foreign literature into Chinese, since foreign literature is always very successful on the Chinese market and publishing houses usually earn money by publishing foreign books. What the government emphasizes is the promotion of a certain kind of Chinese literature in the rest of the world. As mentioned above, the Chinese government sent a big delegation to the Frankfurt Book Fair in 2005, and according to government sources, the ratio of Chinese literature sold for translation into other languages to foreign language books bought for translation into Chinese at that Fair reached 4:5.<sup>55</sup>

For Chinese language writers, it is clear that the international climate is much better today than before as far as their chances of being translated into foreign languages are concerned. Interest in Chinese literature and other kinds of Chinese

books is increasing across the globe, along with interest in other aspects of Chinese culture such as film and fine arts. It is also a fact that the Chinese language is one of the five official languages of the United Nations, and its global reach makes more people seek to learn Chinese. For example, more good translators are appearing in the US who are able to translate Chinese into English while maintaining a high literary quality. In Europe, almost every small language such as Swedish, Danish or Norwegian has translators who are doing good work with Chinese literature. Some of them translate from the English translation.

It is always important to have good literary works translated into other languages, and most particularly into English. To increase the mutual understanding of different cultures and literatures is International PEN's task, as stated in its charter. For ICPC members, it is even more important to have their works translated into other languages. ICPC members are mostly dissident writers in China, and their works are banned for political reasons, though some of those works have very high literary quality and significance. If those works are translated into other languages, particularly English, and receive international recognition, that will, in turn, influence Chinese readers. This is a specific effect that the translation of literary work has in the Chinese context. ICPC member Liao Yiwu is a good example. After his works are translated into other languages, particularly English and French, his influence among Chinese readers and on Chinese literature will increase as well.

### Some random comments

The Chinese case shows that translation of literature can convey different values and interests. The choice of the different values can be cultural or literary as well as social, political and commercial. One can make the translation for personal values and interests, which decide what kind of literature is translated (travels). Therefore, the question about making literature travel can be: making what kind of literature travel?

In a globalization context, there are debates about different values. Some people emphasize universal values, and some people emphasize different values, for example, claiming 'Asian values'. In the post colonialist perspective, or in the perspective of so-called Western cultural hegemony or cultural imperialism (Edward Said), or in the perspective of what I have called 'cultural hydraulics', there are some values taking advantage of being in high positions, like water flowing from high places to lower places. This is often reflected in literary translation, particularly in quantities. However, this is not necessarily negative in my opinion.

International PEN emphasizes universal values referring to human rights such as freedom of expression but also stresses the diversity of different cultures. We should identify literature not only in space (horizontal), but also in time (vertical); all cultures generally develop from tradition to modern. Thus, literary translation is not only an effort to cross different cultures horizontally, but also

an effort to develop all traditional societies into modern societies. In this sense; that water flows from higher to lower places does not mean unbalance, actually creates a new balance.

Literary translation itself follows the social development and people's needs. It is also important to keep a diversity of cultures. Diversity means that we should let different values flow freely between areas in the coordination I describe above. With international support, we should try to break the barrier between them, no matter if these barriers are natural (from language perspective) or artificial (political reasons). Internet will help to overcome the barriers.

### 3.6 France

**Anne-Sophie Simenel**, *Program Director, Cultural Services of the French Embassy in New York*

For some time now the French and foreign literature sections have been sitting side by side on the shelves of French bookshops in almost equal proportion. They reveal a diversity and an eclecticism that show, year after year, the opening of the French publishing scene to the world.

The fact that for more than 20 years publishing houses of all sizes have existed which are based on a mainly foreign catalogue, such as Editions Actes Sud or Editions Philippe Picquier—which mainly publish works translated from Asian languages—adds further substance to this view.

And yet the cost of a translation is high and its success never guaranteed. So how can we explain this French success, and does a reciprocal one exist in the other countries of the world, in particular the United States?

### Foreign literature in France

#### State of Affairs

This is easy enough to determine; one only has to consult the catalogues of the different French publishers, from the largest groups to the smallest houses, and the state of affairs is plain to see: almost a third of the literary works that have appeared in France are translated from a foreign language. Since 1996, in each new literary season (from the end of August to the end of October) the proportion of novels translated from a foreign language to French has varied between 39.5% (1996) and 32.2% (2005).<sup>56</sup>

In the lead is English (all the English-speaking countries together), with, for the whole of 2004, 240 literary titles purchased out of a total of 430—in other words more than half—with a clear predominance of American titles (153, or one third of acquisitions of works of literature, all languages together) over British titles (66).<sup>57</sup> Far behind comes German, with 41 titles purchased, then Spanish and Italian with 24 and 23 acquisitions respectively, Russian (19 works), Swedish and Chinese (11 and 10 titles), and last, coming in close together, Japanese and Dutch (7 titles each), Norwegian (6) and Portuguese (5).



### Reception of translated works in France

However, a translation is a heavy financial burden and requires a major investment in terms of time. Indeed, if one takes a translator's average rate as 20 Euros a page of 1500 characters (we will return to this in more detail later), we need to calculate over 2,500 Euros as advance payment for the translation of a work of 200,000 characters (about 150 pages), which adds considerably to the final retail price of the book. Moreover the periods of time are long and several years may go by between the signing of a contract for the sale of rights and the actual appearance of the work.

But as the figures given above show, publishers take the risk despite everything. These results are due to a combination of several factors, and French readers' equal interest in French and foreign literature is no doubt due to the quality of the authors and works chosen, the quality of the translation and the amount of media coverage of the works that appear. Let us leave aside the first two factors since we shall be returning to them later, and simply note with respect to the third factor the existence of columns about foreign literature in all the literary magazines, such as *LIRE*, *Le Magazine Littéraire*, *Livres Hebdo* or *Le Monde des Livres*.

It goes without saying that foreign authors enjoy considerable prestige and a certain aura in France, perhaps even more than in their own countries. In *Livres Hebdo* of 1 July 2005, for example, Claude Combet notes that Paul Auster's latest work, *Brooklyn Follies*, was published by Actes Sud in

France even before it had appeared in the United States in January 2006.

In general terms, French publishers, especially where American literature is concerned, tend to be on the lookout rather than just waiting.

### The reasons behind the successful opening up of French publishing to the world

#### Publishers and specialised readers

Although not all publishing houses function according to that same model, it is interesting to make a brief analysis of the working of *Actes Sud*, which has recently won the Prix Goncourt, the most prestigious French literary award, and counts among its authors a Nobel Prize winner whom it helped to discover, the Hungarian writer Imre Kertész. Indeed, the policy of this house, which has based its catalogue on foreign works, is to entrust the publishing of works translated from another language to collection editors who are specialists in the original language. They are providers of works, editors and correctors of the translation if the need arises. There is no doubt that the success of this house has been staked on its capacity to read the authors *in the original*.

This model is applicable to many other houses, to a lesser extent according to the languages translated. If it goes without saying that many French publishers read English; this is clearly not so much the case with other, less usual, languages, but that does not mean that they are neglected, thanks to the work of skilled readers,

on whose conclusions and advice the publishers depend.

#### Translators

The first point then is the quality of the works chosen. The second, and by no means the least, is the quality of the translators and of their work.

In France, that quality is endorsed by the status of the translator, whether literary or technical, who is regarded as an *author*, a professional whose rights and obligations are guaranteed by various associations and trade unions.

As for the payment, here are the stipulations of the *Code des Usages de la Traduction Littéraire (Literary Translation Code)*, signed in March 1993 by the ATLE, the SGDL and the SFT for the first party, and the SNE (National Publishing Union) for the other: payment for literary translations must be the object of an "advance payment on proportional authors' rights whose amount [...] depends mainly on the length and difficulty of the translation, and the competence and fame of the translator". The unit of calculation is the page of 25 lines of 60 characters, paid on average between 19.50 Euros and 21.50 Euros for translations from English, between 21.50 Euros and 22.50 Euros for translations from German, Italian and Spanish, and between 21.50 Euros and 23.50 Euros for other languages.<sup>58</sup> That advance payment is set off against future author's rights from which the translator benefits.

The purpose of that framework, which recognises the work of the translator as a specific, autonomous profession, is to improve his material and social situation and

to promote the quality of the translation of the foreign works published in France, thus supporting the development of foreign literature on the French publishing scene.

#### CNL financial aids

The Centre National du Livre (CNL), or National Book Centre aid programme for translation, has been available to French publishers wishing to publish translated works for many years. The subsidy finances between 50% and 60% of the total price of the translation.

To be eligible, the publisher has to submit a dossier including a sample of the translation (about 20% of the work), and the dossier will be judged, amongst other things, on its quality. It is also indicated that the contract between the translator and the publisher (which must be supplied) must "conform to the *Code des Usages*" which we spoke about earlier. In other words, if the translator's payment is less than 17 Euros, no aid will be granted. If it is between 17 Euros and 20 Euros, the publisher will receive 50% of the cost of the translation, and 60% above 20 Euros.

This CNL subsidy programme thus provides twofold assistance for the development of the publication of foreign literature in France by supporting both the publisher and the translator.

#### French literature abroad

##### State of Affairs

##### Global figures, buyer countries

According to the survey *Exchange of rights (88 publishers)* done by the Publishing

Exchange and the SNE in 2002, 4,698 titles (all fields together) were the object of a sale of rights to foreign publishers for the purposes of a translation. The business figure for those rights was 106 million, an increase of 7.5% over the previous year.

Two years later, according to the 2004 National Publishing Union (SNE) external statistics, the number of titles sold had risen to 6,077, of which almost two thirds (1,817) were works of literature. A comparison of the purchases and sales of rights for 2004 speaks for itself: France sells far more literature than it buys, at the rate of 1 title bought for 4.2 titles sold.

If we break down these figures, we see that the countries that are fondest of French literature are France neighbours: Italy (157 titles bought), Spain (148, 165 for the Spanish language as a whole), and Germany (117, for the German language as a whole). Other countries with high figures are Greece (91), Rumania (91), Turkey (75) and Portugal (74, plus 44 for Brazil). Eastern Europe is showing a strong interest in French literary production; Poland took a good position with 72 titles, followed by the Czech Republic with 63 and, to a lesser extent, Yugoslavia, Bulgaria, Hungary, Lithuania and Slovenia, with 48, 38, 34, 31 and 25 works bought respectively. Lastly, we note that the Asian countries are also good buyers, with 72 titles sold to South Korea, 49 to China and 48 to Japan. For the exchange of rights with all these countries, we see that the balance is tipped heavily in favour of France.

However, that balance is reversed when it comes to English-speaking countries. Indeed, for 240 English titles bought, only

90 French titles were sold in 2004, with the same figures for the United Kingdom and the United States (42 titles each). We can thus detect the most flagrant imbalance in the exchanges of rights with the United States, which for French publishers and authors remains a publishing, and even a cinematic, El Dorado.

### **The reception of French authors in the world and the United States**

If among the most translated French authors in the world we find many from the mid 20th century such as Sartre, Camus, Malraux or Gide, we should not underestimate the importance of contemporary ones.

Indeed, according to Lucinda Karter, director of the French Publisher's Agency—the eyes and ears of International French Publishing Bureau (BIEF) in New York, which represents certain French publishers in the United States—, American publishers “were more consumers of the great names of literature, of literary criticism, of philosophy, of history, of sociology”.<sup>59</sup> And to mention some of those great names: Althusser, Bataille, Baudrillard, Breton, Char, Deleuze, Duras, Ernaux, Furet, Glissant, Klossowski, Kristeva, Leiris, Le Roy Ladurie, Levinas, Michaux, Nora, Perec, Queneau, Ricoeur, Sagan, Serres, Sollers or Todorov. But Ms Karter also notes a shift of interest towards more contemporary fiction such as works by Emmanuel Carrère, François Cheng, Assia Djebar, Anna Gavalda, Camille Laurens, Amélie Nothomb or Jean-Christophe Ruffin, and even an interest in authors who are little known

in France, such as Laurent Graf or Thomas Gunzig. Lastly, the present tendency also applies to overseas French authors, such as Alain Mabanckou, whose novel *African Psycho* was published in 2007 by SoftSkull Press; descendants of immigrants (for example, the recent release of *Kiffe kiffe demain* by Faïza Guène by Harcourt); and exiles or foreigners living in France (*Les Mots étrangers* by Vassilis Alexakis, a Greek author who lives in France and writes in French was published in spring 2006 by Autumn Hill Books).

In the United States, even if the trade balance is unfavourable to France and there are still great efforts to be made, French publishing production is in a good position, with 0.8% of the total of American production, of which 2.8% are translated works. In other words, about 30% of the works in translation in the United States are from French language sources.

### **The promotion of French literature abroad**

If, with the exception of the United States, the sales figures for French literature speak for themselves, we must not forget that they are the result of many different initiatives by the publishers on the one hand, and on the other, by the different people involved with books abroad, such as BIEF, the CNL and the French Embassies Book Services, notably in New York.

Among these initiatives we find a number of aids, both for foreign publishers wishing to publish French works and for translators from French into a foreign language, provided by the Ministry of

Culture and the Foreign Ministry. For example, through the Books and Reading Department and the National Book Centre, the Ministry of Culture earmarks an annual budget of almost 10 million Euros in aid for the development and export of French publications and the sale of rights to French titles to foreign publishers.

### **The International French Publishing Bureau**

BIEF is an associative structure that promotes French publishing abroad by attending major events, but it is also engaged in study, market prospection and documentation and training of foreign professionals. With 250 members and the support of the French Ministry of Culture and Communication and the Foreign Ministry, it has existed for 130 years. It also works in close cooperation with the SNE, the CELF and the Publishing Exchange.

By carrying out 70 actions every year, the BIEF ensures the collective presence of the works of French publishers at book fairs and salons all over the world, generalist events such as Frankfurt or specialist ones such as Bologna, and at international congresses, but also through exhibitions of works by publishing field, exhibitions that are frequently mounted in several towns and cities in the same country.

BIEF also organises exchange and training seminars abroad for professionals in the world of books. Some of them are held in France to coincide with the Book Fair in Paris and at French publishing houses for a period of several months, which shows that the BIEF is

determined to be at the heart of encounters between booksellers, publishers and people working in the book chain in general who want to cooperate with French publishing.

As a support and complement to those activities, the organism provides its members with studies of book markets abroad, the place French books occupy in it—in terms of sales of rights and exports—and their potential for development, through the quarterly publication of a newsletter *La Lettre*, special dossiers and reports. The Web site [www.bief.org](http://www.bief.org) contains complementary information about activities, reports and the latest news in the profession. In terms of sales of rights, Europe (the whole continent) and Asia, but also Latin America, are the priority zones at present. The permanent eyes and ears of BIEF, France Edition Inc. in New York, offers all members the services of a rights agency for English, and in Hanoi the aim of France Edition Viêt-nam is to develop French-Vietnamese exchanges in the field of books, both for exports and for exchanges of rights or co-publishing partnerships.

### Financial aids

The French government also subsidises translation initiatives through different programmes, designed for both publishers and foreign translators.

### Aids for publishers

#### CNL

The National Book Centre provides support for French publishers for the sale of

translation rights of their books to their foreign colleagues and assumes part of the cost of translation. It pays particular attention to markets considered “difficult” and literary fields where promotion abroad is most necessary (human and social sciences, theatre, young adults’ literature, etc.). About 500 titles a year benefit from aid from the CNL to be translated into a foreign language.

To be eligible, the dossier must be submitted by the French publisher holding the sales rights. The dossiers are scrutinised by a committee made up of representatives of the administrations involved, publishing professionals and highly qualified persons. The dossiers are selected according to various criteria such as the quality of the work, the policy of the foreign publisher and its respect for its commitments to the French publishers, the risk involved, the translator’s fee and the amount of the advance payment.

The aid, paid to the French publishers who have to pass them on to the foreign publishers, are calculated from the translator’s or translators’ fee to the exclusion of all other costs connected with the production or promotion of the work. The sum agreed may be 20% to 50% of the cost of the translation submitted in the application dossier.

### International Cooperation and Development Department (Foreign Ministry)

Moreover, for many years the Foreign Ministry has been offering an aid programme for foreign publishers: the

Publishing Aid Programme (PAP), designed to support books of cultural importance. A medium or long term programme for publications by French authors is set up by local publishers in liaison with the cultural services of the French embassies.

For the United States this aid, called the Hemingway Grant, is awarded to American publishers through the cultural services of the French Embassy in the United States. It cannot be added to an aid from the CNL and the amount varies from 1,000 to 6,000 dollars. In the dossier, the American publisher must provide a provisional budget justifying the amount of the aid applied for, amongst other things.

### Aids for translators

In addition to the aid granted to foreign publishers, the CNL and the Foreign Ministry offer translators from French to foreign languages several kinds of aid designed to support their work.

### Aids for translation

The CNL awards aid for the translation of a work, on certain conditions. The aid is designed to support the translation of French works into foreign languages, except for books in the public domain, school books, practical guides and magazines. The amount of the aid, which is given directly to the translators, may vary from 20% to 50% of the cost of the translation.

There are two kinds of aid. First, grants, which apply to all fields of translation and are designed for long-term personal projects. To be eligible, the translator

must have three translated works published and take full or partial leave.

Second, translation credits, which are a lump sum for the translation of a difficult work for heritage purposes. The application must be made by the translator, accompanied by a letter setting out the problems (stylistic difficulties, different levels of language, documentary research, etc.) and the interest of the work. The committee will decide according to the quality of the original text and a sample of the translation, and will assess the degree of difficulty of the translation. A translation contract must be provided, and the aid will be added to the publisher’s payment.

### Scholarships for foreign translators

The CNL also awards scholarships for foreign translators who want to live in France to carry out a translation project. These scholarships may be obtained by sending a dossier to the CNL through the cultural services of the French Embassy in the candidate’s country of residence. The decisions are taken by the president of CNL after consultation with a committee made up of translators, publishers and representatives of the administrations involved. The committee meets once a year and awards a hundred or so scholarships, the sum being 1,525 Euros per month for a stay of one to three months. Travelling expenses are not paid.

The translators must justify a project for the translation of a French work which is the object of a contract with a foreign publisher. They must live abroad. All genres are included (literature, poetry, young adults, human and social sciences)

and all works, including those that come into the public domain.

Lastly, since 2005, through the Book Service of the French Embassy in New York, the Foreign Ministry has been managing its own programme for stays by translators from French to English (United States and United Kingdom), in partnership with Villa Gillet, a cultural institution in Lyon.

The programme allows foreign translators working on a translation project of a contemporary French work to spend six weeks in Lyon (the aid includes transport, accommodation and an allowance) and to become involved in the cultural life of the city. The translators selected always take part in workshops at Villa Gillet. To be eligible, the translators need not necessarily justify a contract with a foreign publisher, since the aim of these stays is to bring new projects onto the American and British publishing scenes.

### **The actions of the Cultural Cooperation Services in New York**

Created in 2004, the Book Service of the French Embassy in New York is engaged in promoting French publications in the United States. To carry out its task it has a varied range of tools: the Hemingway Grant campaign and translators' stays at Villa Gillet as we have already seen, but also a new programme of support for translation of French titles published since 2000 "French Voices", a program of visits by French-speaking authors to the United States and invitations to American authors and publishers to France, as well

as a Web site for American book professionals, which aims to be a filter for French publishing.

### **French Voices**

In partnership with the PEN American Center, in 2006 the Book Service set up *French Voices*, a new translation program designed to assist the US publication of books written in French and published after 2000.

By the end of 2008, 30 books—including an equal number of works of literature and essays—will have been selected by a committee of French and American book industry professionals.

The series, recognizable thanks to a logo designed by famous French artist Serge Bloch, will offer English-language readers a new Francophone perspective on our globalized world. A short preface by a well-known writer will introduce each book, and a reading guide will be available free at [www.frenchbooknews.com](http://www.frenchbooknews.com).

To help offset the financial risks associated with distributing translated texts in the American marketplace, the publisher of each selected project will receive \$6,000 for the translator's stipend. If a project without an American publisher is selected, the Book Service will do its best to support it by identifying and making overtures to a suitable partner.

### **Visits and invitations**

Furthermore, the Service has thirty or so visits by authors per year: the aim is to invite French-speaking authors to come and take part in conferences at universities,

give readings in bookshops and Alliances Françaises or guarantee the promotional monitoring of a work translated in the United States. They are also an opportunity for authors who have not been translated to meet American publishers and literary agents.

In the framework of a project over three years, the Book Service is also making a subsidy available to the Pen American Center for a visit by a delegation of ten authors to the literary festival *World Voices*.

Lastly, the Book Service is setting up a series of invitations to France for American authors and especially publishers. The invitations allow publishers from the two countries to meet, to discover their respective catalogues and to establish long term trade relations.

### **[www.frenchbooknews.com](http://www.frenchbooknews.com)**

And so the Book Service can assist American publishers at decisive stages: the link with French publishers, the financing of translation projects and the monitoring after publication of the work. The Web site [www.frenchbooknews.com](http://www.frenchbooknews.com), created in association with the French Embassy in London Book Bureau, plays a fourth, no less decisive, role: to make an interesting proposition by selecting each month a dozen works which have recently appeared in France, presenting them to the publishers in the form of a critical summary. The site also offers American and British professionals a list of contacts of the people in charge of the sales of rights in the French publishing houses, a list of the aids awarded to publishers and

translators by the CNL and the Foreign Ministry, and a data base with all the texts translated into English since 1990, which will come into operation in autumn 2007.

All these initiatives by the French government for foreign and, particularly as far as American publishers are concerned, allow the spread not only of literature, but of all French publishing abroad. It is thanks to the grouping of these different initiatives that the sales figures for French rights abroad are so good.

For the United States, we can (optimistically) glimpse a change of atmosphere, which would leave a stronger place for translations as a whole, notably from French. This prospect is supported by the immense success of French or French-speaking writers such as Bernard-Henri Lévy (despite and certainly due to the controversy), Marjane Satrapi for the comic, or Irène Némirovsky, whose posthumous novel *Suite Française* was published in spring 2006 by Knopf. Moreover, certain French and/or European publishing houses, such as Assouline or Europa Editions (Italy), are embarking on the American adventure and six French literary agents are becoming increasingly established in the American publishing market.

In conclusion, let us return to the state of translation into and out of French in France. The situation is very positive for translations from French into a foreign language as a whole. There are a large number of buyer countries, the sales figures are good, and the spread of French literature is excellent in a large majority of countries. For the translation of foreign languages into French, our



assessment must be more moderate: the translations are of high quality, and the immense efforts made in favour of the translators are paying off.

Nevertheless, we can see a strong imbalance between sales and acquisitions of rights, especially to the detriment of our European neighbours, which we should look at more closely. In the end the balance may still be positive but despite everything it is relatively negative if we take account of the translation of works of French literature into English, especially in the United States.

There are many measures still to be taken, and by no means the least of them is to persuade American publishers to consider the work of the translator as an art, worthy of payment equivalent to its value and of a protective statute. For there is no doubt that the promotion of foreign literature in a country has to do above all with the translation, with its quality and the appreciation and recognition given to translators.

## NOTES

### Argentina

<sup>1</sup> See, in this regard, the excellent study by Patricia Willson, *La Constelación del Sur. Traductores y traducciones en la literatura argentina del Siglo XX* (Buenos Aires, 2004, Siglo XXI Editores, Argentina).

<sup>2</sup> This data was taken from the official page of the Argentine Chamber of Books: [www.editores.org.ar](http://www.editores.org.ar).

<sup>3</sup> A glance at the cultural supplements of the major newspapers—*La Nación*, *Clarín*, or *Página/12*—is sufficient to verify this.

### Catalonia

<sup>4</sup> In Spain, *castellano* (Castilian) is the term that usually applies when the context is the languages of the Spanish State, while *español* (Spanish) tends to be used *vis-à-vis* languages of other countries. Some philologists say that Castilian strictly refers to the language of Castile in the Middle Ages or, in modern-day terms, to a subdialect of Spanish, spoken in Castile and different from the Spanish spoken in other parts of Spain, Andalusia and Aragon (whose authors are Spanish writers, not “Castilian” writers), for example. Since “Spanish” is the generic term (free of ideological, political and territorial connotations) that is normally used in English, I shall use it throughout this text (except where precision requires the use of “Castilian”) when referring to the language of the Spanish State [translator].

<sup>5</sup> A database established by the Institutió de Lletres Catalanes (Institute of Catalan Letters) to collect information about the translation of Catalan works into other languages. Since 2002, the Institut Ramon Llull took over the task of its updating. The archive TRAC has been converted into a computer database and can be freely consulted on-line: [www.llull.cat/llull/biblioteca/trac.jsp](http://www.llull.cat/llull/biblioteca/trac.jsp)

<sup>6</sup> This section is based on a survey carried out by e-mail with some fifty translators and people working in publishing. While we do not cite them by name, we have tried to include the most frequently occurring opinions.

<sup>7</sup> Peter Bush, “Reviewing Translations: Barcelona, London and Paris”, in *EnterText*, an interactive interdisciplinary e-journal for cultural and historical studies and creative work, Brunel University of West London (volume 4, number 3, supplement, winter 2004/2005). Available at <http://www.brunel.ac.uk/4042/entertext4.3sup/ET43SBushEd.doc> (last accessed 3 June 2007 [editor]).

### Germany

<sup>8</sup> Goethe-Institut, <http://www.goethe.de>; EUROPA, <http://www.europa.eu>.

## Six Case Studies on Literary Translation

<sup>9</sup> Verbraucheranalyse/Consumer Statistics 2004, Bauer Media AG: <http://www.bauermedia.com>.

<sup>10</sup> bfai—Bundesagentur fuer Aussenwirtschaft, <http://www.bfai.de>.

<sup>11</sup> Börsenverein des Deutschen Buchhandels, <http://www.boersenverein.de>.

<sup>12</sup> Becker, Jürgen Jakob: Übersetzung. In: Schütz, Erhard (Hg): *Das BuchMarktBuch. Der Literaturbetrieb in Grundbegriffen*. Reinbek bei Hamburg: rowolts enzyklopaedie im Rowohlt Taschenbuch Verlag, 2005.

<sup>13</sup> Börsenverein des Deutschen Buchhandels (Hg): *Uebersetzungen in die deutsche Sprache*. In: *Buch und Buchhandel in Zahlen 2006*. Frankfurt am Main: MVB Marketing- und Verlagsservice des Buchhandels, 2006.

<sup>14</sup> Becker, Jürgen Jakob: Übersetzung. In: Schütz, Erhard (Hg): *Das BuchMarktBuch. Der Literaturbetrieb in Grundbegriffen*. Reinbeck bei Hamburg: rowolts enzyklopaedie im Rowohlt Taschenbuch Verlag, 2005.

<sup>15</sup> Harris, Megan: Foreign Books Dominate German Market. In: <http://DW-WORLD.DE>, <http://www.dw-world.de/dw/article/0,2144,1726488,00.html> (10.02.2005).

<sup>16</sup> Frankfurt Book Fair: <http://www.book-fair.com>.

<sup>17</sup> Becker, Jürgen Jakob: Übersetzung. In: Schütz, Erhard (Hg): *Das BuchMarktBuch. Der Literaturbetrieb in Grundbegriffen*. Reinbeck bei Hamburg: rowolts enzyklopaedie im Rowohlt Taschenbuch Verlag, 2005.

<sup>18</sup> Börsenblatt des Deutschen Buchhandels, #27-2006, p. 191; Börsenblatt des Deutschen Buchhandels, #28-2006, p. 153; Börsenblatt des Deutschen Buchhandels, #29-2006, p. 167; Börsenblatt des Deutschen Buchhandels, #34-2006, p. 101; Börsenblatt des Deutschen Buchhandels, #36-2006, p. 137; Börsenblatt des Deutschen Buchhandels, #38-2006, p. 151; Börsenblatt des Deutschen Buchhandels, #42-2006, p. 155; Börsenblatt des Deutschen Buchhandels, #43-2006, p. 139.

<sup>19</sup> Deutsche Kultur International: <http://www.deutsche-kultur-international.de/search/index.html?keyword=146&section=search&lang=de>.

<sup>20</sup> Kuhn, Eva: Arbeit im Verborgenen. In: <http://www.zdf.de/ZDFde/inhalt/4,01872,2194692,00.html> (09.22.04).

<sup>21</sup> Herzog, Roman: “Rede anlässlich des Wieland-Übersetzerpreis”. In: <http://www.fim.musin.de/Cyberlernen/gabi2/Rede.html> (10.18.97).

<sup>22</sup> Schermer-Rauwolf, Gerlinde “Friß oder Stirb”. In: <http://www.literaturuebersetzer.de/>.

<sup>23</sup> Goethe-Institut Translation Program: <http://www.goethe.de/uun/ang/ueb/uea/enindex.htm>.

<sup>24</sup> Pro Helvetia: <http://www.prohelvetia.ch/index.cfm?rub=30>.

<sup>25</sup> Austrian Federal Chancellery: <http://www.bundeskanzleramt.at/DesktopDefault.aspx?TabID=3969&Alias=art>.

<sup>26</sup> Society for the Promotion of African, Asian and Latin American Literature: <http://www.litprom.de>.

<sup>27</sup> LCB: <http://lcb.de>.

<sup>28</sup> VdÜ: <http://literaturuebersetzer.de>.

<sup>29</sup> DÜF: <http://www.uebersetzerfonds.de>.

<sup>30</sup> Frankfurt Book Fair: <http://www.book-fair.com>.

<sup>31</sup> German Book Office: <http://www.gbo.org>.

<sup>32</sup> Goethe-Institut: <http://www.goethe.de>.

<sup>33</sup> German Book Prize: <http://www.germanbookprize.de>.

<sup>34</sup> New books in German: <http://www.new-books-in-german.com>.

<sup>35</sup> Currently, it is unforeseeable if this project will continue in 2007.

<sup>36</sup> Willand, Jutta, Rights Director at Eichborn AG, Documentation of the 17th International Rights Directors Meeting “A Fresh Look at Rights” Recent Changes in the German and French Markets, Frankfurt Book Fair (10.07.03).

<sup>37</sup> Becker, Jürgen Jakob: The City, Its History, Its Stories. Reflections on the Literature of a New Berlin. In: *Dimension. Contemporary German-Language Literature Volume 7*, Number 1. Nacogdoches.

<sup>38</sup> Willand, Jutta, Rights Director at Eichborn AG, Documentation of the 17th International Rights Directors Meeting “A Fresh Look at Rights” Recent Changes in the German and French Markets, Frankfurt Book Fair (10.07.03).

<sup>39</sup> Becker, Jürgen Jakob: The City, Its History, Its Stories. Reflections on the Literature of a New Berlin. In: *Dimension. Contemporary German-Language Literature Volume 7*, Number 1. Nacogdoches.

<sup>40</sup> Frankfurt Book Fair: <http://www.book-fair.com>; *New York Times*, 12.20.2005; *Die Welt*, 12.27.2005; *Der Spiegel*, 12.24.2005; dpa, 11.29.2005.

<sup>41</sup> Steinhof, Eirik: Introduction. In: *Chicago Review. New Writing in German*: Chicago, 2002.

<sup>42</sup> Frankfurt Book Fair: <http://www.book-fair.com>.

<sup>43</sup> Börsenverein des Deutschen Buchhandels (Hg): *Lizenzen*. In: *Buch und Buchhandel in Zahlen 2006*. Frankfurt am Main: MVB Marketing- und Verlagsservice des Buchhandels, 2006.

<sup>44</sup> Frankfurt Book Fair: <http://www.book-fair.com>.



<sup>45</sup> Maczka, Michelle and Riky Stock: *Literary Translation in the United States: An Analysis of Translated Titles Reviewed by Publishers Weekly*. New York: Publishing Research Quarterly, Volume 22, Number 2, 2006.

<sup>46</sup> Willand, Jutta, Rights Director at Eichborn AG in a phone conversation (11.02.06).

<sup>47</sup> PEN American Center: <http://pen.org>.

<sup>48</sup> NewbooksinGerman: <http://www.new-book-in-german.com>.

### China

<sup>49</sup> About the source for 2003 data, see <http://www.china.org.cn/english/en-sz2005/kj/biao/22-13.htm>. Data for 2005 are from the General Administration of Press and Publication of PRC: <http://www.gapp.gov.cn/GalaxyPortal/inner/zsww/frame.jsp> or [http://www.cppinfo.com/common/Bulletin/Bulletin\\_content.aspx?key=50&lmgl\\_id=508](http://www.cppinfo.com/common/Bulletin/Bulletin_content.aspx?key=50&lmgl_id=508).

<sup>50</sup> See [http://www.chinawriter.com.cn/zuoxe/zuoxie\\_jianjie.asp](http://www.chinawriter.com.cn/zuoxe/zuoxie_jianjie.asp).

<sup>51</sup> Sources are same as in note 1.

<sup>52</sup> According to an email from Professor Bonnie S McDougall, who is director of Translation Research Centre at Chinese University in Hong Kong, Red Chan wrote a dissertation at Oxford some years ago about translation of the PRC. Lawrence Wong (formerly CUHK; now at Singapore) has a research project which includes the FLB.

<sup>53</sup> About Sino-Foreign Copyright Trade and Publishing Cooperation, it is stated in an official website in China as following:

"The Chinese Government has always attached much importance to cooperation in the publishing industry between China and other countries. According to the Regulations on the Administration of Publishing and the Catalogue for the Guidance of Foreign Investment Industries, domestic and foreign publishers are allowed to cooperate in copyright trade and publishing.

Copyright trade was booming. For instance, the copyright of the Xinhua Dictionary with English Translation published by the Commercial Press International Co. Ltd. in 2000 has been bought by several publishers including some from Singapore, the United States, Britain, France, Germany and Canada. The copyright of the book *Deng Xiaoping on Socialism* has been transferred to a Japanese press and 200,000 volumes of the book have been published and distributed in Japan. Through transference of copyright, the Japanese edition of the China National Geography magazine was published in Japan in 2000, with more than 20,000 volumes of the first issue and over 30,000 volumes of the second distributed. Publication of English, Swedish and Malaysian editions of the magazine under the same formula is also under discussion now. Copyright exports have become an important channel for Chinese publications to go global.

Publishing cooperation has also been frequently adopted by Chinese and foreign presses. The China International Publishing Group, in cooperation with the American Yale University Press, is planning to publish more than 20 different book series on Chinese culture and civilization, of which two have already been completed. The project has inputs from both sides of both manpower and capital. The Chinese and English editions of the book series will be distributed in China and the United States, respectively.

Sino-Foreign periodical copyright cooperation is welcomed. Under this formula of cooperation, Chinese periodicals can have a long-term copyright cooperation with foreign counterparts and use their contents. For years, Chinese periodicals that have engaged in such approved cooperation have seen remarkable quality improvements. They have learnt about the running of periodicals from their foreign counterparts and this will help promote the development of the periodical industry in China."

<sup>54</sup> See [http://news.xinhuanet.com/book/2005-11/04/content\\_3729442.htm](http://news.xinhuanet.com/book/2005-11/04/content_3729442.htm)

<sup>55</sup> See [http://news.xinhuanet.com/book/2005-11/04/content\\_3729442.htm](http://news.xinhuanet.com/book/2005-11/04/content_3729442.htm).

### France

<sup>56</sup> Source: *Livres Hebdo* 1 July 2005 no. 608.

<sup>57</sup> Source: External statistics 2004, based on a sample of 91 publishers. SNE.

<sup>58</sup> Source: ATLF, on the basis of 328 replies obtained from a survey carried out with translators in June 2004, from contracts signed in 2004-2005.

<sup>59</sup> Newsletter 1 September 2003: "Le Bureau de New York a vingt ans: une petite histoire du livre français aux Etats-Unis."

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## 4. Experiences in Literary Translation

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**Esther Allen and Simona Škrabec**

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This chapter, divided in two sections, exposes a number of interesting experiences on literary translation. The first section deals with translation into English, especially through American initiatives. The second section focuses on the tools to promote translation to other languages (including English) used by four European countries.

### 4.1 Experiences in the United States

This section of the report presents several general approaches that seem particularly effective for getting international work into English right now, and in so doing offers an overview of many, though by no means all, of the projects undertaken by PEN Centers and committees worldwide that relate to translation, as well as initiatives by a variety of other organizations

that work with PEN to promote the translation of international writing in English.

Three practices that seem most effective at the present time are: programs carried out on an issue-oriented, trans-regional basis; programs that offer special support to translators, as well as to publishers of translations; and initiatives that make use of the Internet as an extraordinary new resource for the dissemination of international writing via English.

#### **a) Issue-oriented, trans-regional themes**

The difficulty of getting into English is no news to the many cultural agencies that have been struggling with the problem for decades. Since such agencies are usually government-sponsored, they naturally tend to focus on the given language, region or nation they are funded to represent.

Moreover, since universities generally organize their academic departments by language, the region-by-region approach dovetails neatly with the needs of many university programs. And it has, in the past, proven spectacularly effective; in the late 1960s and early 1970s, it was a Rockefeller grant program to support the translation of Latin American literature into English that made possible the translation of works by Gabriel García Márquez and others and successfully created a new audience for Latin American literature in the United States.

However, in recent years, many cultural agencies have grown impatient with the inevitable risk of “preaching to the converted” that this approach entails: the risk of introducing international writing only to that small subsegment of the English-speaking audience that already has a committed interest in the language or country in question. **The Institut Ramon Llull’s** initiative in sponsoring this very report embodies a contrasting approach that is currently proving effective in reaching wider audiences: to propose a given issue and bring together people from a variety of different regions and languages to address it (see [www.llull.cat](http://www.llull.cat)).

**PEN American Center** has adopted this tactic to good effect in **PEN World Voices: the New York Festival of International Literature**, an annual event launched in 2005 (see [www.pen.org](http://www.pen.org)). The World Voices Festival, which has consistently drawn large audiences to its events, assembles a wide variety of writers who work in many languages for panels that are rarely organized by region or language,

but instead focus on compelling issues, both political and literary, or take the form of tributes or conversations. A consortium of European arts organizations with branches in New York, including the Instituto Cervantes, the French Cultural Services, the Italian Institute of Culture, and the Czech Center, has also begun producing literary programs at other times of the year in New York that include writers from across Europe in discussion with each other.

Growing out of a PEN American Center tradition of May as World-in-Translation Month, **Reading the World** is another new project that puts works of translated literature published by a growing number of commercial and non-profit publishers on prominent display in independent bookstores across the United States throughout the month of May. Launched in 2005 by two independent bookstore owners in collaboration with the Dalkey Archive Press’s Center for Book Culture, the program had grown considerably by its second annual celebration in 2006. For further information, see [www.readingtheworld.org](http://www.readingtheworld.org)

For 40 years, **the International Writing Program at the University of Iowa** (see [www.uiowa.edu/~iwp/](http://www.uiowa.edu/~iwp/)), now directed by Christopher Merrill, has invited writers from around the world for visits of up to three months, giving the writers a chance to come to know the United States at first hand, but also to bring their work to U.S. audiences through a variety of panels, readings and presentations organized by the program. Merrill was one of the principle authors of a recent report on cultural

diplomacy commissioned by the US State Department which lamented the current absence of a US cultural agency along the lines of the British Council or the Instituto Cervantes. The Iowa International Writing Program, which receives funding for a number of its participants from the State Department, does all that it can to make up for that.

An even longer tradition of support for international literature is ongoing at the **University of Oklahoma**, where the bimonthly journal *World Literature Today* has just celebrated its 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary ([www.ou.edu/worldlit/](http://www.ou.edu/worldlit/)). The journal also administers the biennial **Neustadt International Prize for Literature** which awards \$50,000 to an eminent poet, novelist or playwright from anywhere in the world. Inaugurated in 1969, it was the first and remains the only literary award of its scope in the United States for which both international and U.S. authors are eligible.

The **Center for Translation Studies** at the **University of Texas at Dallas**, founded in 1980 and directed by Rainer Schulte, offers students both an MA and a PhD in the context of an interdisciplinary humanities program and promotes the visibility of translation and the translator through research and public events (see [www.translation.utdallas.edu](http://www.translation.utdallas.edu)). It also serves as the home base of the **American Literary Translators Association** (see below).

The San Francisco-based **Center for Art in Translation** ([www.catranslation.org](http://www.catranslation.org)) sponsors an innovative *Poetry Inside Out* program that brings translators into

bilingual elementary schools to enhance the language skills of new generations of US students and increase their awareness of translation. The Center also organizes cultural forums and readings and publishes *TWO LINES: a journal of translation*, an annual magazine which, since 1994, has been a forum for international literature translated into English and commentary on the art of translation.

Under the direction of the eminent Kenyan novelist and playwright Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o, the **International Center for Writing and Translation at the University of California at Irvine** ([www.humanities.uci.edu/icwt/](http://www.humanities.uci.edu/icwt/)) sponsors numerous events and congresses on translation-related issues, offers stipends and fellowships to graduate students for projects in Translation Studies, and has a program of grants to support the translation of literature and theory into English (see below). A partner of the International Center for Writing and Translation, the **International Institute of Modern Letters (IIML)**—[www.modern-letters.org](http://www.modern-letters.org)—supports translation as part of its commitment to “advancing the cause of democracy and progress through a free literature.” The IIML is committed to helping persecuted writers prevail against censorship and bringing their works to an audience in the United States. Based in Las Vegas, in 2001 it made Las Vegas a City of Asylum for persecuted writers, and now works with a network of other Cities of Asylum that has developed across the United States (see [www.cityofasylum.org](http://www.cityofasylum.org)). **Rainmaker Books** is an IIML program dedicated to supporting

the publication of literary translations (see below).

Co-founded by the Writing Division of the Columbia University School of the Arts and PEN American Center, the **Center for Literary Translation at Columbia University**—[www.centerforliterarytranslation.org](http://www.centerforliterarytranslation.org)—launched in the fall of 2006, is drawing together a number of collaborators, including the website **Words Without Borders** (see below) and the international poetry journal *Circumference* ([www.circumferencemag.com](http://www.circumferencemag.com)) to create a dynamic new organization that will support translation through funding, education, conferences and public events.

In England, the **British Centre for Literary Translation (BCLT)**, founded at the University of East Anglia in 1989 by the late W.G. Sebald and currently directed by Amanda Hopkinson ([www.uea.ac.uk/eas/centres/bclt/bcltintro.shtml](http://www.uea.ac.uk/eas/centres/bclt/bcltintro.shtml)), offers an imaginative and varied program of events, activities, publications, including *In Other Words: The Journal for Literary Translators*, and coursework. Along with **English PEN**, the BCLT sponsors the annual Sebald lecture on the art of literary translation, a gala event held in London which includes a joint award ceremony at which prizes, for translations from Dutch, French, German, Modern Greek, Spanish and Russian, are distributed. Each of the six prizes previously had its own individual and separate awards event, but the BCLT's former director, Peter Bush, worked to unite them into a single ceremony in order to increase the degree of recognition of the efforts of the various translators and of international

literature in general. The Sebald lecture is now one of the cultural highlights of the year in London, and the prizewinners are annually featured in an article in the *Times Literary Supplement*.

## b) Support for translators and publishers of translations

Literary translators of many languages in many countries complain of the difficulty of their career, the poor or nonexistent remuneration and lack of recognition; translators in the English-speaking world in particular do not have an easy time of it. Support for literary translators in the form of grants, residencies, prizes and professional assistance is therefore hugely beneficial, as it encourages them to persevere in their demanding work. Support in the form of fellowships or prizes for younger translators is especially helpful in this respect. Another part of the problem of publishing literary translation in the English-speaking world is the cost to publishers, who are loathe to spend money on projects that all too often are not money-making ventures. Financial support for publishers of translations to cover the costs of publication and promotion is therefore also an effective way of ensuring that more translations will be published.

### Translators' Associations

For over 40 years, **PEN American Center's Translation Committee** has fought to ensure that translators' work is recognized and fairly rewarded. To support translators

in their negotiations with publishers, the Committee has established a Translators' Model Contract ([www.pen.org/page.php/prmID/271](http://www.pen.org/page.php/prmID/271)); it was also the PEN Translation Committee that lobbied the U.S. Library of Congress to include translators' names in its listings, thus gaining recognition for translators in library catalogues across the country, as most follow the Library of Congress model. The Committee also administers the PEN Book-of-the-Month-Club Translation Prize, which is awarded to the translator of a book-length prose work published in the previous year. There is also an annual prize for the translation of poetry, as well as the Ralph Manheim Medal, a lifetime achievement award for translators. The Los Angeles-based **PEN Center USA** also offers an annual award to a translator for the best book-length translation ([www.penusa.org](http://www.penusa.org)).

Founded in 1978, the **American Literary Translators Association** (ALTA—see [www.literarytranslators.org/](http://www.literarytranslators.org/)) is a nationwide organization with a membership of about 600, based at the Center for Translation Study at the University of Texas at Dallas. In addition to publishing *Translation Review*, a scholarly journal of translation studies, and *Annotated Books Received*, the most detailed source of information about literary translations published in the United States, ALTA organizes an annual congress which provides an invaluable opportunity for literary translators from across the country to meet and exchange ideas. A very rich intellectual community has thus been formed. A high point of the annual congress is the awarding of the

**ALTA National Translation Award** for the best book-length literary translation of the preceding year. The ALTA website offers a wide array of professional resources for translators, including advice on getting their work published and on promotion and tenure, for those with university positions. The site also offers extensive information about academic programs and departments of literary translation in the United States and elsewhere, as well as grants and awards for literary translators.

### Grants to translators

In 2003, **PEN American Center** received an anonymous endowment of \$730,000 that enabled it to establish the **PEN Translation Fund**—[www.centerforliterarytranslation.org](http://www.centerforliterarytranslation.org)—which, through a highly competitive annual application process, awards grants to translators on the basis of their skill and the importance of the unpublished projects they have submitted. The goal of the fund is to increase the number of literary translations into English published in the United States. To date, the Fund has supported a total of 32 translations from 22 languages, a good number of which have now been published to considerable acclaim.

The United States government itself, via **the National Endowment for the Arts**, remains the country's most generous funder of translations, offering grants of \$10,000 - \$20,000 to the best translators and translation projects to emerge from a highly competitive application process. The NEA Translation Fellowships have been a key component of the Endowment's

Literature Program for many years (see [www.nea.gov/grants/apply/LitTranslation/index.html](http://www.nea.gov/grants/apply/LitTranslation/index.html)) and recently the NEA has further consolidated its commitment to translation both by increasing the amount of money available for the Translation Fellowships (thus making it possible to offer more of them) and through an ambitious new program, the **NEA International Literature Awards** (see under “Funding for Publishers of Translations” below).

The **International Center for Writing and Translation (ICWT)** at the University of California at Irvine also offers grants to translators ([www.humanities.uci.edu/icwt/cfp/cfp.html](http://www.humanities.uci.edu/icwt/cfp/cfp.html)). This year, the ICWT will give four grants of \$5,000, with particular interest in translations from cultures and languages that have been overlooked and marginalized by the Anglo-American canon.

### Residencies for Translators

The first program of its kind in North America, the annual Banff International Literary Translation Centre ([www.banff-centre.ca/programs/program.aspx?id=446](http://www.banff-centre.ca/programs/program.aspx?id=446)) is a summer residency program inspired by similar literary translation centers in Europe. In addition to affording translators a two-week period of uninterrupted work in the gorgeous setting of the Banff Centre for the Arts, the program allows a translator to request a joint residency of up to one week with the writer whose work he or she is translating, thus allowing translator and writer to consult with one another extensively. The Banff program is open to translators from Canada, Mexico and the United States, and works

closely with many translators affiliated with **PEN Canada**.

In the United States, **Ledig House** ([www.artomi.org/ledig.htm](http://www.artomi.org/ledig.htm)) is an international writers' colony in upstate New York that welcomes translators to apply for residencies of one week to two months. The convivial residency sessions, with participants from across the globe, take place twice a year, in the spring and fall, in a lovely rural area.

### Support for the Publication of Translations

Many PEN Centres across the world have themselves become publishers of journals or anthologies of translated work as a way of supporting the efforts of their members, and of advocating the work of the censored writers they work to defend. **International PEN's** annual journal naturally includes a great deal of work in translation, as does **PEN America**, the journal of PEN American center. In addition, PEN American Center's Freedom-to-Write Committee has published several anthologies of work by writers whose communities have been subjected to persecution and censorship, including *Inked Over, Ripped Out: Burmese Storytellers and the Censors* (edited by Anna J. Allott, 1993) and *The Roads of the Roma* (edited by Ian Hancock, Siobhan Dowd and Rajko Djuric, 1998). More recently, PEN American Center participated in a lawsuit against the United States government in order to gain publication for *Strange Times, My Dear: The PEN Anthology of Contemporary Iranian Literature* (edited by Nahid Mozaffari, and courageously published by

Arcade in 2005). **Scottish PEN** and **Austrian PEN** have each published anthologies of translations of work by members from different linguistic backgrounds.

The most ambitious PEN program of support for publishers of literary translation in English is **English PEN's Writers in Translation** program. Founded in 2004, and supported by the Arts Council England and a grant from the Bloomberg news organization, the program offers grants of up to £4,000 to publishers for the specific purpose of promoting and marketing a translated work. The program also offers grants of up to £250 to writers in other languages whose work has not found a publisher, to pay for a sample translation and reader's report. (See [www.englishpen.org/writersintranslation](http://www.englishpen.org/writersintranslation)).

The **Lannan Foundation's Literary Grants** to publishers have supported translation projects published by the finest non-profit literary presses in the United States for almost 20 years ([www.lannan.org/lf/lit/grants/](http://www.lannan.org/lf/lit/grants/)). More recently, the International Institute of Modern Letters launched **Rainmaker Translations**, a new imprint under which it publishes books with a consortium of four leading publishers ([www.modernletters.org/programs/translations.html](http://www.modernletters.org/programs/translations.html)).

Even more recently, the National Endowment for the Arts launched its **International Literature Awards** ([www.nea.gov/grants/apply/InternationalLiterature.html](http://www.nea.gov/grants/apply/InternationalLiterature.html)) aimed at providing American readers with greater access to the literature of Europe. In partnership with various European countries, beginning with Greece

and Spain in 2007, the NEA will provide funds to publishers for the translation, publication and promotion of works from those countries.

Most funding for translation into English available to publishers naturally comes from government cultural agencies. The French Cultural Services recently announced an ambitious new program of funding for the translation into English of French titles originally published since 2000, that includes residencies for translators at the Villa Gillet in Lyon (see the French case study included in this report and [www.frenchbooknews.com](http://www.frenchbooknews.com)). Though not generally on so large a scale, many governments offer this kind of funding to publishers. UNESCO maintains a very useful database of help and subsidies for literary translation at:

[http://portal.unesco.org/culture/en/ev.php-url\\_id=1539&url\\_do=do\\_printpage&url\\_section=-473&url\\_pagination=40.html](http://portal.unesco.org/culture/en/ev.php-url_id=1539&url_do=do_printpage&url_section=-473&url_pagination=40.html)

In addition, for those in the publishing industry who have access to it, the *Publishing Trends* newsletter for September, 2006 offers a great deal of extremely useful information about a wide variety of grants available to publishers from governments across the globe for the translation of literature into English (see [www.publishingtrends.com](http://www.publishingtrends.com)).

### c] Internet-based initiatives

Though English was once the primary language of the Internet, by 1998 most newly-created Web sites were not in English, and by



2002 less than 50% of the Web was in English (see David Crystal's *The Language Revolution* cited in the first chapter of this report). This trend is an encouraging one for those who prefer the idea of a multilingual world in which English is a useful and optional lingua franca rather than the only possible means of gaining access to globalized technologies.

In keeping with that outlook, several new websites in Europe use English not necessarily as a means of gaining access to the English-speaking world, but as a common ground on which European writers and intellectuals working in many different languages can read each other's work. International PEN's Translation and Linguistic Rights Committee, based at Macedonia PEN and chaired by Kata Kulavkova, has founded one such site, [www.diversity.org.mk](http://www.diversity.org.mk). Each author represented there is presented in at least three languages: the original, Macedonian, and one of the three PEN languages (English, French and Spanish).

Thierry Chervel, of [www.signandsight.com](http://www.signandsight.com) (its name a punning reference to a classic work of German philosophy), says that the site's purpose is to use English in Europe as it is used in India and Pakistan—as a language by which intellectuals of different linguistic backgrounds can communicate with each other. The English version of the German on-line magazine *Perlentaucher*, Signandsight provides a lively and informative view of German intellectual and cultural life by summarizing the cultural pages of the major German newspapers, and publishing a selection of particularly relevant articles in English translation.

The most audacious website to have taken on the more daunting task of disseminating international literature to an English-speaking audience is [www.words-withoutborders.org](http://www.words-withoutborders.org). Working in partnership with Bard College, PEN American Center, and the Center for Literary Translation at Columbia University, *wordswithoutborders* brings out a new issue each month with specifically commissioned translations of writing from a different part of the world. All back issues are available on the site, which means that in the three years since it was launched, it has developed into a vast resource for introducing new writers from all over the world into English. The site also incorporates a growing community of forums and blogs, sponsors public events and has published two impressive anthologies of world literature, *The Literature of the "Axis of Evil": Writing from Iran, Iraq, North Korea and Other Enemy Nations* (New Press, 2006) and *Words Without Borders: The World Through the Eyes of Writers* (Anchor, 2007).

Babelguides.com began life not as a website, but as a new approach to writing guidebooks for travelers: the idea was not to give an outsider's view of a country, but to introduce it via translations of the work of its own writers. The successful series of guides developed into a website that offers a combination of reviews and bibliographic information on international literature in English translation.

Each of the sites mentioned here includes links to other sites, too numerous to mention, which are also working to connect the world's literatures to each

other. The international network thus formed is perhaps one of our best hopes for the perpetuation of a true world literature, in all its polyglossia.

## 4.2 Experiences in four European Countries

Netherlands, Catalonia, Germany, and France

We would like to highlight a number of interesting experiences that have come from the four countries mentioned above. These have been grouped into the three following categories: initiatives to foster foreign promotion, initiatives to foster an interest in other cultures, and initiatives aimed at supporting translators.

### a) Initiatives to support foreign promotion

#### European and Regional Funding

In addition to the initiatives developed by the governments in each country, which will be listed further on, it should be kept in mind that there are European and Regional grants available for translation.

#### • European Union Grants

The European Union has developed multi-annual programs to support translation that include grants for translation of literary works as well as for joint projects and specialized training. From 1995 to 2000, these efforts were included in the **Ariane** program, which was followed by **Cultura**

**2000** until 2006. This program, in turn, was replaced by **Cultura 2007**. Thus far the European Union has given very limited funding to these literary translation programs, namely the equivalent of the budget allocated yearly for promoting books in a small country such as Slovenia (1.5 million euros). To put it another way, just 4% of the grants provided by Cultura 2000 went to literary translation. These grants were awarded to anywhere from 55 (2003) to 70 (2005) translations. Thirty European countries are eligible, including all 27 EU members as well as Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway. The grants cover all costs involved in translation (which cannot be over 60% of the total cost for publishing the book). Literary works eligible for these translation grants must have been written by European authors and published in or after 1950. In awarding the grants, priority is given to works written or translated into minority languages. Despite their financial limitations, these programs are among the few available sources of funding for translations published outside of the countries of origin, and therefore they are of the utmost importance.

#### • Regional Cooperation Networks

It is also important to note that some of the major European regions have managed to set up cultural cooperation networks in their areas of influence, which include literary promotion and translation grants. Cooperation between Scandinavian countries and Baltic countries is particularly strong. There are also several initiatives in Central and Eastern Europe

(Next Page Foundation, Central and East European Book Project).

### National Grants for Translation

Most European countries have developed government programs providing grants for translations of their literature into other languages, which often also include some aspects of foreign promotion, such as travel grants for authors. To make these programs more effective, they have created independent agencies focusing on foreign promotion of the country's literature or culture. These agencies are more flexible than the government bodies (Ministries) and act as effective mediators between governments and the business environment.

#### Holland and Flanders:

- <http://www.nlpvf.nl/>  
The **Nederlands Literair Productie- en Vertalingenfonds** (Foundation for the Production and Translation of Dutch Literature), based in Amsterdam, is funded by the country's Ministry of Education and Culture. The foundation actively promotes Dutch literature abroad and provides financial support to foreign publishers interested in publishing Dutch literary works. This includes fiction, quality non-fiction, poetry, and children's literature. The Foundation can fund up to 70% of translation costs.

- <http://www.fondsvoordeletteren.be/detectie/flash/001.htm>

The **Vlams Fonds voor de Letteren** (Flemish Literary Fund) is an autonomous government body that has been active

in Belgium since 2000. The principal instruments of its foreign policy are information and documentation, translation grants, travel grants and literary production grants.

#### Catalonia:

- <http://www.llull.cat/llull/>

The **Institut Ramon Llull** provides grants to publishers for translating literary, non-fiction and research works. From 2003 to 2007 more than 250 titles have been granted support through this scheme. A program of residences for literary translators has recently been launched.

- <http://www.mcu.es/>

Through Dirección General del Libro, Archivo y Bibliotecas, the **Spanish Ministry of Culture** offers "Grants for the promotion of translation and publication of literary and scientific works by Spanish authors in any foreign language," aimed at publishing companies and offered on a yearly basis. Aside from Spanish-language authors, those writing in Catalan, Basque or Galician are also eligible.

#### Germany and other German-speaking countries:

- <http://www.goethe.de/uun/ang/ueb/uea/enindex.htm>

The **Goethe-Institut Translation Program** has been running for 30 years. It has given financial support for the translation of about 4,000 German books into 45 languages.

- <http://www.prohelvetia.ch/index.cfm?rub=30>

**Pro Helvetia** is a program that supports the promotion of Swiss authors and books related to Switzerland.

- <http://www.bundeskanzleramt.at/DesktopDefault.aspx?TabID=3969&Alias-art>  
The **Austrian Federal Chancellery** has a specific translation grant program.

#### France:

- The **Directorate General for International Cooperation and Development**, a division of the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs, offers a grant aimed at foreign publishers, providing support to culturally important books.

- <http://www.centrenationaldulivre.fr/>  
The **Centre National du Livre** allocates an annual budget of almost 10 million Euros to funding French publishing exports and granting the rights for French titles to foreign publishers. Almost 500 titles benefit from this funding each year.

### Promotional Publications in English

One of the most widespread initiatives in all countries are programs for complete or partial translations of works into English aimed at attracting foreign publishers. The international exposure pursued through English also includes printed magazines to help convey the context of a specific national literature, websites, and anthologies. Most often, these programs are not solely aimed at the English-language market, but instead use English as a "useful intermediary" for introducing themselves to cultures in Eu-

rope and a large part of the world without language barriers, at least not for an educated public.

#### Holland and Flanders:

- Books from Holland and Flanders, Quality Nonfiction from Holland and Children's Books from Holland  
Produced in English, these books introduce new Dutch literary titles twice a year, published by the Foundation for the Production and Translation of Dutch Literature.

#### Catalonia:

- **Booklets that offer a choice of works written in Catalan (five genres: fiction, poetry, drama, classics and non-fiction).**  
Produced in English, German and Spanish, these booklets introduce new or classic titles written originally in Catalan language. They are published by the Institut Ramon Llull.

- ***Transfer. Journal of Contemporary Culture***

Journal produced in English once a year by the Institut Ramon Llull. It collects articles and essays that have appeared previously in Catalan cultural journals. Its aim is to make visible the ideas of Catalan academics and essayists on the main intellectual debates of today.

- ***Catalan Writing***

The Institució de les Lletres Catalanes (Institute for Catalan Letters) published the English-language literary magazine *Catalan Writing* from 1992 to 2002. Publication

resumed in 2006 thanks to Catalan PEN, with funding from the Institut Ramon Llull.

#### **Germany and other German-speaking countries:**

- <http://www.new-books-in-german.com>  
*New Books in German* is a London-based magazine offering a printed selection of German books twice a year. Three thousand copies of the magazine are distributed worldwide. Information is also available on their website.

- [www.signandsight.com](http://www.signandsight.com)

The English version of the online magazine *Perlentaucher*. Aside from a selection of cultural news items from newspapers and information about high-profile books, two or three English translations of particularly interesting nonfiction pieces are published weekly.

#### **France:**

- [www.frenchbooknews.com](http://www.frenchbooknews.com)

The **Bureau du Livre** at the French Embassy in London has a website where each month it publishes reviews of ten works recently published in France. The site also includes a listing of both foreign-rights contacts at French publishing companies and grants already awarded to publishers and translators by the CNL and the MAE, along with a database covering all works translated into English since 1990.

- **Best French Writing: 21st Century**

The Book Service at the French Embassy in New York and PEN American Center cre-

ated this project in 2006. About 50 titles published after the year 2000 will be selected to be published as part of a collection. The American publisher who chooses to publish the translation will receive a \$6,000 grant. All titles will have a logo and include a preface by a well-known American author.

#### **Promotional Efforts Abroad**

Only a few of Europe's larger countries have specific programs with institutions operating centers or offices abroad, which enable them to develop a far more effective promotional strategy.

#### **Germany and other German-speaking countries:**

- <http://www.gbo.org>

The **German Book Office** was founded in 1998 by the Frankfurt Book Fair. It has offices in New York, Beijing, Bucharest, Moscow and Warsaw. The main purpose of these offices is to facilitate business contact between German publishers and those of the host country or region.

#### **France:**

- **Services du Livre des Ambassades de France (Book Office at the French Embassy)**

The French Embassies have a program that supports promotion of French books and includes assisting authors during their visits and organizing events and cooperation with local institutions. The Embassy in New York, for example, awards the Hemingway grants for translation of French works into English, manages

translators' residencies at Villa Gillet, in Lyons, and runs a series of promotional tours for French-language authors in the United States. It also invites U.S. authors and publishers to France.

#### **Visiting Publisher**

This program aimed at foreign publishers, who are invited for a brief visit to the host country to help establish personal contact with publishers, cultural programming organizers and authors, is typical of medium or small countries that have not fully developed other channels such as major book fairs or multinational publishing companies.

#### **Holland**

##### **and Flanders:**

- <http://www.nlpvf.nl/>

The **Nederlands Literair Productie- en Vertalingenfonds** (Foundation for the Production and Translation of Dutch Literature) invites ten publishers to spend a few days in Amsterdam so they can meet with Dutch publishers.

#### **Catalonia:**

In light of the Catalan culture being named "guest of honor" for the 2007 Frankfurt Book Fair, the Institut Ramon Llull has helped set the stage by organizing a series of visits by foreign publishers to Barcelona. These publishers have met with local literary agents and publishers in order to become acquainted with Catalan fiction and nonfiction works. This has never previously been done on a regular basis.

#### **Standardized information, databases, and catalogs**

One of the primary objectives of foreign promotion is to inform audiences in other countries about national literature and its context. Aside from producing promotional material, such as for book fairs, it is also essential to cater to professionals (i.e., publishers, authors, and translators) by providing them with information that covers a variety of resources ranging from author databases to translation bibliographies and catalogs, as well as information about foreign rights, translation grants, the current status of the publishing industry, etc. All these tasks are primarily carried out by the government agencies responsible for foreign promotion. Only the largest countries have specific organizations with offices abroad.

#### **Holland and Flanders:**

- <http://www.speurwerk.nl>

The **Stichting Speurwerk betreffende het boek** (Book Research Foundation) is based in Amsterdam and publishes a variety of information on Dutch books. Its primary focus is the domestic market, as made clear by the fact that its website is available exclusively in Dutch.

#### **Catalonia:**

- <http://www.llull.cat/llull/biblioteca/trac.jsp>  
**TRAC**, a catalog of all literary works translated from Catalan into other languages, was compiled by the Institució de les Lletres Catalanes from 1993 on, and has been available online since 2005 through the Institut Ramon Llull website.

- <http://www.mcu.es/>

**Overview of Spanish Book Publishing** The main indicators for the Spanish publishing industry are available for reference through the country's Ministry of Culture website, following this route: Statistics, Primary Statistics, Statistics of Publication of Books. A more detailed study (including information on publications in Catalan) is available in the annual printed version. The fact that it is published exclusively in Spanish and not in other languages suggests that it is aimed primarily at the domestic market.

#### Germany and other German-speaking countries:

- <http://www.gbo.org>

The **German Book Office** was founded in 1998 by the Frankfurt Book Fair. It has offices in New York, Beijing, Bucharest, Moscow and Warsaw. The purpose of these offices is to facilitate business contacts between German publishers and those of the host country or region.

#### France:

- <http://www.culture.gouv.fr/culture/dll/dll198.htm>

La **Direction du Livre et de la Lecture**, belonging to the French Ministry of Culture and Communication, is in charge of la Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Bibliothèque Publique d'Information, and le Centre National du Livre. Within the book trade, it supervises the creation, publishing, distribution, and promotion of books in France and abroad. It assists in the founding of publishing companies and bookstores and develops strategies

for reinforcing the export market; it also performs research studies about reading habits and book sales.

- <http://www.bief.org>

Le **Bureau International de l'Édition Française (BIEF)** provides studies about foreign markets, rights and French book exports. It also publishes special reports and summaries. The Bureau guarantees the collective presence of the works of French publishers at book fairs and other events worldwide and at international congresses. It also organizes book exhibitions for the publishing sector in different cities in a given country. BIEF is an association comprising 250 members and receives support from the French ministries of Culture and Communication, and Foreign Affairs; it has been active for 130 years. The organization also works in close collaboration with le Syndicat National de l'Édition (National Publishing Union, SNE), CELF, and la Centrale de l'Édition (Publishing Center).

- <http://frenchpubagency.com/>

The **French Publisher's Agency** is a New York delegation of BIEF that represents several French publishers in the United States.

#### Websites

In recent years, many foreign promotion programs are based on websites, which are capable of offering a broad range of information in many languages. There are online magazines and catalogs of authors or specific works that include translation excerpts,

book reviews and relevant bibliographies. Most of the websites focus on national literature, but some of them are international in their scope, such as the project developed by PEN Macedonia—*Diversity* (<http://www.diversity.org.mk/>), an attempt to put together a catalog of literary translations into a wide range of languages—or Hungarian-based *Babelmatrix* (<http://www.babelmatrix.org/>). Among others, the network of European cultural magazines known as Eurozine (<http://www.eurozine.com/>) is also very important for raising awareness about literature and thought in general.

#### Holland and Flanders:

- [www.nlpvf.nl](http://www.nlpvf.nl)

The **Nederlands Literair Productie- en Vertalingenfonds** (Foundation for the Production and Translation of Dutch Literature) has an informative, updated website offering a full range of information about Dutch literature. It includes a database of all translations of Dutch literature into other languages.

#### Catalonia:

- [www.pencatala.cat/ctdl](http://www.pencatala.cat/ctdl)

**Pàgines de traducció literària** (Literary Translation Pages) is an initiative of the Translation and Language Rights Committee of Catalan PEN (active since 2004), and has been organized with support from L'Institut Ramon Llull and L'Institut de les Lletres Catalanes. Their goal is to take advantage of the potential offered by the Internet for introducing Catalan literature to a broad readership, both locally and abroad. Presentations

of translated authors are broken down into two areas: translations from Catalan (exports) and translations into Catalan (imports). **Literatura catalana en traducció** (Catalan Literature in Translation) introduces Catalan authors with a short introductory essay translated into several languages, a bibliography of all their translations, and excerpts from both the original work and its translations. **Literatura universal en català** (Universal Literature in Catalan) strives to draw up a map of the translations that reach Catalonia from different cultures. In addition to these author and translated-book presentations, there is a third area specifically devoted to translators. **L'espai del traductor** (The Translator's Space) provides detailed information about all the translators who have used Catalan for their work either as a source or a target language.

#### Germany and other German-speaking countries:

- <http://www.litrix.de/>

Litrix offers reviews and translations of excerpts from contemporary German literature.

- [www.lyrikline.org](http://www.lyrikline.org)

This online publication offers poems and their translations into different languages, both in text and audio formats.

- <http://www.perlentaucher.de/>

*Perlentaucher* (Pearl Divers) is an online magazine providing current information about the cultural and intellectual scene



in Germany. It includes a daily summary of the contents published in the culture sections of major German newspapers and links to the articles available online. It also offers information about the books that have attracted most attention, either for their quality or for being controversial. It includes a search engine for finding articles by author or subject in the database.

### Language Teaching and Cultural Centers Abroad

Training translators and experts in a specific national literature is the basis of all literary promotion abroad. For small or mid-sized countries, training of this sort is primarily channeled through language assistants at foreign universities (as is the case of the hundred or so Catalan language assistants coordinated by L'Institut Ramon Llull). The network of language assistants has often sparked interest in a given culture. Language assistants often do more than just teach the language; they also organize cultural events that reach a broader public, such as recitals, readings or lectures.

Meanwhile, the situation for the handful of truly widespread languages in Europe (English, German, French, Spanish and Italian) is entirely different. All European universities have departments teaching these languages, and training foreign experts in their literatures is an age-old tradition. Besides, these languages have large networks of institutes abroad focusing primarily on language teaching (such as the British Council, the Goethe

Institut, the Alliance Française, the Istituto Cervantes, and the Instituto Italiano di Cultura) while also offering a wide variety of cultural events related to their countries of origin.

### Expatriate Communities and Literature Promotion

Given a series of major migratory flows caused by political and economic situations, many European countries have expatriate communities in different parts of the world. These communities usually try to maintain their distinctive cultural features as well as their cultural bonds to their countries of origin. The cultural activities they organize tend to be hosted at a center, and can range from publishing magazines and websites to organizing cultural events and language teaching.

There is a considerable number of literary translators coming from families of immigrant or exiled families, particularly among minority languages that do not have channels for teaching their language abroad. Exiles were particularly important in disseminating literature from communist countries during the Cold War. Those who leave their country of origin due to political problems and end up becoming their country's best-known writers internationally may also come from other countries who have suffered a dictatorship or lacked freedom of expression. In this context, it would be interesting to further examine the role that expatriate communities have or have had in promoting a specific literature (through

translation in the country of destination) both in the case of the four European countries highlighted here and in general.

### b) Promoting an interest in other cultures

Governments tend to be more interested in efforts towards exporting their authors than towards introducing foreign literature into their country. One of the indications of this preference is that there is much less funding available for translating foreign literature into a particular country's language than in the opposite direction. However, there is a considerable difference between large countries and the rest: the former have specific organizations that systematically focus on introducing and assimilating the world legacy into their language, while many smaller countries do not have organizations of this type.

Yet initiatives to promote interest in other cultures do not depend solely on funding for translations; other efforts as diverse as international festivals, residencies for foreign authors, and book fairs must also be considered. In an even broader sense, one must also consider all the resources aimed at enriching a country's literary life, given that a strong interest in one's own literature is the best basis for wanting to find out about writing from other cultures.

One of the greatest differences between the situation in Europe and that of the United States is the lack of cooperation between European universities and the

other agents involved in promoting literary life (especially publishers and government organizations). Very few European universities have publishing companies capable of distributing books through ordinary commercial channels and the events they organize rarely reach out beyond academic circles. As far as literary translation is concerned, there is no doubt that the best professionals are those who have a solid academic background in a specific language and a thorough knowledge of its literary tradition. That is why it is particularly worrisome that the efforts coming from academic circles have minimal impact on the general public and on translations; if they do manage to be published through universities, they still do not reach a broad enough readership.

### Public Funding

#### Holland:

There is no kind of support available for Dutch publishing companies wishing to publish translations of foreign literature.

- [www.fondsvoordeletteren.nl](http://www.fondsvoordeletteren.nl)

The **Fonds voor de Letteren** (Dutch Foundation for Literature) was established in 1965 after protests about the lack of government support for writing. Its aim is to boost the quality and availability of Dutch and Frisian literature. It offers grants for translators working on a literary work into either one of these two languages, as well as grants for authors writing new works. Translators can request an additional fee to complement that paid by the publisher



and even double this amount. Every year, about 200 writers and 100 translators benefit from these grants.

#### **Catalonia:**

- <http://www.cultura.gencat.net/ilc>

The **Institució de les Lletres Catalanes** strives to promote works in Catalan and their authors, organizing promotional campaigns and exhibitions and participating in book fairs. It also awards grants to authors, scriptwriters and researchers. Beginning in 1993, it has offered two yearly grants for translations into Catalan, one for translators and another for publishers.

- [http://www10.gencat.net/sac/AppJava/servei\\_fitxa.jsp?codi=13101](http://www10.gencat.net/sac/AppJava/servei_fitxa.jsp?codi=13101)

As part of its policy, the Catalan Government's **Programa de Suport a l'Edició en Català** (Program for Supporting Catalan-Language Publishing) strives to reinforce the presence of the Catalan language and foster publishing, awareness and distribution of Catalan-language books.

#### **Germany and other German-speaking countries:**

- <http://www.litprom.de>

**Gesellschaft zur Förderung der Literatur aus Afrika, Asien und Lateinamerika** (Society for the Promotion of African, Asian and Latin-American Literature) has a program supporting German translation of literature from countries that have traditionally received very little international attention

- <http://lcb.de>

The **Literarisches Colloquium Berlin** offers grants within its program «Übersetzungsförderungsprogramm für Beltristik aus den Ländern Mittel- und Osteuropas» (Translation Grants Program for Central and Eastern European Literature). The program provides funding for literary works from this region in order to increase the diversity of the selection available to German readers.

#### **France:**

- <http://www.centrenationaldulivre.fr/>

The **Centre National du Livre** has for many years awarded translation grants to French publishers looking to publish works in translation; this funding covers 50-60% of total translation costs.

- <http://www.maison-des-ecrivains.asso.fr/>

One of the goals of the **Maison des Écrivains** (Writers' House) is to develop cooperation with similar organizations in Europe that promote literary activity in a given country.

- [http://www.sgdl.org/vieculturelle\\_prix.asp](http://www.sgdl.org/vieculturelle_prix.asp)

The **Société des Gens de Lettres** (Literary Society) awards several literary translation prizes.

#### **Organization of International Festivals**

Many European countries host literary festivals attended by foreign authors on a regular basis. Catalogs are often published during these events, including excerpts by

the visiting authors in several languages. These meetings foster awareness of universal literature and bring literature closer to a wider audience. Some of these events have a long-standing tradition.

#### **Catalonia:**

- <http://www.bcn.es/barcelonapoesia/>

**Barcelona poesia.** International Poetry Festival held in Barcelona; 2006 was its 22<sup>nd</sup> year.

- <http://www.cccb.org/kosmopolis/index.htm>

**Kosmòpolis**, a festival organized by the Centre de Cultura Contemporània de Barcelona.

#### **Germany and other German-speaking countries:**

- <http://literaturwerkstatt.org/>

**Literaturwerkstatt Berlin** hosts the «Poesie Festival Berlin», one of the highest-profile poetry events in all of Europe. It also organizes translation workshops and other efforts aimed at introducing foreign authors to German readers.

- <http://www.literaturhaeuser.net/>

The **Literaturhaus** (Literature House) is an institution with a long-standing tradition in Germany. Some of these centers have made up a network (Berlin, Hamburg, Frankfurt, Salzburg, Munich, Cologne, Stuttgart and Leipzig) in order to coordinate their efforts. The events they organize have an international element, although they are primarily aimed at enriching literary activity in the city where they are held.

#### **Organization of International Fairs**

The major fairs are highly influential and succeed in attracting publishers from around the world; but the smaller ones, while perhaps internationally renowned, can also offer good opportunities for fostering cooperation with the publishing business. Fairs facilitate buying foreign rights for publishing books in other countries; therefore, it is only natural that all major fairs organize activities aimed at translators.

#### **Catalonia:**

- <http://www.salollibrebcn.com/>

El **Saló del Llibre de Barcelona** (Barcelona Book Fair) is organized by the Gremi d'Editors de Catalunya and the Gremi de Llibreters de Barcelona i Catalunya, the publishers' and booksellers' unions in Catalonia. Its first international fair was held in 2005.

#### **Germany and other German-speaking countries:**

- <http://www.book-fair.com>

The **Frankfurter Buchmesse** (Frankfurt Book Fair) organizes the most important event worldwide in the book trade. It is an affiliated company of the Börsenverein des Deutschen Buchhandels, the German Booksellers and Publishers Association. It also has an international department that promotes German books throughout the world.

- <http://www.leipzig-buchmesse.de/>

The **Leipziger Buchmesse** (Leipzig Book

Fair) is the second most important book trade event in Germany. While the Frankfurt fair is aimed at professionals, Leipzig showcases books for the general public.

#### France:

- <http://www.salondulivreparis.com/>  
The **Salon du Livre de Paris** (Paris Book Fair) is the most important fair in France.

#### Foreign Writer Residencies

Spending some time living in a foreign country is a good way for a writer to promote his or her work and its chances of getting translated.

#### Holland:

- <http://www.fondsvoordeletteren.nl/min-ibweb.php?mwid=20>

The **Residency for Writers in Amsterdam** is a project jointly developed by the Dutch Foundation for Literature, the Foundation for Production and Translation of Dutch Literature, the University of Amsterdam and Atheneum Booksellers. The partners collaborating in this project have made living space available in the heart of the old city. Writers visiting from abroad also have access to the University of Amsterdam Library, the Academic Club and the Dutch capital's literary activities.

- <http://www.fondsvoordeletteren.nl/min-ibweb.php?mwid=10&sid=335>

**Introductory Portfolio** is one of the most successful programs developed by the Dutch Foundation for Literature. It consists of an interview with the author, a

brief description of the work, biographical information, and an excerpt translated into Dutch. The program is aimed at authors from non-Western countries who have not yet been published in Holland and find it difficult to make their work known. Another purpose of the Dutch Foundation for Literature's project is to increase the chances of foreign authors living in Holland to start writing in Dutch. Therefore, writers living in the Netherlands who are unable to write in Dutch are eligible.

#### Catalonia:

- <http://www.icorn.org/>  
Barcelona is one of the refuge cities of the international Cities of Refuge Network (ICORN) and welcomes writers who suffer political persecution. The Imprisoned Writers Committee of Catalan PEN manages the refuge program. This program increases awareness about other situations among the Catalan public.

#### Germany and other German-speaking countries:

- <http://lcb.de>  
The **Literarisches Colloquium Berlin** offers accommodation and grants for foreign writers and translators at its center.

#### France:

- <http://www.meet.asso.fr/>  
**La Maison des écrivains étrangers et des traducteurs** (Foreign Writers' and Translators' House), located in St. Nazaire, offers accommodation for foreign authors and their translators and organizes debates, readings

and meetings between writers on a regular basis. It also awards two literary prizes each year: one for the best piece of fiction published in French translation (*Laure-Bataillon Prize*) and one for Young Latin-American Literature. It has its own publishing company that generally prints bilingual editions. It also publishes *Meet*, a literary journal.

#### Acquisition of Translations for Libraries

Programs that guarantee book purchases for libraries with public funds are very important for enabling the presence of translations over a long period of time. This measure has proven particularly positive in small and medium-sized countries where books are not always reprinted when editions go out of print or when the overall economic situation in the country does not allow for ongoing acquisitions.

### c] Translator support initiatives

#### Centers for Translators

These centers offer translators accommodation and the necessary conditions for completing a translation project, answering questions that arise in the process, and acquiring a better understanding of the literary context of the original work. These residences usually make it possible to meet with the author or with scholars specialized in the work being translated.

#### Holland:

- [http://www.nlpvf.nl/about/translators\\_house.php](http://www.nlpvf.nl/about/translators_house.php)

**The Translators' House in Amsterdam**, a project of the Foundation for the Production and Translation of Dutch Literature, accommodates five translators who may stay up to two months. Translators may also apply for grants, even for projects without a contract from a publisher if they are sufficiently well-defined. The program is only available to translators working from Dutch into other languages.

- <http://www.fondsvoordeletteren.be/detectie/flash/001.htm>

The **Flemish Literary Fund** manages the translation center located at the university town of Louvain (Belgium). Translators can use the university library meet other translators, writers and native speakers. The center has two fully furnished apartments.

#### Catalonia:

##### • Farrera de Pallars Seminars

Twice a year since 1998, the Institució de les Lletres Catalanes has promoted meetings between foreign authors and Catalan translators in Farrera de Pallars, a small village in the Pyrenees. Each spring and fall, the ILC invites two poets from the same language to meet with ten Catalan poets and translators. The authors submit selections of their poetry in advance, and during the events, participants are split into two groups and have an opportunity to discuss all the aspects of the different versions of the selected poems. This process is extraordinarily valuable in terms of the personal contact and knowledge of each other's work that it brings about, as well as the participants' work habits.

### Germany and other german-speaking countries:

- <http://www.uebersetzerfonds.de>  
The **Deutscher Übersetzerfonds** was established in 1997 and is located in the Literarisches Colloquium Berlin. It offers work and travel grants for translators. It also funds tutors assisting translators and residencies in translation centers such as Straelen or Visby (Baltic Center for Writers and Translators, Sweden). It organizes thematic seminars and workshops.

- <http://www.euk-straelen.de/>  
The **Europäisches Übersetzer-Kollegium** in Straelen is the largest international literary translation center in the world. Translators who have a signed contract from a publisher may apply for residency, regardless of their country of origin. The center has a library with 110,000 books, 25,000 of which are dictionaries in over 275 languages and dialects. Computers with Internet access are available. Accommodation includes 29 independent apartments. The center is located in a pleasant small town.

- <http://www.zug.ch/dialogwerkstatt/>  
**Dialogwerkstatt Zug** is offered by the cultural organizations of the Swiss canton of Zug. It has been promoting the art and culture of translation since 1996, offering translation grants and hosting meetings on translation at its center.

### France:

- <http://www.atlas-citl.org/es/citl/index.htm>

The **Collège International des Traducteurs Littéraires** in Arles offers accommodation and translation grants funded by the Centre National du Livre. In agreement with certain countries, they have developed binational programs through which they organize continuing education seminars aimed at young translators as well as their more experienced colleagues. Cultural events, debates, and discussion panels are organized in and around the city of Arles.

- <http://www.villagillet.net/>  
**Translation Residencies in Villa Gillet, Lyons** Since 2005, through the Book Service at the French Embassy in New York, the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs has offered its own residency program for translators from French into English in collaboration with Villa Gillet, a cultural organization in Lyon. The program offers six-week residencies in Lyon (grants include travel expenses, rent, and a subsidy) and participation in the city's cultural activities. Having a contract with a publisher is not a prerequisite, given that the goal of these residencies is to bring new projects into the US and British publishing world.

### Translators' Associations

These associations offer sample contracts, suggest rates, and strive to apply pressure towards gaining increased recognition of the translator's role, such as the agreement to include the translator's name in library catalogs and newspapers reviews.

### Catalonia:

There is no association of literary translators to and from Catalan. Translators do have some support from writers' associations and organizations that protect copyright in general.

- <http://www.escriptors.cat/>  
The **Associació d'Escriptors en Llengua Catalana** (AELC, Catalan-Language Writers' Association), founded in 1977 at the Congress on Catalan Culture, has promoted sample contracts and offers a legal advisory service to its associates.

- [http://www.cedro.org/catalan\\_inicio.asp](http://www.cedro.org/catalan_inicio.asp)  
El **centro español de derechos reprográficos** (Spanish Reproduction Rights Center, CEDRO) strives to improve working conditions in Spain for all contributors to culture in written form, and therefore also protects the rights of literary translators.

### Germany and other German-speaking countries:

- <http://literaturuebersetzer.de>  
**Verband deutschsprachiger Übersetzer literarischer und wissenschaftlicher Werke** is an association of literary and scientific translators established in 1954 to protect the interests of translators in society.

### France:

- <http://www.fit-ift.org/fr/news-fr.php>  
The **International Federation of Translators (FIT)**, established in Paris in 1953 by Pierre-François Callé, includes translators' associations from about 50 countries, representing over 60,000 translators throughout the world.

- <http://www.sft.fr/>  
The **Société Française de Traducteurs** (SFT) is the professional translators' union and has about 1,000 members.

- <http://www.atlf.org/>  
The **Association des Traducteurs Littéraires de France** (ATLF) was established in 1973; its mission is to protect the interests of translators and to promote the quality of literary translations published in France. It currently has over 700 members.

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## 5. Conclusions

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**Simona Škrabec**

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Literary translation is an accurate indicator of key aspects of our world at large. The existence of literary translation and the conditions surrounding it reveal much more than can be summed up by the figures of the number of translations done or the investment a government is willing to make in order to promote its country's literature. Before analyzing the information gathered on the subject in very different countries, it is important to step back and take a broader look at what we can learn from the very existence of literary translation.

### **Unequal Presence of Written Culture**

It would be a mistake to assume that by doing studies of all of the countries in which translated books are published, we would come away with a clear overall picture of the international situation regarding literary translation. This x-ray of the world

would only show those countries and cultures with a well-developed educational network and an established publishing industry and that is because an educated population is a prior condition to having readers and the capability of producing books. Literary translators depend on these two factors: the existence of books and an audience capable of reading them. This is not as obvious and facile a conclusion as may appear, given that literary translators only translate what is in print. Furthermore, many cultures in the world have been left out of the exchange of literary translations, because in order to participate, it is not enough just to have a publishing house and potential readers: the language must also necessarily be as normalized as possible.

Only those cultures with a codified and firmly consolidated language, and with a fairly complete network of institutional



and cultural resources (schools, universities, bookstores, libraries, publishing houses, newspapers, theaters, etc.) can hope to join in this exchange. These requirements exclude the indigenous languages of South America and those of a large part of the African continent, where literary translations are few. But specific, and serious, circumstances can also affect the participation, of countries which, in the past, have enjoyed a developed and sound publishing network. Before 1991 Bosnia was active in the market of books written in Serbo-Croatian which included books from Croatia, Bosnia, Serbia and Montenegro. Today, however, given the difficult economic situation and the political tensions with neighbouring countries, the Bosnian people can only manage to buy school textbooks. In just fifteen years a whole system which was well in place has fallen apart and it will take much effort before this country will, once again, have as many translated books on the market as it did before the war.

So, there is an inequality in the status of the participants in this exchange, and the mechanisms of domination are easily spotted. Literary translation exposes these enormous differences in development around the world quite clearly. Beyond the tensions between the strong and the weak, and the struggle for visibility on the world stage, there are other conditions which must be met prior to joining in the exchange: the will to participate, cultural openness and a sense of curiosity about others.

### **A Broad Reach, Though Not Yet Broad Enough**

We must also be aware that the picture of literary exchange presented in this report is incomplete. The two major areas not covered by this study are Indian literature and Russian literature, and their respective areas of influence. India is a place where multiple languages and cultures live side by side, and we mustn't forget the presence and influence of English. As a result, here literary translation operates under a different set of conditions than is commonly the case in Europe. The linguistic situation is complex and not at all easy to sum up in a few words; several different points of view must be taken into account in order to come up with a balanced picture of the situation.

The Russian-speaking area also remains largely a mystery to the Western world. Russian literature is, without a doubt, one of the most important and influential literatures of Europe. The classic texts of its 19<sup>th</sup>- and early 20<sup>th</sup>-century writers are widely translated and are an important part of the canon of world literature. But today, contemporary Russian authors have relatively little visibility in the international market, considering the number of Russian speakers in the world and the importance of that country's literary history. At the same time, however, Russia is one of the large monolingual literary markets where a successful author can expect to easily sell over a million copies of his or her book. At any rate, both Russia and India remain active on the international market, which can

not so easily be said of the African and Arab countries.

The economic difficulties suffered by Africa, together with the influence of the languages of the former colonial empires has meant that a very specific literary connection with the international market has been established, particularly in the case of French-speaking countries, given that writers in the French language have good chance of their voices being heard internationally.

The situation in the Arab world is even more complicated. The tendency of various Arab countries towards isolation has meant that the rest of the world knows little more about the literary production of these countries than those works written by authors living in exile. The West's perception of the Arab world is, generally speaking, rather negative. Political tensions and cultural unfamiliarity lead to prejudice and lack of interest, which makes it enormously difficult for Arab authors to become known in other countries. Gone are the days when the cultured classes throughout Europe were awed by the Eastern wisdom of "A Thousand and One Nights".

### **The Self-sufficiency of the English-speaking area**

When we try to explain the differences in the frequency of literary translation throughout the world, economic or political problems come to light. However, literary translation reveals another factor, which is the attitude towards other cultures. Reports done on the English-speaking

countries show an overriding attitude of self-sufficiency. Information received from Australia, New Zealand and South Africa shows that remainders from the English and North American publishing houses are sold cheaply in the bookstores, thus strangling these countries' own publishing industries which remain outside of the influence of the large publishing houses.

In addition to its dominant position in the internal market, the English language tends to ignore everything that isn't in English. The wide reach of the English language is often, and mistakenly, considered to represent the whole world. This attitude is the result of multiple factors dating back to the centuries of the expansion of the British Empire. Today, hiding behind the relative impermeability of the English-language market is an desire to avoid facing the reality that there are other worlds out there with which communication should be established; in the opening chapter of this report, Esther Allen makes reference to this "pain of communication" (using Jiří Gruša's words). Creating a closed, self-sufficient setting, however large, excludes comparisons with others. The internal values of an impermeable culture create the illusion of being absolute values.

Another measure of self-sufficiency is that English-speaking countries don't keep reliable statistics on the number of books translated to English. This is also the case in Argentina and Mexico where no figures are available on which of their writers have been translated to other languages nor what translated books can be found



in their bookstores. We have learned that the government of Catalonia has no statistics on literature imported from other countries, although, it does keep careful track of the books which have been translated from Catalan to other languages. This lack of statistical information is probably not due just to a lack of interest but is also an attempt to avoid being asked certain questions touching on identity issues (i.e. the degree of openness of a given country or culture), as shown by the survey sent to the different PEN centers.

In 2004 in the United States, there were 14,400 new translations of books into English, of which only 874 were literary texts. This is considered to be approximately 3% of all books on the shelves. In comparison, in France, approximately 30% of all books published are translations. Germany, too, is known to feature much world literature in its bookstores, in spite of the fact that the percentage of translated works has dropped drastically in the past ten years. In the medium and small European cultures, this percentage tends to be very high and, in some cases, represents almost half of the new titles appearing on the shelves (examples are: Czech Republic, Estonia, Lithuania and Finland, among others). It is important to note that in all of these countries the great majority of translated texts are from English.

It has been observed that in some cultures — especially smaller ones — which do a lot of translation, publication of works in their own languages is quite low. Yet, at the same time, all cultures, large and small, open to works from the outside, have a

good system in place for the teaching of foreign languages and a network linking the worlds of publishing, teaching, media and academia and reflect, therefore, a high internal social cohesiveness. In countries which are open to world literature, literary translation is well-considered, and viewed as creative work, not a mechanical task. We can see this in the case of the excellent German writers who still today follow the example of Goethe and Herder, dedicating time not only to their own work but also to literary translation. The situation in Germany is not exceptional; in many other countries recognized writers also serve as ambassadors to literatures from abroad. These interconnecting elements are missing in cultures lacking interest in the literature of other countries.

In the United States, the concept of cultural diversity is completely monolingual. The scenes and customs described in the books may be very exotic, but the original language in which these picturesque stories are narrated is, almost without exception, English. With a greater number of translated texts perhaps this perspective would change and the North Americans and English would see that their view of cultural diversity is almost solely limited to what can be found within the English-speaking world. But we know that only 3% of the books on the shelves in the United States are translations, and many of these books fit into the category of decontextualized, hybrid works: in short, cosmopolitan literature, conceived and written for an international audience without its own local interlocutor.

Given the widespread resistance to communication with other cultures within the English-speaking world, translators have had to bear the weight of linguistic diversity alone. Thus, a translation to or from English has very special value, because it allows speakers of other languages to continue speaking and writing in their own language, without losing the connection with the English-speaking setting. Translation keeps English from simply substituting all the other languages.

This situation is particularly worrisome with regard to scientific texts. The pressure to write in English has practically put an end to the writing of texts in the exact sciences, physics and biomedicine in other languages. This same pressure is becoming evermore apparent in the social sciences and humanities fields. Books targeted for a cultured audience can expect that readers have a command of today's lingua franca, but that is not entirely possible for literature targeted to a broader audience. As a result of this tendency to write scientific texts in English, many languages are being left, literally, without their own scientific terminology and without original-language texts written by their most outstanding scientists.

### A Book as Merchandise

Literature targeted to broad sectors within the English-speaking world has undergone a disturbing change. Books have become *book-shaped objects*, lacking any clearly-defined cultural value. What counts is the immediate profit from the sale. That is the sole objective of the best

sellers, as though literature weren't an essential part of the educational system of any given country and its cultural life. The transformation of the literary setting into a market has had a very negative effect on the visibility of translation.

It is very difficult to compete for a corner of the market against publishing houses which have powerful means to promote their authors. Both original and translated works must battle against large-scale marketing campaigns in the media in order to gain any public attention. In the United States, publishing houses invest vast sums of money in promoting authors they view as potentially bestselling. How can a translated work compete with that kind of investment when, in addition, the author of the original work is often not a contemporary writer who can do book tours or attract media attention?

In principle, there is a built-in quality-control filter with literary translation: the books which are translated normally tend to be those most valued or frequently-read in the literature of origin. That means that the great works of a given literature can't use the same channels to reach a foreign audience as works targeted to the public at large. However the influence of entertainment literature in the English language has not only thrown the English-speaking market off-balance but also that of the other countries as well, given that today the majority of translations are of easy-to-read, lightweight literature originally written in English. In addition, these easy-sell titles are not presented abroad within their original context, nor is there any follow

up by scholars once the book has sold. This is also serving to wear away at the bridge between cultures that literature has always provided. A translated book is a source of information on an unfamiliar culture, not just an interesting story.

Literature depends on the book industry, but those responsible for delivering books to the readers are the networks of bookstores and libraries. A translated book cannot compete in the market under the same conditions as a book published in its original language. The degree to which it does or does not make its mark, depends on the main distribution channels. In the United States many translations of European authors are published by small, independent and non-profit presses. These publishers are often too small to act as effective intermediaries and see that the book reaches all corners of the planet. A translation, even one into English, can only be influential if it really manages to be accessible to the international audience. It is not enough to just exist as a book. The large chains that control world distribution give priority to the mega-sellers which literally strangle the provision of other types of books in the stores. It is difficult to imagine what measures can be taken to turn these trends around or limit their impact.

### Illegal Copies of Books

The report on China reveals another problem which has yet to be fully resolved: pirate copies. Aside from the fact that this practice places author's rights in peril and does obvious economic damage (both to

the authors and the translators), there is another direct consequence which can't be overlooked. The existence of a semi-clandestine network which produces and distributes unauthorized copies hampers the creation of publishing houses and bookstores. This applies to any country, but especially to economically-weaker countries. The situation in countries such as Chile or Peru, where unauthorized reprints, or even photocopies, of books published in Spanish are circulating is very different from what took place in communist Europe with the circulation of underground editions known by the name of *samizdat*.

In Eastern Europe, literature challenged repression by weaving an underground literary exchange network. The books which circulated through this network aroused passions but, without a doubt, did not generate much profit; that was not their aim. It is, however, the aim of the pirate copies. This illegal business is damaging to writers and an obstacle to establishing publishing houses and bookstores but, beyond that, it encourages an attitude of thoughtless acceptance of foreign models. As these are copies meant for easy sale, the ones that are put into circulation are books and translations which have had proven success in other countries.

Paradoxically, pirate copies end up being sound boxes for the trends imposed by the large companies in the global market. Circulation of illegal copies undermines the possibility of an autonomous decision as to what books a given culture wishes to know about, translate and incorporate

into its culture. Among the most worrisome trends in the international literary market is the impoverishment of the range of translated works. The number of authors who obtain global recognition is steadily shrinking.

### Translation in the History of Literature

The literature which has had most success in bringing its authors into the English-speaking market is French literature. Approximately 30% of translations done in the United States are of books originally written in French. What is most extraordinary about this fact is that the works translated are those of famous names in literature, in literary criticism, in philosophy and in other humanistic disciplines. French literature proves, then, that with a good cultural policy it is possible to turn around the two negative trends the substitution of the original language by English in scientific texts, and the predominance of lightweight quick-selling literature.

In addition to the economic support given to the promotion of French literature, efforts are also made to organize conferences in foreign universities, and readings in bookstores and French language schools which provide a good context in which to more fully introduce the writers and their works.

In order to be noticed on the market, a book must be reviewed and commented upon by the critics. Further down the line, if it hopes to become part of the canon, literary historians and theoreticians must

also focus their attention on it, thus smoothing its way into a foreign country's literary system. The first step, attracting the attention of specialized media, is already a difficult one in the case of translated works. The second step, however, is practically impossible for those cultures without schools or universities abroad.

Translators are not always conscious of the extent to which the effectiveness of their work depends on literary scholars. Government administrations, as well, often overlook these steps which are critical to a solid reception from abroad of a particular work and the culture it represents. Too often promotional efforts abroad are a one-shot event, and a headline in a leading newspaper or good sales figures for a book seem to be enough.

Only a literature which has an international network of scholars specialized in that particular literature at its disposal, is capable of introducing its classical authors to the international stage. A good example of just how difficult this process can be is that of the novel, *Max Havelaar*, one of the great classics of Dutch literature. In spite of the fact that it was published by a press as famous as Penguin Classics, it hasn't been able to make much of a mark outside of Holland. If the translation is to create any long term effect, the audience must be made to understand the work in its original context. Unfortunately, little attention is generally given to inviting and educating critics so that they can present the translated work in its best light. This need to create a framework of references is also critical for the effective promotion

of more demanding genres, particularly poetry.

### Political Implications of Literary Translation

The situation as it exists within the large monolingual areas is clearly one of the most interesting points that has come out of this report. However, the report has not brought to light another very disturbing attitude with regard to translation, and that is fear and, even paranoia, experienced in relation to others. Since input for the report has come only from countries which translate works into their language and whose works are translated out of their language, it is understandable that almost no one has made reference to the situations in which a country's borders remain practically sealed.

In Lithuania a distant memory remains of the situation which existed during the Soviet era, when literary translation to Lithuanian was not greatly welcome. The PEN center which responded to the study's questionnaire in the name of China does not exist within the country's border: its open attitude would not be tolerated. The Chinese government still today not only controls what books are imported, but also who can receive support for their works by being translated or presented abroad. During the Cold War, this type of ideological censorship was a constant in communist Europe, applied more or less strictly, depending upon the regime in question. At that time, the majority of the writers who managed to have their works translated were exiles living outside

of their countries. Putting a stop to, or obstructing, the free trade of books is a clear sign of political repression within a society.

A well-developed system of literary translation demonstrates, above all, a curiosity for unfamiliar worlds, though sometimes this interest can become mixed with a certain escapism. Translation offers the chance to go beyond the limits of one's own culture. Some small countries import an almost unbelievable quantity of books: in some places more than half of all books published are translations. There is a great eagerness to learn about other worlds, particularly in European countries.

This curiosity may be accompanied by the desire to stretch beyond the horizons of one's own culture, particularly during difficult periods. Even in the United States we can see fluctuations in the number of literary translations which increase during periods of opposition to that country's own cultural models, as evidenced in the '60s during the Vietnam War. Translation also stretched out beyond the horizons of communist Europe and of Spain during the Franco dictatorship. In Catalonia, books from other countries were a breath of fresh air during the years of dictatorship and brought with them freedom of thought which, at the time, neither writers nor the man or woman on the street could enjoy.

In China as well—and going well back in time—foreign literature is the most popular and that which sells the best. In the decades following the Cultural

Revolution, authors who didn't dare write their own works for fear of persecution, translated the works which Marx or Lenin had praised and, thus, through translations of Shakespeare or Balzac, were able to express their vision of the world and withstand the ideological pressure. In other cases, translation even helps to bridge physical distances: in Argentina, where a good part of the immigrant population has maintained ties with their native countries over generations, translation has always been well-considered and seen as a way to overcome the sense of isolation.

### Government Support for Translation

One of the points that the different reports have brought up in more detail, is the support given to literary translation by public administrations. Having reviewed the main public policies for support, we can conclude that translation is quite well subsidized. Precisely because of that, however, it is a potentially weak activity. A look at support given to translation on a nation-to-nation basis within the larger international context will quickly show that the countries with the fewest resources publish fewer works abroad. Is that a fair situation?

Furthermore, the relative abundance of subsidies has created a climate in which a publisher is generally not willing to publish a translation if it is not financed by the country of origin of the work. Ways must be found to help correct this imbalance. We can find exemplary models in organizations existing, for example, in

Germany, a country traditionally open to translations. The Society for the Promotion of African, Asian and Latin American Literature (*Gesellschaft zur Förderung der Literatur aus Afrika, Asien und Lateinamerika*) and the Literary Colloquium of Berlin (*Literarisches Colloquium Berlin*) subsidize translations in order to give German readers the opportunity to learn about literatures that are less able to find their way onto the international market.

Traditionally, translation took on importance primarily as a way to nurture a given language with information from other cultures. Translating *The Bible* or *Don Quixote* in their entirety into a language not widely spoken, demonstrated the capacity of a culture, small as it might be, to meet the highest literary standards. But this center of gravity is changing and—forcing the issue a bit—we could say that today, the task of translation is exactly the opposite. Translations must demonstrate the importance of a culture by being able to find entry into a foreign literary environment.

A given literature is considered to have achieved success when it produces and exports a great number of works; in contrast, however, the number of foreign works imported doesn't seem to carry the same weight. Translation has, over the years, enjoyed a certain prestige because everyone was aware of the importance of expanding their cultural horizons by bringing in works from other cultures. But the attention that the literature of one particular culture receives abroad should not be an excuse to ignore other literatures.

There are many options available to find economic support for translations within the respective countries of origin, but what is lacking is the means to find support for translation and promotion of literary works from the country receiving the translation. As a result, it is difficult not to fall into the trap of only promoting those writers who are “officially” considered to be most important: in those countries where freedom of expression and democracy are under threat, official subsidies only go to those writers with close connections to the regime in power.

### **Translation and Freedom of Expression**

The need to disconnect the translation of a literary work from the economic support system of the country of origin of that work is especially important when the country in question is immersed in a climate of repression and ideological control of all aspects of public life. The Chinese literature which was translated to other languages during the 1950s had the sole aim of providing propaganda for the Maoist regime and only those works approved by the government and the Communist Party were able to be translated. This system of control of economic subsidies and promotion of works abroad is still in place in China today; there are works which are censored for political reasons and can not be published. The only chance that Chinese dissidents have of publishing their works is through translations to other languages in the international arena.

In the case of China as well as other countries, translation and international recognition of dissident authors has been able to bring about revised perceptions of the regime, both within the country and from the outside. Translation has great subversive power. But in order to assure its creative capacity and true subversive power, literature must maintain a certain independence from political power; it must become a space of freedom, untainted by official political entities or dogma.

Democratic countries often forget the great lack of liberty of expression prevailing in certain countries. If all works that were translated required government support, those many voices that can't even be heard in their own country would be silenced. Those works which haven't reached the public eye at home but which receive attention in a foreign country sensitive to the problems of others, are also indicators of the degree of freedom of expression in a country.

### **The Situation in Europe**

Setting political and social factors aside, it is clear that more and more activity is taking place to encourage literary translation and interest in other cultures: international festivals, residencies for writers and translators, specialized literary journals, university courses for foreign students, etc. Especially worthy of mention is the idea of providing specialists in the original language of a translated work who can present all aspects of this work to a foreign audience. France is a model in this regard, both in terms of outside

literature which comes into the country as well as of the promotion of French writers abroad.

Also, in the course of recent years, cultures existing within states that are not their own—as is the case of the Catalan culture — are receiving greater international visibility. This change has come about as a result of the important political changes which have taken place in Europe since the early 1980s and which brought about the fall of the Berlin Wall. While in post-war Europe nobody questioned the division of Germany into two different states with, consequently, two different “national” literatures, and the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia considered themselves single states and, thus, single nations, those rules clearly changed after 1989.

A new perspective on the situation which takes into account the importance of each culture and respect for all languages, has made inroads, at least in Europe. Currently many EU countries have policies defending this view and have established an effective system to defend linguistic rights.

There is another important factor influencing the improvement of the international climate with regard to literary exchange, and that is the ease of communication in a globalized world. During the Franco dictatorship a Spanish citizen had difficulty getting a passport to visit any communist country, and people from Eastern European countries couldn't cross the Iron Curtain, but these administrative blocks have disappeared in today's European Union. And, as a result, a new way of

seeing the world has opened up. If we take into consideration the historic destiny of the small countries of Europe, or those which formed part of the Soviet Union, the struggle to preserve cultural identity is no longer an isolated anecdote, as it could have seemed in the past when the most distant point on the horizon was the country next door.

Standing up for one's own culture no longer carries with it the stigma of provincialism, as it once may have. The idea that in order to be considered important a culture has to be big and fit within the confines of an internationally-recognized state is no longer a generally-accepted concept in Europe.

One of the consequences of this change of attitude has been the regeneration of the capillary system of European literature: cultures and languages which, before, only knew of each other through translations from the major languages and are now able to connect directly with each other, without having to go through publishers in Paris. In cultural and literary terms, globalization has also had many positive and revitalizing effects.

## Afterwords

# On Translating and Being Translated

**Narcís Comadira.** Catalan poet, translator and painter

I know I will annoy many writers and readers if I say that being read and understood—communicating, as they say—is by no means the first aim of literature. The first aim of literature is the construction of the work. It is accomplishing the writer's obsession to create an artifact, in this case a literary one, that will function as well as possible. It is feeling the satisfaction of choosing and combining words, of tightening up syntax, of moulding a form: the fulfilment of constructing a work of art. Later, and only later, comes the reader. And this reader is, first of all, the writer. The writer constructs for the pleasure of doing so and then, in part as a reader, to understand the world and understand himself or herself. The writer gives shape to deep experience and hence objectively possesses it. When all this is done, then, and only then, the reader who is other than the writer enters the scene, the invited reader, first of all in the author's own linguistic milieu. Next come growing numbers of invited readers and thus translation into other languages. Translating a text into other languages to increase the number of readers is important. But the role of translating in literature is much more important than increasing the number of readers.

In fact, translation comes into play earlier. It is there from the very start. Writing, for a writer, is to translate his or her own individual language, full of idiosyncratic idioms, family twists, semantic deviations, slang—spur of the moment or baggage of education—into a language that, while still conserving the warmth and vitality of this personal language, is to be understood by all those who belong to the same linguistic milieu. Writing, then, is translating. And once the work is written, the reader from the same linguistic milieu must also translate it from the common language into his or her personal language so as to understand the text in a way that is alive, warm, moving—the things that really count. Reading is also translating, translating within the same language.



Next, so that the form in which we have written can be read and understood in other linguistic settings, the work must undergo the process of translation, strictly speaking. The *form* in which we have written the work needs to be *transformed* so that it will function within another system of signs, and hence it needs somebody to transfer it into another language. But it isn't enough for the translator merely to know the language from which the work is being translated; what must also be known, as well as possible, is the personal language and idiosyncratic features of the author whose work is being translated, not only to offer the general sense of the common language in which the author has established the text, but also its more intimate sense. Then, evidently, the translator must know the language into which the translation is being done and be capable of offering in this language what he or she has deeply understood. Here too, a double translation must be made, into the common language of the translator's linguistic milieu of course, but also into the translator's own literary sensibility, for only through personal linguistic idiosyncrasy can the translator provide a faithful rendition of the first translation that the author has produced in the act of writing. All in all, it seems complicated, and is. It is difficult to translate successfully. However, the risk must be taken, and one must dare to wish to be translated because, without translation, one's works would be no more than a closed exercise within one's own system, which, in the long term, can be debilitating. And while it is well-known that a language is revitalised by importing the forms of other languages through translation, I also think that when a language has to go into another language, it very often discovers its own intrinsic deficiencies and this awareness is useful for forcing the language to find forms of genuine enrichment, fertile flexibilities, transmittable constructions, and idioms that confer nuances.

Translating and being translated are indispensable for the healthy development of a language and indispensable, too, for being able to fine-tune one's own language so as to acquire an ever more sensitive instrument for the first aim of writing I mentioned at the outset: the construction of a form. Translating and being translated mean that the mental, instrumental, sentimental and cognitive fields of a language can expand, and that, in the long term, the language that has been able to translate and to be translated is now better equipped to slip into increasingly subtle forms, into forms that read the world and that understand it in ever-greater depth. Translating and being translated mean advancing closer and closer to true global understanding, an understanding that does not eschew idiosyncrasies, an understanding that does not reduce the world to one single and thus impoverished language and to one single reductive and primary way of thinking. Such a reduction might seem useful for exploitation but only because it is founded on illiteracy. The language of the world has to be translation. Anything else would be simplification, impoverishment, intellectual abjection. Anything else would be to squander the immense richness of the world's personal and linguistic idiosyncrasies, and revert to utter barbarism.

## The Language of Languages

**Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o** • Kenyan novelist and playwright, is the director of the International Center for Writing and Translation, University of California at Irvine

Translation is as old as nature and nurture. Nature itself is a multicultural environment where different formations, organic and inorganic, live in constant exchange, even when that exchange is hostile to certain species. Nurture is literally a translation from nature, just as cyberture today is a translation from nurture. Different religions, particularly the ones which have spread beyond their original shores, attest to the necessity and power of translation. The different European national literatures that emerged with the Renaissance got their national life and character from translations from Greek and Latin and from their rival contemporaries.

European languages vis-à-vis those from Africa, Asia, South America, Native North America, in their service to imperialism, have played the role of enabling the visibility of colonized and marginalized cultures, but they have done so by uprooting native voices from those very cultures and languages. What is needed is a new role for those languages like English, which have become dominant actors in the globe for whatever reason, that enables the visibility and even the exchange of different voices without disabling them. Thus we need to adopt a new slogan: *enable* and not *disable*.

Translation seen as conversation—for conversation assumes equality among the speakers—is clearly the language of languages, the language that all languages should speak. Thus we should move into a world where this common language of languages is alive and well and recognized in our everyday lives. Translation between the dominant languages and marginalized languages; translation between marginalized languages; translation as the common language of languages should go a long way towards enabling dialogues among the different world cultures, large or small. In contrast to Western self-aggrandizing globalization, we could create a better cultural foundation for egalitarian globalism.

