The Three Percent Problem: Why do English Speakers Read So Few Books in Translation?

Victoria Morrison

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By: **Victoria Morrison**

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Signed by the final examining committee:

Philippe Caignon Chair

Hélène Buzelin Examiner

Debbie Folaron Examiner

Sherry Simon Supervisor

Approved by _____
Chair of Department or Graduate Program Director

_____
Dean of Faculty

Date _____

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Abstract

Since the end of the 1990s, along with the availability of new technologies, globalization has stimulated local cultural industries and cultural exchange has increased. As a result, the number of books in translation in the world has grown from 50,000 published in 1980 to more than 75,000 in 2000. This represents a 50% growth in the number of translations published worldwide. However, the majority of these translations have English as a source language. Conversely, in the English book market the share of translations has fallen from 8.6% in 1960 to 2.8% today. This leads us to wonder: why is it that the more the world translates from English, the less it translates into English?

This thesis studies the various economic, political, and social aspects that influence the publishing industry in the United States, which have a clear impact on the attitudes of publishers regarding translated literature. The first half of the project examines the relationship between translation and globalization and the negative perceptions surrounding translation as process of deformation. The second half opposes independent and commercial publishing practices, especially regarding books in translation. Because 80% of books in translation are published by independent publishers, the last chapter presents an overview of ten small publishing houses, highlighting their approaches and thoughts about publishing international literature in English translation in the United States.

Résumé

Depuis la fin des années 1990, la mondialisation stimule les industries culturelles locales et favorise l'échange interculturel par le biais de nouvelles technologies. Par conséquent, sur le marché mondial, le nombre de livres traduits est passé de 50 000 en 1980 à 75 000 en l'an 2000, ce qui représente une augmentation de 50 %. Cependant, la majorité de ces traductions ont l'anglais comme langue de départ. Inversement, sur le marché du livre anglophone, le nombre de traductions est passé de 8,6 % en 1960 à 2,8 % aujourd'hui. Comment pouvons-nous alors interpréter le faible taux des traductions vers l'anglais?

Ce mémoire examine les différents enjeux politiques, économiques et sociaux qui influencent le monde de l'édition aux États-Unis et qui ont un effet sur le comportement des éditeurs quant à la publication des œuvres traduites. Dans un premier temps, ce mémoire examinera la dynamique entre la traduction et la mondialisation ainsi que l'idée de la traduction en tant que procédure de déformation. Dans un deuxième temps, nous analyserons les pratiques éditoriales des maisons d'édition commerciales et indépendantes, avec une emphase particulière sur les livres traduits. Puisque 80 % des livres traduits sont publiés par des éditeurs indépendants, le dernier chapitre de ce mémoire présentera un survol de dix petites maisons d'édition afin de souligner leurs approches et leurs idées entourant la publication d'œuvres traduites aux États-Unis.

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Introduction.

The Three Percent Problem: An Overview

This thesis is about what has come to be known as "The Three Percent Problem" in translation, which is omnipresent in the discourse surrounding literary translation in the English-speaking world. As documented by Esther Allen in *To be translated or not to be: PEN/IRL report on the international situation of literary translation*, the 'three percent' figure refers to the notion that only around three percent of fiction and poetry published in English each year in the U.K. and in the United States are translations. Depending on who is doing the reporting[1], this figure varies slightly. However, since around the year 2000, the number has consistently remained between 2 and 4 percent, down "from 8.6% in 1960, to 4.95% in 1975, and to less than 2.8% nowadays" (Cusset in Sapiro 2010: 424). Conversely, non-English-speaking European countries translate to a much greater extent. In fact, "figures for translated titles in other European countries have reached 25 percent or more" (Cronin 2006: 36).

Fundamentally, along with the availability of new technologies, translation has grown in importance over the past 20 or 30 years. More specifically, "the dynamics of globalization [have] stimulated local cultural industries. As a result, cultural exchange [has] increased. The number of books in translation in the world grew from 50,000 published in 1980 to more than 75,000 in 2000," (Sapiro 2010: 423). This means that there has been a 24% growth in the number of translations published between the 1980s and 1990s, and a 50% growth from the eighties to the early 2000s. But as much as these numbers reflect expansion, they are misleading because a majority of the translations that make up these figures have English as a source language. In fact, "the average

[1] As this thesis documents, this number has been analyzed by translation scholars, sociologists, and publishing companies in Europe and in North America.

number of books translated every year from other languages was even smaller in the 1990s than in the 1980s. This means that, quantitatively speaking, diversity has diminished," (423).

In his book, *Is that a Fish in your Ear?,* David Bellos expands on this idea, showing the influence that English has on non-English-speaking countries. Basing his numbers on UNESCO's *Index Translationum*[2], which was started "to keep track of the global flow of translations" (Bellos 203), Bellos explains that from 2000 to 2009, out of 133,000 titles translated between English, French, German, Arabic, Hindi, Chinese, and Swedish, more than 104,000 were from English. Of those 133,000 translated books, barely more than 8% were into English (204). From this perspective, the imbalance affecting the flows of translation is very strong.

That being said, as Jasmine Donahaye has documented in her report, *Three Percent? Publishing Data and Statistics on Translated Literature in the United Kingdom and Ireland*, the UNESCO database may be somewhat off. For one thing, the database includes reprints and re-releases (Molénat 2007). In addition, some of the publication data from the U.K. and in Ireland may not complete (Donahaye 11), especially when we consider that the bibliography of translated titles that Donahaye received from Literature Across Frontiers via PEN via Nielsen BookData was not comprehensive, omitting some of the original book titles and names of translators. "The fact that there were many blanks in translator names illustrated the problem that has already been identified – namely, that if publishers do not provide this information to Nielsen in the first instance, it will not subsequently enter the data record" (20). This alone shows that not all publishers are sensitive to the issues surrounding inequality in the global flows of translation – the consequences of which are detailed in the first two chapters of this thesis. Indeed, this needs to be

[2] Sapiro's figures also stem from this database.

addressed because "Publishers play the most important role in raising the profile of translators and translation – and in this apparently small matter, they can make a significant difference" (25).

Nevertheless, although UNESCO's database is not entirely complete, it still gives us a good idea of the general situation in the world today: "Translations from English are all over the place; translations into English are as rare as hen's teeth" (Bellos 204). To put it another way, "there is clearly a translation imbalance in terms of a privileged source language (English) which does not engage in a relationship of reciprocity in the area of literary translation" (Gentzler qtd. in Cronin, 2006: 36).

The Role of English as a Linguistic and Cultural Hegemony

As I will explain in the first chapter of this thesis, the fact that English is so heavily translated into other languages reinforces the language's hegemonic power. "Half the books translated worldwide are translations from English (…) well behind come German and French, which represent between 10 and 12% of the world market of translations" (Heilbron and Sapiro 2007: 96). Eight additional languages, including Spanish and Italian, occupy a semi-peripheral position; the share for these languages is around one to three percent of the international market. All other languages "have a share of less than one percent of the international market, and might thus be considered as peripheral, despite the fact that certain of them (Chinese, Arabic or Japanese) represent linguistic groups that are among the most important in terms of number of speakers" (ibid.). Bellos sheds additional light on this paradox by underscoring the surprising figure that "Chinese is the receiving language of just over 5 percent of all the translations done in all directions (…) [which is] barely more than Swedish, whose speakers number less than 1 percent of the

speakers of Chinese" (Bellos 203). This shows us that the number of primary speakers a language has is not an accurate way of identifying central and peripheral languages.

> Distinguishing languages by their degree of centrality not only implies that translations flow more from the core to the periphery than the other way around, but also that the communication between peripheral groups often passes through a centre. What is translated from one peripheral language into the other depends on what is translated from these peripheral languages into the central languages (Heilbron 435).

In other words, the three percent figure in translation isn't just problematic because it implies that English speakers have access to a body of literature that presents a narrow worldview dominated by insular Western values, these values are also twice as likely to be translated into other languages. The danger is a loss of diversity. As Michael Cronin states in *Translation and Identity*, "Humans cannot be members of an infinite number of cultures or speak an infinite number of languages," (Cronin 2008: 39) but literature can help us "to understand the history, way of life and outlook of citizens from other member states" (39). From this perspective, if monolingual English speakers don't have access to new literature from foreign countries, global understanding is doomed to decrease.

The Role of Small-Scale Publishers

As Vauhini Vara recently wrote in the New Yorker, "there's an inherent chicken-and-egg problem in the debate over why large U.S. publishers don't invest more in foreign titles: they can't do it because not enough people buy translated books, but one reason not enough people buy translated books is that they tend not to be promoted as heavily," (Vara 2014). This idea illustrates a widespread belief in the publishing industry that publishing literature in translation is a risky endeavour. But as Chad Post has stated, publishing is always risky, as one never knows how well

a title is going to do (Post 2009c). Post maintains that in the publishing world, "there is a disconnect between publishing thoughtful, long-selling literary translations and a system that thrives on the HUGE HIT and is willing to spend millions to make that hit happen IMMEDIATELY" (ibid.).

At the other end of the spectrum, there are a number of small-scale independent publishers that continue to, and are even fully dedicated to publishing international literature in translation. In fact, as Sapiro states, "most translations (around 80% in 2008) are published either by non-profit presses which mention it as part of their mission (…) or by small independent trade publishers" (Sapiro 2010: 434). Independent publishers that publish literature in English translation may not be producing bestsellers, but what these houses lack in economic capital, they make up for in symbolic capital. As Pierre Bourdieu states, these publishers mostly "act as discoverers, investing their cultural and linguistic competence in the search for avant-garde works in minor languages and countries (…). [Their work] also serves as a means to stem the invasion of commercial, specifically Anglo-American, literature" (Bourdieu 147). Independent publishers also cultivate a stronger sense of purpose and identity, as the goal to construct a quality catalogue becomes a bigger priority than financial gain. Even though these translated works may not become short-selling instant hits, when kept alive in the backlist, they become long sellers "thanks to the canonization process which turns them into classic works," (Sapiro 2010: 426). In this sense, translation represents "a mode of legitimation, in which authors as much as mediators may be the beneficiaries" (Heilbron and Sapiro 2007: 103).

From a theoretical perspective, this canonization process is also congruent with Even-Zohar's Polysystem Theory, which states that the literary system needs to be opened up gradually for new ideas to take. This means that international literature, which may present new or revolutionary ideas, will be rejected if it is introduced too centrally, too soon (Even-Zohar 51). In

other words, international literature *needs* to be published on a small-scale before it can ever reach a wider audience.

Definition of Terms

Throughout this thesis, the Pascale Casanova's notion of consecration turns up repeatedly, and although the meaning of this term is relatively implicit in the context of this thesis, to make sure there is no confusion, the following is an attempt at a definition. Casanova states that translation is generally defined as the act of moving a text from one language to another within the context of an equal linguistic framework, but from the perspective of world-systems analysis, translation is actually quite unequal, and it occurs within a highly hierarchical system (Casanova 2002: 7). More specifically, the world system is organized around a binary: "selon l'opposition entre, d'un côté, au pôle autonome, les champs littéraires les plus dotés en capital et, de l'autre, les champs nationaux démunis ou en formation et qui sont dépendants à l'égard des instances politiques – nationales le plus souvent" (2002: 8). From this perspective, literarily impoverished spaces are always trying to acquire more literary capital. There are a number of ways to do this, such as winning a literary prize, being translated by a famous author, having a famous author write the preface to a book, or being published as part of a collection that is already considered prestigious (Casanova 1999: 115). In this sense, consecration is synonymous with recognition, and every ounce of consecration afforded to an author from a peripheral or semi-peripheral country brings that country closer to the literary centre. This is beneficial, because it allows writers from deprived literary spaces to reach a wider audience.

The terms *world literature*, *Word Literature*, *international literature*, and *translated literature* also come up a lot, but not interchangeably. More specifically, the capitalized form of 'World Literature' refers to "a publishing category and object of academic study" ("World Lite"),

whereas the lowercase 'world literature' is used to refer to everything written in all languages ever (ibid.). The term, 'global literature' is used in this context as well. By contrast, the term 'translated literature' is used to define any book translated from one language to another. International literature, on the other hand, specifically refers to books that have been translated from a foreign language into English. In fact, small-scale American publishers usually prefer this term over 'translated literature' or 'books in translation,' and it echoes the internationalist ideal that Casanova mentions in *La République Mondiale des Lettres*, where "the world of letters is one of peaceful internationalism, a world of free and equal access in which literary recognition is available to all writers, an enchanted word that exists outside time and space and so escapes the mundane conflicts of human history" (1999: 43). This portrays the concept of an international literature as somewhat idealistic, but given the low rate of translations into English, this might be the point.

Final Opening Thoughts

As Donahaye has suggested, publishers have the power to solve the three percent problem, but for that to happen, there needs to be an audience for this category of literature. The power is also in the hands of the book-buying public. Fortunately, there is already a slew of independent, small-scale English-language publishers who specialize in avant-garde literature and minor language titles in translation in America, ten of which are included in chapter four of this thesis. Incidentally, a great deal of their practices, thoughts, and approaches reflect the theories about the publishing industry laid out in Chapter 3.

My hope for this thesis is that it will somehow contribute to the conversation surrounding the issues outlined in this project. The flows of translation may be uneven, but by advocating for reading world literature as a means of fostering global understanding, embracing internationalism as an avant-garde literary project, and understanding translation as a method of creation, the 'three

percent problem' is gaining momentum, and the current work of small-scale and independent publishers is starting to resemble a grass-roots movement that is vying for change. This is what makes this subject all the more interesting.

Chapter 1. Translation as Symptom and Instrument of Globalization

In the late 1990s, the trope of globalization reached an apex of sorts; international trade became more widespread following the introduction of organizations such as NAFTA and the WTO, and global communications increased. During this time, discussions surrounding the ultimate implications of globalization were charged with excitement and fear. The lighter side of globalization hinted at a world with cheap travel and enhanced human connection. The darker side, however, was marred by images of sweatshops and teargas-laden protests. The book market was also affected, as corporations started acquiring publishing houses with the intention of making book sales more profitable. A number of commercial publishing companies merged to create mega publishing conglomerates, currently known as 'The Big Five[3].' Around the same time, the availability of new technologies stimulated cultural production and exchange, and translation increased. All of these elements made the world more connected than it had ever been, but as society became more globalized, it also became more Anglicized, or more specifically, more Americanized. Accordingly, the increased output of translations in the world have mainly been into and out of English, with very few translations taking place in other directions. To be even more specific – and this is the crux of the three percent problem – the majority of translations have been largely unidirectional, meaning that most non-English-speaking countries have taken to translating extensively from English, with English-speaking countries translating relatively little by comparison. As Johan Heilbron and Gisèle Sapiro have shown, this shouldn't be surprising: "the more the cultural production of a country is central, the more it serves as a reference in other countries, but the less material is translated into this language" (Heilbron and Sapiro 2007: 96-97). However, the one-way mirror effect that exists in a world that translates everything from English

[3] In the United States, the Big Five refers to: Penguin Random House, Hachette, HarperCollins, Macmillan, and Simon & Schuster (Packer 2014).

and relatively little in other directions poses a real threat to diversity in the sense that, if things don't change, we could soon find ourselves in the heart of a global monoculture where everything is influenced by the West, and the West is only influenced by what it produces.

This chapter will address the issues that surround translation in a globalized society, starting with the socio-political framework that strengthened the global consolidation of English after World War II. It will also address the realities of the electronic publishing industry and the future of print, in addition to second language acquisition around the world, and the idea that translation is inescapable for minor language writers. Finally, we will look at how translation mirrors the process of globalization through the duplication of cultural artefacts. Translation doesn't just serve to teach us about other cultures – it also helps us to embrace diversity. Although translation is often viewed as a process of deformation, which creates a cycle of dependency, it is in fact crucial for the conservation of different world literatures and our understanding of past cultures. As Goethe once said, "Left to itself, every literature will exhaust its vitality if it is not refreshed by the interest and contributions of a foreign one" (Goethe qtd. in Allen 22). The low rate of translations published annually in the United States implies that English could be headed in such a direction. This is what proponents of international literature are seeking to avoid.

The Globalization of the Book Market

In a paper titled, *Responding to Globalization*, Johan Heilbron reminds us that target cultures are autonomous cultural systems. This means that we must analyze modes of reception in the context of theses spaces' relationships with outside cultures, that is to say, in the context of a world system that includes books and ideas, but also people, with all of the economic, political, and language issues that arise our of any social framework (Heilbron 2008: 187). In order to understand the context that has given rise to the low rate of translations published in the United

States, we need to start by looking at the socio-economic aspects that began to transform the American industry in the second half of the 20th century.

In her paper, *Globalization and Cultural Diversity in the Book Market: The case of literary translations in the US and France*, Gisèle Sapiro explains that after World War II, Americans worked hard to develop an autonomous national literature in an effort to reverse the power relations between Britain and the United States. (Sapiro 2010: 422). "Between 1955 and 1978, book production in the US increased more than six-fold (from 12,589 to 85,126 titles), more than twice as much as in France and Germany (from 10,364 to 31,673 in France)" (2010: 422). America's push to assert its national independence through publishing echoes the idea that "the printing industry [has traditionally] played a crucial role in the building of national identities (Anderson in Sapiro: 2010: 422). In the 20th century, however, this initiative was strengthened by the growth of the global market for movies, music, and books, which "emerged as exchange was being liberalized within the framework of international negotiations, notably the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), which reflected the dominant position the US had acquired" (2010: 422).

The growth of the book market was also accelerated by falling book prices following the introduction of paperback books. "Often published in separate series, paperbacks made books accessible to larger groups of the population, changing the publication pattern. Reprints of previously published hardbacks became more numerous and, in most paperback series, translations were particularly important" (Heilbron 2008: 189). As a result, the share of translated books grew around the world, climbing from "about 5% of all published books in 1946 to nearly 30% around 2000" (189-190). While paperbacks certainly had a hand in stimulating this increase, the growth of translations was further precipitated by "increasing international mobility and international awareness, intensified through the Marshall Plan and Western alliances like NATO and the European Union" (189-190). This ultimately improved the position of translators, making the

translation profession economically viable (189-190). Around the same time, international travel increased. The growth in translated literature happened almost everywhere; "The only apparent exceptions are the most dominant powers, the United States and the United Kingdom. Typically, no significant increase in the remarkably low translation ratio has taken place in these countries since the end of World War II" (188).

At the end of 1970s and in the early 1980s, the economic downturn affected the steadiness of the book market, and "annual book production fell nearly 20% within a few years" (190). Things briefly picked up again in the early 1990s, only to decrease again after 1995. During this time, the book market changed "from a steady growing market into a cyclical one" (190). By 2000, people were buying 18% fewer 'General books[4]' than 25 years earlier. "Although initially linked to the economic circumstances, the downward cycle of the book market has since suffered primarily from competition from new media like commercial television (…) and the personal computer (the internet and games)" (190). To reiterate, there were two major slumps in the book market which affected the rate of translations published worldwide, with the initial decline of the book market being the result of a period of overproduction following the introduction of paperback books. "The second one, at the beginning of the 1980s, was part of the more structural transformation of the book business: the number of books published diminished, sales were in decline, and the reprint ratio diminished as well. This is one of the explanations for the temporary decline in the translation ratio" (190).

Although the translation growth rate has always been uneven, it is worth noting that translations from all languages continued to increase from 1946 until 1980. Unsurprisingly, translations from English grew the most, from 2% to 15% of all books published in 1976. "But the

[4] Heilbron distinguishes 'General books' from Educational and Scientific books (2007: 190).

share of translations from other languages also increased. German translations expanded from 1.4% (1946) to nearly 6% (1980), and translations from Other Languages went up from 1.2 to 2.6% (1984)" (Heilbron 2008: 191). Following the economic downturn of the 1980s, however, translation rates shrank: "translations from German declined from 5.7% (1978) to 3.4% (1997), translations from French from 2.7% (1980) to 1.7% (1997), translations from Other Languages from 2.6% (1984) to 2.1% (1997). For a while, even translations from English decreased slightly: from 15.1% (1976) to 14.2% (1986)" (192). Following this trend, English is the only language that recovered, and by 1997, the share of translations from English had increased from 14% to 21% of all books published worldwide (192).

Heilbron suggests that the growth in translations from English was strengthened by the fall of communism in Eastern Europe, "leaving the U.S. as the only superpower" (192). The sheer number of languages in the European Union also solidified the need for a common language – a contest that English ultimately won. When we consider that close to one third of the planet now speaks English as a first or second language (Crystal 2008: 1), it becomes very easy to see how the global obsession with American culture arises mainly out of accessibility. Conversely, if Americans publish relatively few translations, it might be partly due to the idea that out of all the cultural industries, the book market is resisting globalization more than any other (Sapiro 2010: 419). In addition, the American book market is still relatively recent; if the American book industry grew out of a need to combat British hegemony, the low translation ratio in the United States might be seen as a way of asserting autonomy. As Casanova states, older literary fields are more autonomous than younger ones (Casanova 1999: 85). While this statement was meant to support the idea that French-speaking Belgium is dominated by France, and German-speaking Switzerland is dominated by Germany, it wasn't that long ago that the United States were under the dominion of Great-Britain. Considering the influence of American culture across the world, it is difficult to

imagine that the American book market's resistance to translation arises out of that country's need to affirm its independence, but it may just be that we are feeling the aftershocks of a book market that is not that old, and that is still enjoying its ability to assert its freedom from British hegemony and European culture.

This explanation doesn't account for the fact that Britain also presents the same 3% translation ratio, but this too is attributable to general theories surrounding the globalization of the book market, which state that it is normal for dominant languages to translate less than dominated language groups (Heilbron 2008: 188). Furthermore, English isn't just dominant because of the allure of American culture – it is also the language of business, and the global lingua franca. In this regard, "far from favoring diversity, globalization has reinforced the domination of English" (Sapiro 2010: 423). "As Abram de Swaan demonstrated in his analysis of the European language system, the more languages, the more English" (Heilbron 2008: 192).

Language Logistics and the Future of Print

Logistics is involved in the low rate of translations into English in the sense that, very few literary agents, publishers, and editors speak all of the languages they would need to speak to evaluate numerous works translated from many languages. In this sense, our inability to understand the languages we need to translate is hindering our openness translation itself. In most cases, a publisher must rely on target-language readability to perform an assessment of translation quality, and this becomes the only criterion of evaluation. This challenges our notion of the quality-assurance process which is usually involved in publishing. Who is the translator? How do we know we hold a good, faithful translation in our hands? How do we know the original work or initial translation hasn't been compromised in the editing process? When it comes to editing a work in

translation, “one editor will be responsible in a publishing house for a number of different literatures and languages. We are now in an age where we are spending more time than ever before pointing up the intrinsic complexity of translation but we have less and less time to make that complexity a textual reality” (Simeone in Cronin 2003: 121). American literary agent Nicole Aragi agrees that there should be more books in translation, but she doesn’t know where to begin. “I think one problem is that I don’t read in other languages, and that most agents don’t either. If you can’t read a book in its original language and form a view on it, then that’s the first barrier. You need to find a reader in that language who you can absolutely trust, but even then, where is the personal response you need in order to know you really love something?” (Aragi qtd. in Lee 2013).

The electronic publishing scene has also democratized the publishing industry somewhat, as publishing models have morphed from the selling a small number of ‘expensive’ books to a few people to selling a large number ‘cheap’ books to countless readers (Packer 2014). Self-publishing e-book platforms, which allow minor language writers to publish their books in English translation without the support of a publisher, also mean that “anyone who presents a translation and enough money can get their ‘unreadable’ book published” (Watson 2011). Robert Elsie, one of three professional literary translators in Albania, has said that this phenomenon creates monstrosities, recalling an instance where he overheard someone saying, “My daughter has done four years of English in high school, so she’s going to translate my novel” (ibid.). These instances showcase the understandable impulse to accelerate the consecration process through translation. They also reflect a trend known as ‘wiki-translation,’ that is to say, “emerging forms of collaborative, community translation which are facilitated by global information technology” (Cronin 2010: 136). This is not to say that self-published translators are necessarily filling a translation need (although maybe sometimes they are), but their initiatives are reflecting a world where “translation consumers are now becoming translation producers” (ibid.). Though the quality of these works might be

questionable in the sense that they are not necessarily being subjected to any sort of mediation or editing process before reaching the publication phase, wiki-translation is positive insofar as that it "points to the making visible of the demands of translation for larger groups of users" (ibid.).

Self-publishing practices are not just limited to e-books. Recently, the book market has developed print-on-demand (POD) technologies that allow vendors to print a single copy of a given book, which liberates publishers from having to commit to a full print run of a title they may not be sure about, or can't afford print. Namely, Amazon uses POD technology for its self-publishing platform, and Rice University Press, which initially closed in 1996, was revived eleven years later "with the idea that it would publish online only, using low-cost, print-on-demand [books] for those who want to hold what they are reading" (Jaschik 2007). Although there is growing evidence to show that this might be where the future of print is heading, there is still a case to be made for print. As we will see in Chapter 4, a number of independent presses put a great deal of thought into the design and tactility of their books, which may help to draw in readers. There is also an emerging trend in the publishing industry where minor language publishers are producing single copies of bound and printed books to send to international publishers (Watson 2011). This practice is presumed to provide a more vivid impression than the traditional practice of sending a sample chapter with a sample translation in PDF format, as it gives publishers a tangible idea of what they could produce. Accordingly, "the physical book seems to matter more than the full translation itself. [Agents] found that even their picture books sold better when a publisher received an English edition instead of a Slovenian original and a PDF of the full translation" (ibid.). Although e-book publishing is gaining momentum, printed books remain an important step in the publication of a legitimate literary artefact. Because of the costs associated with publishing a book in print, the print medium presents a form of consecration in and of itself. As Cronin states, "the mode of

communication of the message has a discernable effect on the status of the message in question and the quality of its reception" (Cronin 2003: 21).

English as a Pivot Tongue

Like globalization, "translation is all about making connections, linking one culture and language to another, setting up the conditions for an open-ended exchange of goods, technologies and ideas" (Cronin 2003: 41). Although translation is often viewed as a process of deformation, which creates a cycle of dependency, it is in fact crucial for the preservation of various world literatures and our understanding of past cultures. In this capacity, translation stimulates creativity, allows us to forge a more profound connection with history, and promotes cross-cultural exchanges and understanding. Esther Allen speculates that the uneven flows of translation are due to the global appeal of English, which has been strengthened by technological developments and the invention of the Internet in the United States. "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 inflections are tidy and relatively easy to learn compared with heavily inflected languages and those that have other complex morphological variations" (Allen 18). To the detriment of cultural diversity, as a global language, English behaves "more like an invasive species than a lingua franca, resisting and supplanting whatever is not written in itself, speaking in the loudest voices while failing to pay much attention at all to anything said in any other language" (Allen 21).

By virtue of being 'louder' and more accessible, the idea of being translated into English is that much more appealing:

> 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 (Allen 23).

David Bellos has described English as a *pivot tongue*. Because it becomes easier to get a book in another language if it already exists in English, "translators into English play an important role in the international trade in books" (Bellos 212), even though there are relatively few of them. Considering that the number of native speakers a language has is not a reliable indicator of whether that language is considered central or peripheral, and that the flows of translations tend to move from the core to the periphery rather than the other way around, Heilbron and Sapiro have also noted that translations often pass through the intermediary of a central language:

> The more central a language is, the more it has the capacity to function as an intermediary or vehicular language. Thus, the English or French translation of a Norwegian or Korean work is quickly announced by its publisher, who foresees that translation into a central language will be immediately followed by a quite large wave of translations into other languages (Heilbron and Sapiro 2007: 96).

English's failure to translate other languages is that much more problematic when we consider that it doesn't just deprive native English speakers from contact with other world literatures, "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" (Allen 23). Furthermore, when we consider that "the direction of translation is overwhelmingly from and into English" (Venuti in Cronin 2003: 88), that means that minor languages are, for the most part, not communicating between each other without the mediation of English. However, it is equally important to note that "English speakers are obviously not directly responsible for the use of English as a pivot, because the only folk for whom English is never a pivot language are the speakers of English themselves" (Bellos 215). Rather, the issue stems from the international

publishing industry, which is continuously seeking to accrue literary capital through translation into and out of English. In this sense, society has embraced a diffusionist model of culture, where "globalization becomes synonymous with Modernity and the West – [with] Western ideas gradually spreading to the rest of the non-Western world" (Cronin 2003: 77).

Second Language Acquisition Around the World

In an effort to understand why so few books are translated into English, we need to consider that relatively few native English speakers are proficient enough in a second language to become translators. "The general decline in foreign-language learning in the English-speaking world in recent years can be attributed in part to the ready identification of English as the sole language of globalization" (Holborow qtd. in Cronin 2003: 49). From this perspective, it is crucial to consider that foreign-language learning isn't just waning in the English-speaking world; when given the chance, more and more people are choosing to learn English as a second language.

> If we except English from the picture, the situation is not much better in many other countries throughout the world. Language-learning, without which translation is impossible, is, if nothing else, a form of prolonged interaction with another people, language and culture. It is difficult, unpredictable, occasionally humiliating and often exasperating, like all worthwhile engagements with difference. Remove language and the risk is a multicultural sweatshop of tamed, sanitized differences, the dangerous ingredient of linguistic diversity corralled off backstage in kitchens and call-centres (Cronin 2003: 100).

The obvious consequence of a lack of language diversity across the world is a reduced pool of translators who are ready, willing, and able to create viable translations. In North America, this problem may be traced in part to a lack of translation programs in American universities, which have come to devalue "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" (Allen 28).

This trend creates a ripple effect where a number of university presses, which have traditionally represented some of "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" (Allen 29). This doesn't just impact literary translation, it affects the social sciences as well. With little hope of ever being translated into English, social scientists are "under ever-increasing pressure to write in English, whatever their first language might be" (29). According to the American Council of Learned Societies, this has precipitated the "increasing homogenization and impoverishment of social science discourse" (29).

In addition to depleting the quality of the discourse, the trend to move away from translation in favour of encouraging authors to write directly in English, no matter what their first language might be, is affecting the quality of education, or students' ability to fully grasp what they are reading. As Bente Christensen states, "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" (qtd. in Allen 29).

> 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 (Maalouf qtd. in Allen 29-30).

Alternatively, "The developmental state needs to see translation as part of a 'local project' which is also paradoxically a repudiation of the potential ethnocentric narrowness of that project in its

acknowledgement of the necessary interdependence and openness of culture itself" (Cronin 2003: 56). When authors are repeatedly encouraged or required to write in English when English is not their native language, the goal is to promote understanding, not diversity. In theory, the result is normalized writing, which doesn't necessarily reflect the difference or otherness that readers absorb when reading a text in translation. On the other hand, when Cronin proposes that we view translation as a local project, the goal is "to promote different national literatures but the effect is to create diversity (…). In other words, though the international publishing industry operates globally, geographical breadth does not guarantee variety of translation content. It is the affirmation of difference (at national level) that leads to the conservation of difference (at international level)" (56). Although writings produced in an author's non-native English may present an effective method for communicating ideas, the process is one of assimilation, and it endangers the global cultural ecosystem.

Neo-Babelianism and the Tragedy of Translated Men

If translation is the ultimate "consequence of events surrounding the construction of the tower of Babel" (59), the situation described above is one that we might associate with a concept that Cronin has termed, neo-Babelianism, or "the desire for mutual, instantaneous intelligibility between human beings speaking, writing, and reading different languages" (59). A neo-Babelian society views linguistic diversity as an obstacle to global understanding. The idea is that if everyone spoke English, we would all understand each other; "This is what might be termed *neo-Babelianism by default*" (60). In this context, translation wouldn't necessarily disappear, but it would be transferred: in a neo-Babelian world, "translation is entirely carried out by non-English speakers. It is they who must translate themselves into English" (60).

> English is predominantly a source rather than a target language in translation terms. In other words, to arrive at the neo-Babelian future of one world/one (dominant) language, a dual translation burden is placed on those who do not speak the dominant language. Not only must they translate themselves into English but they must also translate from English into their own language. The translation task is then redoubled in intensity, but, because of the nature and direction of the translation, it is erased from public view in the global parochialism of Anglophone monoglossia (60).

When we consider best translation practices, this is less than ideal; very few minor language speakers have the fluency required to produce translations that are both faithful and compelling in non-native English. The neo-Babelian perspective therefore becomes somewhat utopian; in reality, when we consider that 50 to 70 percent of translations published in Europe are from English (Heilbron 2008: 434) and that only 2 to 4 percent of books published in the United States and in the United Kingdom are translated from other languages (Venuti 1995: 11), it becomes clear that non-native English speakers have indeed taken on the task of producing the bulk of the world's translations, and that these people are not translating into English.

As a result, the dynamics of globalization have meant that the time, cost, and burden of finding a qualified translator is passed onto "the translated who then become invisible in the linguistic accounts of the powerful" (Cronin 2003: 60). In *La République Mondiale des Lettres*, Pascale Casanova writes of "The Tragedy of Translated Men," contending that their status as deprived writers allows them to be more creative and stylistically inventive in their work. Citing among others Franz Kafka, Milan Kundera, and Kateb Yacine, Casanova asserts that "the greatest revolutionaries of literature are to be found among the linguistically dominated, condemned to search for ways out from destitution and dependence" (Casanova 1999: 255).

Because all dominated writers must confront the issue of linguistic difference in some fashion, by virtue of not writing in English, all minor language writers will encounter translation at some point. In other words, all minor language writers are *translated men*, and regardless of their relationship to the dominant language, *translated men* must "choose between translation into a literary language that cuts them off from their compatriots, but that gives them literary existence, [or retreating] into a small language that condemns them to invisibility or else to a purely national literary existence" (257).

To reach a global audience, all writers on the periphery must deal with distance and decentering in some way, whether it is through the "adoption of a dominant language, self-translation, construction of a dual body of work by means of translation back and forth between two languages, creation and promotion of a national and/or popular language, development of a new writing, symbiotic merger of two languages," (257-258) or more succinctly, translation itself. Although English's status as a lingua franca allows a growing number of international authors to express themselves adequately in a central language, their relationship to the language is always somewhat mediated. In fact, Casanova argues that, "For writers from countries that have long been under colonial domination, (…) bilingualism (defined as "embodied" translation) is the primary

and indelible mark of political domination" (258). Accordingly, globalization has meant that a growing number of bilingual individuals routinely live and breathe translation, as they must continuously translate themselves and the world around them, whether they do so consciously or not. To broaden the scope of this context, Ilan Stavans of Restless books has gone so far as to state that "there is no work of literature that is not translated, even when it's written and read in the same language" (qtd. in Riddle 2015). Stavans is a self-professed immigrant and lover of world literature. For him, translation is "the very source of what literature is about" (ibid.).

Under these circumstances, the field of translation studies is constructive because it brings the translator out of obscurity, shedding light on the importance of hiring qualified translators with the right skills to do the work. In today's globalized society, this can mean the difference between clear and muddied communications, which can make or break the masses' reception of a movie, book, or article. Given the uneven flows of translation today, "We might begin to ask whether in the era of globalization the representation of the translator does not need to be fundamentally reconfigured" (Cronin 2003: 64).

What would this reconfiguration look like? The answer may be as simple as endowing translators with additional agency. Although the world is set up in such a way that governments, companies, and publishing houses get to decide what does and doesn't get translated, these institutions might consider passing on translation-related decisions to the translators themselves. After all,

> Historians, sociologists and economists are asked for their advice on a whole range of issues because they are historians, sociologists and economists, not because they are pretending to be something else. Thus, it is by revealing, not disguising, their identity as translators that translators can make a legitimate bid to make more central interventions in culture, society and politics (Cronin 2003: 67).

In *The Handbook of Translation Studies*, Hélène Buzelin states that "The concept of agency is inextricably linked to that of structure. Together, they reflect a longstanding debate: are human actions governed by objective structures or by free will? While theories of social determination give the upper hand to objective structures, theories of social action place more emphasis on free will" (Buzelin 2010). From a sociological perspective, when it comes to driving change in the publishing industry, namely regarding the low percentage of translated literature in the English-speaking world, it is up to translators to take charge. As Pierre Bourdieu asserts, "promoting or translating a foreign literature may become a strategy to take position, or improve one's position, in a national literary field," (Bourdieu qtd. in Buzelin 2010).

"Clonialism," or Translation as Duplication

As we will further examine in Chapter 2, the idea that the translator's task is to "produce a translation that reads like the original," (Cronin 2003: 128) suggests that "the activity of translation (…) is somehow vaguely fraudulent" (129). This is translation as duplication, and it is relevant to the topic of globalization because the darker side of globalization is usually presented as such. No matter how far a person travels across the world, they encounter the same fast-food restaurants, the same TV shows, the same films, software, and cultural icons. "This is doubling as chain reaction" (129). The spread of the Double implies the eradication of diversity. In the context of publishing, it also implies that the same books are available from one bookstore to the next. What was known as colonialism in the 19th century "gives way to what we might term the 'clonialism' of the twenty-first century" (129). The migration of commodities is made possible by translators, who produce doubles in the form of translated texts, including subtitles, restaurant menus, or books themselves. "This is globalization as homogenization, a McWorld bereft of difference because under clonialism

everything turns out to be a replica, a simulacrum, a copy of a limited set of economically and culturally powerful originals" (129).

Less pejoratively, "A primary function of translation in a global age (…) is to replenish the intertextual resources of a culture. The more books get translated into a language, the more books get potentially read in that language and the more books there are to potentially influence future writers, readers (and translators) in that culture." (133) In this context, intertextual influence can either be direct or indirect. Direct influence implies that the writer reads a foreign text in its original language, whereas indirect influence implies that he or she reads the work in translation. "A feature of English in the current period is that it is both a source of direct intertextual influence as a language that is widely spoken and read, and a source of indirect influence as the world's most widely translated language" (133). This implies a high level of cultural influence and economic power.

> Cultural influence cannot be dissociated from economic power, and indeed cultural prestige further augments economic might because culture has become such an important selling factor in selling goods (…). More than 60 percent of world economic production is accounted for by the speakers of three languages, English, German, and Japanese. If we add French and Spanish, the figure rises to 75 percent (…) So what we get to read in translation in the era of global communication is significantly determined by the economic position of the source-language country. And this, in turn, affects what might be called the intertextual hinterland for any group of readers and writers, i.e. the writers who are likely to be able to exercise an influence on, provide inspiration for, give new direction to, a culture (134).

The notion that translation has the direct ability to influence other writers represents a giant responsibility for translators. Although most translators work in order to earn a living, in some cases, many translators are also responsible for producing cultural artefacts. From this perspective, "There must be an activist dimension to translation which involves an engagement with cultural politics of society at national and international levels" (134). The bottom line is that translation schools need to recognize the "need to teach a more engaged, activist notion of what constitutes a

translator's responsibility and also that this responsibility be firmly situated in trans-national translation history so that any politics of translation is explicitly situated in identifiable historical contexts" (135).

For postcolonial authors, one such way of engaging in cultural activism has been the creation of hybrid texts, involving "the embedding of indigenous words and phrases" (135). This too results in a doubling of sorts, as we find ourselves reading texts that present two languages at once. "If English is notably failing to translate foreign texts into the language, this does not mean that translation has gone away. Rather, the difference is now internalized in the English source text as opposed to being externalized in the foreign source text" (135-136). In the realm of Translation Studies, the issue of how to translate the hybrid text is its own puzzle, but in a globalized society that views translation as "an unwelcome reminder of otherness, [and of] the bothersome double [that] does not go away," (136) hybrid texts provide English-speaking readers with a glimpse of the foreign in an English context, which also overturns "the fluency fetish in translation-resistant Anglophone culture" (135).

Translation as a Science of Difference

In addition to all of the issues described above, globalization has a tendency to oversimplify language representation across the world. Post-colonial critics tend to "reduce Europe to two languages, English and French, and to two countries, England and France" (140) and "Until recently, 70 percent of the books produced in the world originated in four languages, English, French, Russian, and German" (139). If we look at percentages of children's literature in translation, for instance, we notice that "3 percent of the output in Britain and the United States are translations. This compares with 70 percent in Finland, 50 percent in the Netherlands, 50 percent in Italy, and 33.5 percent in Germany" (O'Sullivan in Cronin 2003: 139). In this regard, it would

appear that the fewer speakers a language has, the more literature it imports. As Johann Heilbron has found,

> For every six books translated into Dutch, there is only one book translated from Dutch. This discrepancy applies to all smaller and more peripheral language groups. Writers and intellectuals from these countries must contend with the one-way mirror effect. They are like observers behind a half-transparent mirror, attentively observing what is happening in the international scene, but not participating. For small countries and peripheral language groups, international communication is very much one-way traffic (Heilbron 2008: 193).

Although there is a correlation between the amount that a country translates and the volume of its book production, "it is not a mechanical reflection of the book trade. Markets are in themselves social constructions, which are not independent from cultural and political factors" (Sapiro 2010: 424). More specifically, certain languages "owe their position mainly to state policies, and a change in political power relations or the disappearance of such policies can alter this position" (424). For example, Russian was the source language for 12.5% of translated books leading up to 1989, but this figure dropped to 2.5% after the end of the cold war (424). Conversely, and for reasons unrelated to politics, the number of books translated from Japanese essentially doubled between the 1980s and 1990s, mainly due to the popularity of manga comic books (424).

If state policies are at least partially responsible for the uneven flows of translation, there is also the invisibility of translation to consider. "If translation has traditionally suffered from lack of visibility then there is a sense in which translators working in minority languages are doubly invisible at a theoretical level" (Cronin 2003: 140). In this sense, the issues that minority language speakers have to contend with are not the same as those of more central languages (140), and from the perspective of minority languages, it is important to distinguish "between *translation-as-assimilation* and *translation-as-diversification*. Language speakers can either be assimilated through self-translation to a dominant language or they can retain and develop their language

through the good offices of translation and thus resist incorporation" (142). Moreover, "(…) a domesticating strategy which is perceived as regressive, ethnocentric and appropriative in the case of a major language does not necessarily carry the same meanings for a minority language. If a language in a dependent position fails to translate, then the language itself loses its *raison d'être* as it absorbs the dominant language in a wholly unassimilated fashion" (162). In this respect, it is that much more important to translate *intentionally*. The international book market stands to benefit from publishers who are aware of the state of the global flows of translation, and from translators who are aware of the conditions under which their work will be received in the target culture. That being said, "In any meaningful translation ecology, translation cannot be unidirectional, however noble the intentions. Languages not only function to give us information about where we live, they also tell us about things taking place where we do not live" (169).

The failure to translate doesn't just imply the inability to understand other cultures, but also a refusal to embrace diversity. In fact, "If translation is a science of anything, it is a science of difference, for without difference there would be no translation" (169). Although failing to translate, or translating very little, may seem like it would strengthen English's dominant position in the world system, any language that ceases to import literatures from other cultures will eventually begin to stagnate. That being said, the number of languages a culture translates from is not the only way to quantify cultural diversity. The interpretation of these translations is of some importance, as is their reception, "which implies not only importation but also appropriation and social uses" (Sapiro 2010: 437). All this to say, studying translation practices and the reception of translated literature can provide us with a solid framework for understanding how the circulation of foreign literature contributes to cultural diversity (437).

What Might the Future Look Like?

The advent of globalization has caused a number of spikes and crashes over the last twenty years, from the shrinking of the publishing world to the global economic crisis to the rise of electronic publishing. We will probably always need to contend with certain aspects, such as the time-sensitive nature of the translation industry and the need to adapt to new technologies. The uneven flows of translation, however, may not prove to be so rigid. As more children of migrants and immigrants are born and raised in English-speaking countries, the number of fluently bilingual English speakers will increase, as will the number of people with a desire to share the stories that reflect their heritage and worldview. This is not to say that all migrant children will be raised speaking multiple languages, but many will, and this will likely broaden the pool of potential translators with the ability to translate minor languages in English-speaking countries around the world.

Chapter 2. The Politics of Untranslatability

In *Translation and Identity*, Michael Cronin writes of Dublin City University's first Postgraduate conference in Translation Studies, where many presenters underscored the importance of translation for cultures, languages, and societies, only to go on to criticize the translations at hand, highlighting the ways in which they were inaccurate, inadequate, or even incompetent. In his words, "the presentations (…) showed again and again how translation as transformation involved loss, misrepresentation, partiality and distortion" (Cronin 2006: 128). Unsurprisingly perhaps, when a group of people (in this case, academics) decide to focus on how the act of translation is always somehow inadequate, it becomes very hard to argue that translation "can be relied upon to perform the crucial task of the maintenance of linguistic and cultural diversity" (128-129).

For philosophers and comparative literature scholars, the notion of translation failure arises out of the idea that nothing is translatable. Namely, this phrase appears as one of Emily Apter's "Twenty theses on translation" in *The Translation Zone*, where she reiterates Alain Badiou's idea of translation as an "imperfect vehicle" and Walter Benjamin's argument that "to translate mere content is simply to repeat, badly, the most inessential nature of the original" (Apter 2006: 87). But even if translation sometimes fails, avoiding translation is not the answer:

> The challenge of Comp lit is to balance the singularity of untranslatable alterity against the need to translate *quand même*. For if translation failure is acceded to too readily, it becomes an all-purpose expedient for staying narrowly within one's own monolingual universe. A parochialism results, sanctioned by false pieties about not wanting to 'mistranslate' the other. This parochialism is the flipside of a globalism that theorizes place and translates everything without ever traveling anywhere (91).

The issue, then, might be that globalization has made it too easy for us to feel connected to the rest of the world; remote and virtual experiences have given us a false sense of how much we know

and understand other cultures. In today's globalized society, national borders are blurred and moral codes are disturbed, "even as repressed conflicts continue to well up in uncanny ways" (Damrosch 2009: 129). The result is "freedom and self-invention, dissolving provincialisms and shaking up all routines" (129). The problem with viewing translation as an impossible task that is doomed to fail might be that we are expecting too much of translation. Although it is unreasonable to expect world literature to provide us with a deep understanding of all cultures and everything in the world, "reading world literature should stimulate us to get out into the world" (129). As Erica Debeljak writes,

> All of the squabbles in academia about good and bad translations, faithful and beautiful translations, domesticating and foreignizing translations are interesting, but in the current cultural battle, they are finally beside the point. It is rather like the old saying that the only thing worse than bad publicity is no publicity all. Likewise, the only thing worse than bad translation is no translation at all (Debeljak 2005).

What is World Literature?

The origin of the term, world literature, has much to contribute to any discussion on the issue. The compound noun, *Weltliteratur*, was famously employed by Goethe in 1827 when he proclaimed that "national literature is now rather an unmeaning term; the epoch of world literature is at hand, and every one must strive to hasten its approach" (Damrosch 2003: 1). Two decades later, Marx and Engels would reprise the term in *The Communist Manifesto* to demonstrate newly global trade relations (3). "For Marx and Engels, as for Goethe, world literature is the quintessential literature of modern times" (4). The term helped to shape "both a literary perspective and a new cultural awareness, a sense of an arising global modernity, whose epoch, as Goethe predicted, we now inhabit" (1). To put it another way, as early as the 19th century, globalization promised to unify the world in such a manner that literatures would no longer be limited to national borders.

"As rapidly as 'world literature' has been expanding in many regions in recent years, we are only now just beginning to feel the possibilities of the literary revolution announced by Goethe, Marx, and Engels over a century and a half ago" (Damrosch 2006: 219-220). However, though the world is more unified than it once was, the idea of the nation-state is not as withered as Marx and Engels predicted it would be (212). And even if it were, "it remains unclear how we can really study world literature in the absence of any attention to the cultural space of the nation" (212). Indeed, in its broadest sense, "world literature could include any work that has ever reached beyond its home base, but (…) a work only has an effective life as world literature whenever, and wherever, it is actively present within another literary system beyond that of its original culture" (212).

For this reason, as we resign ourselves to defining world literature as global literature, international literature, or perhaps more succinctly, "everything written in all languages ever" ("World Lite"), these interpretations do not account for translation as an unequal exchange, and conceptually, world literature remains an ambiguous term. If translating world literature and the politics of untranslatability remain contentious topics in certain circles[5], it may be because, as Franco Moretti has asserted, although the term has been around for close to 2,000 years, we have yet to define "a genuine theory of the object (…) to which it refers. We have no set of concepts, no hypotheses to organize the immense quantity of data that constitute world literature. We do not *know* what world literature is" (Moretti 2006: 113).

World-Systems Analysis and the Mechanics of Diffusion

In a paper titled, *Evolution, World-Systems, Weltliteratur***,** Moretti proposes that if we want to understand what world literature *can* mean, we first need to separate past and present. In this

[5] I mean this to include comparative literature and philosophy scholars, but the abstract group mentioned may also include translators and translation studies scholars, and anyone who deals with literature in translation.

regard, Goethe's idea of world literature is not the same as world literature today. "The lesson of the two world literatures is that the past and the present of world literature should be seen, not as 'better' or 'worse epochs,' but as *structurally so unlike each other* that they require completely different theoretical approaches" (Moretti 2006: 120-121). More specifically, leading up to the 18th century, historical world literature is a product of literary diversification and nation states, whereas today's world literature has been transformed by globalization and the convergence of various national literatures, and is best explained by some version of world-systems analysis.

In the context of translation, the world-system shows us how translation may help various national literatures to become more autonomous, and to demonstrate how the less literary capital a nation produces, the more its literary work will be governed by national politics. Within this system, all national spaces are located between two poles: one pole is autonomous and cosmopolitan, the other is heteronomous (or commercial), governed by the nation and politics. Both poles are located at either end of the world literary system, which is made up of all national literary spaces – hierarchically organized according to their relative cultural capital. The system allows us to see the social and political inequalities between languages. And since all languages are not equal, translation cannot be considered an equal mode of transfer. To put it another way, some languages are considered more prestigious than others:

> Il s'agit du prestige, de la croyance proprement littéraire attachée à une langue, de la valeur qui lui est accordée littérairement et qui tiennent à son ancienneté, au prestige de sa poésie, au raffinement des formes littéraires élaborées dans cette langue, aux traditions, aux effets littéraires liés notamment aux traductions et à leur nombre (Casanova 2002: 8).

Casanova proposes replacing standard polysystem terms like 'core' and 'periphery' by the idea that all literatures are either 'dominant' and 'dominated,' because these terms are better at conveying the hierarchical power relations involved in the discussion. This change is not merely

semantic; it also allows us to shift our perspective as far as analyzing the theoretical instruments at our disposal. Instead of viewing the world literary system as a series of concentric circles with a central target to be envisaged, we might think of it as a 'floral' figure, invoking a structure where dominated languages are connected at the centre by polyglots. The more multilinguals speak a common language, the more dominant that language then becomes in the system (8).

By contrast, Moretti's theory of literary diversification has grown out of evolutionary theory in the sense that literatures have evolved much like natural forms: "forms do not just 'change,' but do so by always diverging from each other" (Moretti 2006: 114). To illustrate this point, Moretti conjures the metaphor of the tree. "The tree describes the passage from unity to diversity: one tree, with many branches: from Indo-European, to dozens of different languages" (Moretti 2004: 159). In this manner, "the result of *divergence and branching*" (Moretti 2006: 114) doesn't only show us how nature has evolved to present many forms, it also shows us how literatures have evolved in a similar fashion, and that this is a good place to start in an effort to understand world literature.

The issue with translation, Moretti asserts, is that even though its aim is to promote diversification by spreading ideas across cultures, this process may interfere with the natural development of individual literatures. In fact, if we look at evolution and the development of literary history leading up to the 18th century, diversification tends to occur when cultures are isolated from each other. While researching the international market for 18th and 19th century novels, Moretti concluded, much like Even-Zohar, that as books from the core were exported into the semi-periphery and the periphery, "they were read, admired, imitated, turned into models – thus drawing those literatures into the orbit of core ones, and indeed 'interfering' with their autonomous development" (115). As these works were diffused across the world system, the novelistic forms produced by cultures on the periphery began to mirror the style of works produced by core cultures,

meaning that translation didn't result in diversification, but instead contributed to making literatures more similar across nations. And herein lies the paradox, because without translation, there would be no world literature. More specifically, the idea that different cultures produce distinct literatures with unique plots and styles isn't worth very much unless the rest of the world is able to access these works through translation. In this sense, translation is both constructive and destructive; a mode of transfer that "acts potentially not just as a viral agent destroying cherished pieties but as a bridge which opens the door to a whole new way of experiencing and interpreting the world" (Cronin 2006: 120).

This contradiction allows us to see that in order to truly understand world literature, we need to be open to the fact that "literature itself functions in two completely incompatible ways" (Moretti 2006: 116). First, there is a historical argument to be made, which accounts for the diversification of literatures – a natural, evolutionary process resulting from the fact that until fairly recently, human cultures were unaware of their origins. Literary history also helps us to understand the proliferation of sameness across the literary system, which appears "sometime around the eighteenth century, when the international literary market becomes strong enough to (begin to) subjugate those separate cultures" (116).

Second, there is the morphological debate, which is tied to diffusion, or what we may also think of as the global flows of translation. From an evolutionary standpoint, it is reasonable to expect that "diversity equals divergence: that new forms only arise by branching out from pre-existing ones via some kind of mutation" (116). However, while the world-systems perspective does an excellent job at showing "how forms *move*, a theory of diffusion cannot account for how they *change*, for the simple reason that diffusion is not meant to multiply forms, but to *reduce* their number by maximizing the space occupied by just one of them" (116). In other words, diffusion allows us to preserve literatures, but it doesn't do much to encourage the creation of new ones. If

we really want to produce new forms, we need to look at the convergence of distinct lineages. And this is where Moretti suggests a break in the timeline as far as how literatures evolve. As Thomas Pavel proposes in *La Pensée du Roman*, "divergence is (…) the driving force in the first fifteen centuries of the novel's existence, and convergence from the eighteenth century onwards" (qtd. in Moretti 2006: 117). So although diffusion promotes sameness and conservatism in literature, it occurs along with convergence, and Moretti suggests that there might be a functional relationship between the two.

The Consequences of Standardization

As mentioned above, the relationship between diffusion and convergence might be best explained by the metaphor of translation as a bridge between cultures, because "any culture of connectivity or connectedness implies a degree of separateness and without separateness there is nothing to connect. If translation is proverbially a bridge-building exercise (…), it must not be forgotten that translation has as much a vested interest in distinctness as in connectedness (Cronin 2006: 121). This notion is also congruent with the idea that "modern capitalism bridges the greatest of oceans, and subjects all societies to a single, continuous geography" (Moretti 2006: 116). From this perspective, the concern is that as the world becomes more open and accessible, cultural diversity is threatened. This idea is not new, as Eric Auerbach has observed it as early as 1960: "Our earth, the domain of Weltliteratur is growing smaller and losing its diversity. Yet Weltliteratur, as it was conceived by Goethe, does not merely refer to what is generically common and human; rather it considers humanity to be the product of fruitful intercourse between its members" (qtd. in Cronin 2006: 125). As a theme, the decline of diversity can also be observed in contemporary travel literature, where "Travellers go to far-off places, tell their readers that the 'exotic' is an illusion, that everywhere has now become much the same and that they themselves

are the last witnesses of differences which are about to disappear for ever" (Forsdick in Cronin 2006: 126). In these contexts, standardization is a major pejorative. "Things are always getting worse and the cultural critic like the despairing travel writer can only report on a world that is about to lose its distinctiveness and leave us adrift in a 'standardized world'" (Cronin 2006: 126). This reflects an extremely pessimistic view of the world, however, and it is important to remember that these writings are more often than not op-eds, written in an effort to defer the loss of diversity, which may be imminent, but has yet to occur. "Although humanity is settling into a 'monoculture,' it is at the same time still only *in the process of*, or *on the point of*, producing a 'beat-like' mass society" (Bongie qtd. in Cronin, 126-127). The impulse to forewarn people about the world's imminent loss of diversity reflects the idea that "there is no time like the present to tell us about all that is soon to be past" (127).

Cultural Negentropy and Translation as a Method of Creation

If the inclination to study the past is often present in academic circles, it is because " (…) academic or intellectual inquiry (…) is traditionally fixated on ends rather than beginnings" (Sloterdijk and Finkielkraut qtd. in Cronin 129). When Hegel asserted that "the owl of Minerva flies at dusk, his contention was that it is only after an event that we can make sense of it, that only when something is over can we begin to detect patterns" (129). In his investigation on humanity's interest in fiction, Frank Kermode further elaborated on this subject, asserting that:

> [A]s human beings are born in medias res and have no memory of their birth, and as death signals the extinction of consciousness, we need the fictional stories of other lives to vicariously experience their beginnings and endings (characters are born and die) and thus make sense of our own. What this attraction to endings produces, however, is arguably a culture of belatedness which is drawn inevitably to a sense of loss, of the entropic, as one is always discussing what is already gone, past, no longer, or what indeed might have been (129).

It is almost too easy to fall into a cycle of cynicism and negativity when we are basing our conclusions on past losses and failures. In an effort to fight this instinct, Cronin proposes that we might adopt a *negentropic translational perspective* that is "primarily concerned with the emergence of new cultural forms through translation practice and the way in which translation contributes to and fosters the persistence and development of diversity" (129). Accordingly, instead of bemoaning the random, chaotic, entropic transformations that translation generates, we might view such occurrences as a method of creation, which stands to promote rather than discourage diversity.

Casanova and Moretti both corroborate this negentropic perspective by showing how translation can result in the development of something new, most notably when faithfulness is compromised. To provide a concrete example, in *Evolution, World-Systems, Weltliteratur*, Moretti looks at Émile Zola's *L'Assommoir*, and its translations in Italy and Brazil (cultures which he identifies as being on the semi-periphery and periphery, respectively). In both cases, the novel's plot remains unaltered, while its style is greatly transformed. He goes on to state that he has observed similar cases in books from Indonesia, the Philippines, Japan, and Holland, where a common approach to translation is repeatedly observed: "a plot from the core, and a style from the periphery" (Moretti 2006: 118). For Moretti, this is possible because "the novel is a composite form, made of (…) plot and style: plot presiding over the internal concatenation of the events, and style over their verbal presentation" (118-119). In this sense, the target culture ends up acceding to a new kind of plot, written in a familiar style, which diverges from the original text, thus creating something new.

In *Consécration et accumulation de capital littéraire*, Casanova proposes the reverse when she asserts that translations from dominated languages into dominant ones tend to be less faithful and more free. More specifically, in the 19th century, when French was the most dominant

language in the world system, French translators tended towards adapting texts to fit their personal aesthetics and ways of thinking: “En France (…) on traduit en effet sans le moindre souci de fidélité: la position de la littérature et de la langue françaises incite des traducteurs à annexer les textes en les adaptant à leur propre esthétique ou à leurs catégories de pensée” (Casanova 2002: 11). Casanova also maintains that translations from a dominant language into a dominated one tend to be more faithful, because simple, direct translations that do not deviate from the original are thought of as the best way of endowing the dominated national system with new literary capital (ibid.).

In these instances, Moretti and Casanova’s observations show that whether a translation occurs from a dominant language into a dominated one or vice versa, the convergence of two distinct literatures can indeed result in something new. Moreover, just because a translation is not faithful or diverges from the original text, that doesn’t necessarily mean that the translation has failed. Before we proclaim that nothing is translatable, or that everything is translatable, we should first consider which is more desirable: to create a static, faithful version of a text that nobody will read? Or to create something new, of interest to the target culture, which happens to be based on an original text? Viewed in this manner, a successful translation might best be evaluated by its ability to find an enthusiastic audience.

Although translation is often viewed as a process of deformation, which creates a cycle of dependency, it is in fact crucial for the conservation of different world literatures and our understanding of past cultures. Translation allows us to pursue an ongoing dialogue with the past, because translated works make it possible to “bring foreign elements, extraneous ideas and fresh images into cultures which, without the kick start of otherness, remain stalled in an eternity of mediocrity” (Cronin 38).

> A clear example of translation perceived as promoting a dependent culture was the critical reaction of Irish-language writers to the state-sponsored Irish-language translation scheme for literary works in the 1920s and 1930s. The translation scheme was seen to be promoting a derivative culture, dependent on foreign literary products (mainly in English), cultivating cultural cringe rather than native creativity and autonomy (Cronin 2003: 38).

In this context, 'dependency' is relatively ambiguous, portraying a "relationship that is [both] sought and shunned, desired and condemned. By creating a certain relationship to the source language and culture, literary translation suggests that culturally there is no independence without dependence" (40). And so, even though translation may reveal a nation's dependencies, it also reveals the many connections that same culture has access to, which encourage collective creativity. This is commensurate with Kao's law, named after the Chinese-American thinker, John Kao, who states that "the power of creativity rises exponentially with the diversity and divergence of those connected into a network: in other words its capacity to innovate or create depends on dissonant and complementary ways of thinking, not on consensus" (Mulgan qtd. in Cronin 2003: 41).

Literary Internationalism in Lieu of World Literature

Just as Moretti has underscored the importance of separating past and present in an effort to qualify world literature, in an article titled *World Lite*: *What is Global Literature?,* The Editors at *n+1 Magazine* contend that, since the end of the cold war, world literature has entered a third, international phase. More specifically, world literature in the sense articulated by Goethe is no longer relevant today, and "has become an empty vessel for the occasional self-ratification of the global elite, who otherwise mostly ignore it" ("World Lite").

The problem with World Literature, The Editors at n+1 insist, is that as a genre or subject of academic study, it only applies to a very specific cannon of highbrow, intellectual works of *literature* that reflect distinct politics and aesthetics. "The globally literary content themselves with

the notion that merely to write or read 'literary' books is to enlist, aesthetically and politically, on the side of the angels," (ibid.). The Editors further insist that the works that make up this literary canon are based on tradition and that they don't reflect today's truth. Instead, we might look towards literary internationalism – a concept on the other side of what Casanova has termed the *Greenwich meridian of literature* – also known as the line which divides modern works from works of outmoded literature. The internationalist side of the meridian comprises modern, avant-garde or contemporary works that are more or less current. These oppose academic works, which are based on "outmoded models that belong to the literary past or otherwise fail to conform to the criteria that at any given moment determine the present" (Casanova 1999: 88).

In a review of Emily Apter's book, *Against World Literature: On the Politics of Untranslatability*, David Damrosch writes that "It is surely a mark of some kind of success when a movement begins to be attacked by its own participants," (Damrosch 2014: 504). If the alternative to world literature is literary internationalism, the virtuous nature of the latter category rests in its intention: a project to create a body of great books, rather than a series of commodities to be sold on the grounds that reading works of world literature will make one 'worldly.' As a result, publishers of international works are free to become tastemakers instead of catering to already existing tastes. "Global Lit tends to accept as given the tastes of an international middlebrow audience; internationalism, by contrast, seeks to create the taste by which it is to be enjoyed. The difference, crudely, is between a product and a *project*," ("World Lite").

The idea isn't necessarily new; The Editors at n+1 state that the model has been around for hundreds of years, echoing Damrosch's reference to Marx and Engels, who envisioned an "*internationalist* literature of the revolutionary left: journalism, treatises, and speeches, novels, poetry, plays, and memoirs necessarily written in a given vernacular but always aimed at a

borderless audience of radicals" (ibid.). Today, global literature is more widespread; anything can be written anywhere, in any language. For this reason, it becomes even more important to differentiate national writers from international ones within the concept of world-systems analysis:

> Just as the global space is organized with reference to a literary and cosmopolitan pole, on the one side, and a political and national pole on the other, each of its constituent spaces is structured by the rivalry between (…) 'national' writers (who embody a national or popular definition of literature) and 'international' writers (who uphold an autonomous conception of literature) (Casanova 1999: 108)

Consequently, we might intuit that literary internationalism is the ultimate indicator of autonomy. The concept mirrors Casanova's assertion that "In the most autonomous countries (…) literature cannot be reduced to political interests or used to suit national purposes" (Casanova 1999: 86), and it corroborates the growing appeal of writing in one's non-native English, even though the decision to adopt the dominant literary language is usually fraught with conflict: "L'adoption de la langue littéraire dominante – qui est toujours une décision douloureuse – est souvent une solution provisoire destinée à accélérer le processus de consécration" (Casanova 2002: 16).

Multinational Writers in Exile

Another factor that promotes internationalism is that, as David Damrosch has articulated, globalization has complicated the notion of 'home.' Thanks to affordable airfare, the Internet, and various technologies, staying connected to one's native country is much easier than it used to be. "There are still writers who emigrate permanently, as did James Joyce, Marguerite Yourcenar, and Vladimir Nabokov before them, making a permanent home far from their homeland. Yet a growing number of writers divide their time between two or more locations, actively participating in widely separated communities and often writing for and about both of them" (Damrosch 2009: 116). The result is a growing number of multinational writers whose writing reflects a multinational

experience. In *La République Mondiale des Lettres*, Casanova equates translation to the concept of *littérisation*, which implies "any operation—translation, self-translation, transcription, direct composition in the dominant language—by means of which a text from a literarily deprived country comes to be regarded as literary by the legitimate authorities" (Casanova 1999: 136). In this regard, literary works have the power to reflect a foreign point of view, even when they are directly written in the dominant language, and this process acts as a stand-in for translation. Salman Rushdie, who has famously portrayed Indian experiences by writing directly in English, reiterates this sentiment in the following quote: "The word 'translation' comes, etymologically, from the Latin for 'bearing across.' Having been born across the world, we are translated men. It is normally supposed that something always gets lost in translation; I cling, obstinately, to the notion that something can also be gained" (Rushdie qtd. in Casanova 1999: 136). Other authors, like Strindberg, Beckett, Kundera, and Nabokov, have taken it upon themselves to translate their own work in an effort to speed up the consecration process, which implies that translation has the power to elevate the status of a work of literature.

For the bilingual author, one of the most effective ways of ensuring that their work will cross literary borders is self-translation (Casanova 2002: 16). As stated above, the decision to write in a dominant language is usually a painful one to make, but it is also the only solution that will allow a writer to accelerate the consecration process to achieve the recognition of a wider, global audience (16). "The infinitely diverse practice of self-translation is at least to some extent a way for authors to try to achieve literary freedom by retaining control over the form of their writings, and this to claim an absolute autonomy" (Casanova 1999: 141-142). Indeed, "the writers who seek greater freedom for their work are those who know the laws of world literary space and who make use of them in trying to subvert the dominant norms of their respective national fields" (1999: 109).

One of the most famous instances of a writer finding success in exile is James Joyce, who was "rejected in Dublin, ignored in London, banned in New York," (Casanova 1999: 109) only to be glorified in Paris. Although Joyce already enjoyed a positive reputation in Anglo-American literary circles, especially among expatriated American in Paris, no one wanted to publish Ulysses in the early 1920s. At the time, Joyce's writing had been considered too scandalous, and anything he had published up to that point had been targeted by British and American censors. "It was therefore thanks to the literary authorities of Paris that Ulysses enjoyed a dual publication; but the book found an English-language publisher only as a consequence of the critical verdict of a great translator" (145).

It is worth mentioning that this example represents a different time, when writers went to Paris to be consecrated. Indeed, the configuration of today's literary space is more difficult to identify: "It may be that we find ourselves today in a transitional phase, passing from a world dominated by Paris to a polycentric and plural world where London and New York (…) contend with Paris for Hegemony" (164). In fact, many writers today make a decision to move to the United States to gain international recognition. "Every work from a dispossessed national space that aspires to the status of literature exists solely in relation to the consecrating authorities of the most autonomous places" (109). In this respect, Casanova's *Greenwich meridian of literature* doesn't just separate national literatures from international ones, it also opposes "academics to formalists, ancients to moderns, regionalists to cosmopolitans, writers on the periphery to writers in the center" (110).

> For writers from nationalized spaces, exile is almost always synonymous with autonomy. The great literary revolutionaries (…) find themselves so at odds with the norms of their native literary space and, by contrast, so at home with the norms current in the centers of international space that they are able to make their way only outside their homeland (…) exile is surely the major weapon of the writer who seeks to defend his autonomy against attack at any cost (110).

The Case for International Literature

As the previous chapter demonstrates, as globalization continues to threaten diversity, we find ourselves living in an increasingly standardized world. The inclination to view translation as a process that is always somehow inadequate certainly doesn't do much to move matters forward. Conversely, Cronin's idea of adopting a negentropic approach to translation, where translation is viewed as a method of creation rather than a process of standardization, can help us to focus on cases where translation has promoted the successful communication of ideas rather than instances of translation failure. Rebranding contemporary global literature as international literature may also help us to embrace foreign literature as a literary category that reflects life in a world with highly permeable borders.

In a globalized society, the difference between national and international literature boils down to autonomy. Since literatures at the center of the global polysystem tend to have stronger consecrating powers than those at the periphery, many writers today are becoming increasingly transnational. The result is a growing number of hyphenated writers[6] producing work that reflects a transnational point of view. From this perspective, the work of foreign authors who write in English contributes the body of international literature, much like translated literature does. Even when there is no tangible translation involved, as Casanova has demonstrated, all foreign writers are 'translated men' (and women). This is the backdrop under which Vikram Seth, author of *A Suitable Boy* (1993), found success: "Critics in both England and France described the book as an

[6] The term, "Hyphenated Author" is used by Lisa Suhair Majaj to refer to Arab-American authors who write books in English that "celebrate and convey 'Arab' themes and sentiments to readers in the U.S." (2016). I would argue that this term should be used more broadly to refer to all literatures written by foreign writers who write in English, and who present the ideas of another culture to English-speaking audiences. In Chapter 3, this term is also alluded to by American literary agent, Nicole Aragi.

indubitable sign of the revitalization of literature in English, even of the 'revenge' of the old colonies against the British Empire" (Casanova 1999: 121). The work of hyphenated authors is already diversifying the Anglo-Saxon literary scene: as The Editors at n+1 insist, "these days writers from outside the rich countries don't seem [as] afflicted by white writing (…) not when titles like Moshin Hamid's How to Get Filthy Rich in Rising Asia (2013) are being published[7]" ("World Lite").

With this chapter, I have attempted to highlight some of the reasons why English-speakers might resist reading books in translation, most notably by showing how translation isn't always viewed in a positive light. Nevertheless, the market for books in English translation might be better served by a small semantic change; instead of speaking of a world literature – a genre that tends to over-represent the privileged classes – we might consider embracing the idea of literary internationalism, however utopian that ideal may be. This is the context which has brought a number of independent presses in the United States to focus on publishing international literature in translation, and as the next two chapters show, for independent publishers, this model is not as economically unsound as commercial publishers make it out to be.

[7] Hamid is a British-Pakistani writer who writes in English. The New York Times reports that his work "records the envy, resentment and desire to emulate what America and the West provoke" (Kakutani 2013).

Chapter 3. Publishing Practices: Literary Translation in a Changing Book Industry

There is a saying in the publishing industry that the best way to make a small fortune in publishing is to start with a large one (Post 2011a: 655). While this adage is meant in jest, it also suggests that no one should start a publishing venture with the idea that they will make millions of dollars, because publishing is such risky business. That being said, in defiance of this notion, in the 1980s, the mainstream publishing industry was taken over by "banks, oil companies, and electricity companies" (Bourdieu 140). Since then, revenue expectations have climbed from 3-4% to 10-15% (Post 2011a: 655, Casanova 1999: 170):

> Whereas since the 1920s the average profit of publishing houses (in Europe as well as America) has been around 4 percent, Schiffrin notes that in recent years, in Great Britain and the United States, 'the new owners insist that the level of profit for their book publishing divisions be comparable to the level they require of their other subsidiaries—newspapers, cable television, and film. The objective has therefore been set between 12 percent and 15 percent. This is why there has been a radical change in the nature of the books responsible for achieving short-term profitability objectives.' (Casanova 1999: 170*)*

Once a publishing company has been purchased by a corporation or becomes part of a conglomeration, making money becomes a higher priority than producing a catalogue of high quality books. From this perspective, we might consider that the publishing industry is effectively divided into two poles: with an autonomous pole at one end, and a commercial pole at the other (Casanova 1999: 169). The autonomous pole comprises small-scale publishers, including independent presses, non-profit publishing houses, and trade publishers, which are made up of a small staff – usually under ten people – of dedicated employees with a mission to publish high quality works of literature. At the other end of the spectrum, the commercial pole favours economic capital and the production of short-selling bestsellers. Because it is so unusual for a book to sell enough copies to achieve the 10-15% profit margin mentioned above, commercial publishers have

adopted a survival strategy along the lines that "a few big books float the boat" (Post 2011a: 672). In this model, most titles are expected to either lose money or break even, while a few successes generate enough money to keep the company alive.

This is not to say that profitable books can't be of a high quality – but high quality books are often not profitable until they have been consecrated, and the consecration process takes time. When a work of high literature becomes an overnight success, this is usually a surprise. This is not congruent with the business models of major conglomerates, which seek to publish as many bestsellers as possible. Although the publication of high literature is not only relegated to independent publishers, it is important to note that there are also "medium-scale" publishers, which are often owned by mainstream publishers, and which prioritize high literature, and publish a fair number of translations. As Bourdieu has noted, medium-scale publishers usually employ around 50 employees (or more than ten, but less than 100). These publishing companies benefit from the budgets of large-scale publishers, and the prestige and literary knowledge of skilled workers who exude passion for their work. In the U.S., we might think of Knopf and Penguin (which are owned by Random House) or Farrar, Straus and Giroux (which is owned by Macmillan Publishers). According to the 2015 Three Percent Translation Database, each of these imprints published 7 or 8 translated titles, just under the 9 or 10 titles published by Open Letter and Archipelago that same year. From this perspective, Penguin, Knopf, and FSG's contribution to the body of translated literature available in the United States is significant, and lowbrow bestsellers endow mainstream publishers with the agency and financial freedom to publish high quality literature and market it, without relying on high profit margins right away. Incidentally, it is these medium-scale companies that tend to publish titles by literary prize winners and works in translation by well-known international authors such as Orhan Pamuk, Haruki Murakami, and Michel Houellebecq, to name a few.

Because literature in translation tends not to sell well in the United States, books in this category are largely ignored by major American publishers. In 2008, discouraged by the low percentage of translations published in English, Chad Post of Open Letter started tracking the number of books in translation published in the United States annually. That first year, he discovered that out of 340 translated titles[8], 69 were published by major publishing houses, meaning that 80% of translated books are published by "independent, non-profit, and university presses, which generally don't operate on the 'big advance-big return' model described above" (771). In this regard, translated books are at a disadvantage right out of the gate, because books by independent publishers are never promoted as heavily as those by commercial publishers[9]. However, just because a book doesn't sell millions of copies, that doesn't mean it is devoid of literary value. As this chapter will show, if it weren't for independent publishers, the literary world would stagnate, because many best-selling authors are discovered by independents before they are ever picked up by large-scale publishers. This section will also explore the issues that distinguish large- and small-scale publishing houses at the level of marketing and selection processes, in addition to presenting some of the real-world perspectives of people who work in the publishing industry, more specifically at the level of international literature. The ultimate goal will be to show how publishing foreign books in English translation can, and indeed has proven to be, an efficient way to generate symbolic capital, which has the power to develop into economic capital over time.

[8] The database has since been amended to reflect that 361 titles were published in translation in 2008.

[9] As far as in-store displays at the major chain stores are concerned, indie books are generally not promoted because spaces in these displays are paid for by the major publishing houses. In fact, chain bookstores usually get an additional volume discount – 46% over the usual 45% allotted to independent stores – in addition to "co-op money" to further promote certain books in stores. "For example, the front tables at the chain stores are paid for, as are the end caps, as are other special displays" (Post 2011a: 720). This extra income allows book chains to sell their books for less, which attracts more people to the store. Conversely, small independent bookshops also contribute to the consecration of fringe works, because the people who work in these shops are usually avid readers, and their critical opinion tends to be valued by customers. The head of one of the independent publishers interviewed by Bourdieu has even gone so far as to state, "We count on bookstores almost more than on critics," (Bourdieu 2008: 135).

Book Marketing and the Role of Independent Bookstores

Though traditionally, "the emergence of an international market of translation was strongly related to the cultural construction of national identities and to the development of the book trade" (Sapiro 2008: 159), since the end of the 20th century, "the received wisdom is that globalization spells the end of the nation-state[10]," (Cronin 2003: 4). This marks an important shift in the global publishing industry, because "national book markets are increasingly embedded in the international book market," (Sapiro 2008: 159). In this regard, there is an expectation that all bestsellers, literary classics, and award-winning titles should be made available to the reading public the world over. This mainly happens through distribution networks. Because avant-garde works and titles by lesser-known authors in translation tend to be published by smaller presses, these houses have very little control over how their books are marketed to the major chains[11]. Consequently, these books are more frequently relegated to independent bookstores. "These bookstores often defend small publishers and avant-garde authors with an almost missionary dedication, and their networks of representatives provide a very effective counterweight to the commercial strength and advertising resources of the major houses" (Bourdieu 2008: 135). Gisèle Sapiro contends that French and American book markets differ in the sense that France has maintained "a dense network of

[10] Of course, we need to be careful how we use the term *nation-state*. As it has already been demonstrated in this thesis, affordable air travel and the rise of information technology have made it easier for people to separate their cultural identities from their place of birth or country of residence. However, some countries, like Russia for instance, continue to be touted as nation-states. The fact remains that the bridges between cultures have been strengthened by globalization, meaning that a person can easily identify as *American* along with another culture, or series of cultures, or no culture at all as the case may be. In this sense, the *nation-state* no longer dictates a person's idea of home or identity—not in the West, anyway.

[11] Post states that independents aren't usually in charge of their own distribution. "The lion's share are distributed by a handful of companies: Independent Publishers Group, Consortium, Publishers Group West, and Perseus. And to complicate things (…), Consortium and PGW are both owned by Perseus" (Post 2011a: 776). Moreover, books published by independents are sold by representatives of the distribution company, who don't have a vested interest in the press itself. In other words, "a press looking to sell its books across the country has very few choices on how to go about doing this" (2011a: 780).

independent bookstores. This is one of the conditions for maintaining a pole of small-scale circulation, since the economic constraints are in large part imposed through distribution and the bookstore chains" (Sapiro 2008: 160). To support this theory, Sapiro quotes an independent American publisher who claims that 80% of book sales in the U.S. are now done by big chains, whereas in the past, more than half of American bookstores were independent. "When the independents represented 50% or 60%, they were always ready to take two or three copies, some of them would keep them one month after receiving them, while the chains, if you haven't sold in six weeks, they are back in your stock, which is part of the problem" (interview with Q. in Sapiro 2010: 427). France also maintains a book policy that supports fixed book prices[12] and subsidizes literary and social science translations (160). As Chad Post has noted, "one of the main arguments for the fixed book price (…) is that it allows smaller stores to carry more diverse stock. (…) [and] promotes a healthier book culture," (Post 2011a: 3241).

That being said, it is important to underscore that in recent years, the idea that there simply aren't enough independent bookstores in the United States to support a healthy avant-garde literary scene is somewhat outdated. In fact, the major American book chain model has recently been disrupted by Amazon and the electronic publishing scene in general. Namely, America's foremost book chain, Borders, filed for bankruptcy in 2011, and was taken over by Barnes & Noble – which is now the biggest major chain in the United States. As *The New York Times* reports, with 1,100 fewer bookstores on the American landscape, "Many retailers, including Amazon.com and independents, stand to benefit from a reduction in Borders stores" (Bosman 2011). More specifically, during a recession, people tend to focus more on buying locally, which is good news for independent outlets. "There have been a number of studies on the economic impact of buying

[12] Britain's Net Book Agreement was dissolved in 1997 (Jordison 2010), and according to the Global Fixed Price Book Report, no such agreement exists in Canada, Australia, or the United States.

books from a local store, including one conducted (…) in San Francisco that found that a 10% increase in book sales in the local market would result in increased economic input of $3.8 million, 25 additional jobs, and $325,000 in additional retail activity[13]" (Post 2011a: 871). In this sense, the Borders collapse cleared a path for independent bookstores to resurge in America. Whereas chain bookstores, which are primarily financed by commercial publishers, tend to focus on book sales, independents tend to focus on creating a sense of community, and on connecting with their audience, which fosters a sense of loyalty that encourages repeat customers.

Even though independent bookstores had a tough few years in the early aughts – "Between 2000 and 2007, some 1,000 independent bookstores closed" (Karabell 2014) – the American book scene was recently met by an indie bookstore revival of sorts. "According to the American Booksellers Association, the number of member independent bookstores has increased more than 20 percent since the depths of the recession, from 1,651 in 2009 to 2,094 in 2014" (Karabell 2014). Moreover, "sales at indies have grown about 8 percent a year over the past three years, which exceeds the growth of book sales in general" (Karabell 2014). For reasons stated above, this bodes well for literature in translation, since these titles have a greater chance of finding an audience in smaller stores, which tend to be staffed by knowledgeable, passionate individuals who drive book sales by cultivating a more personal, community-oriented approach to bookselling. Independent bookstores may never be able to compete with Amazon's inventory – but unlike the major chains, this isn't what they are trying to do. In this sense, the alternate business model adopted by indie bookstores protects them from the e-book market somewhat, because Amazon can't reproduce the shopping experiences and social scenes that arise out of these spaces (Karabell 2014). Rebekah Smith of Ugly Duckling Presse has said, "I worked in bookstores during the rise of Amazon, and

[13] These figures stem from the Civic Economics of Retail study carried out between 2002-2012 (Cunningham 2012).

you get the same question almost twelve times a day: *what are you guys going to do?* One of the things that small presses do during the age of Amazon and e-books is give you these beautiful objects that you want to hold and touch" (Smith qtd. in Almeida 2015). The electronic component of Amazon's business model cannot compete with this aspect of print. Amazon may have won the battle against the major chain bookstores in America, but independents "offer something neither Amazon nor the chains can: attention to the quirky needs of their customer base" (Karabell 2014).

In an article published in *The New Yorker*, George Packer refers to the entire Amazon operation as "creative destruction" (Packer 2014). Packer also reports that even the print versions of Amazon books routinely underperform, partly because most bookstores refuse to stock them. "Barnes & Noble and nearly all of the independents refused to stock [Amazon's] books—why help their mortal enemy?—and none of the titles gained enough momentum to force the stores to relent" (Packer 2014). With all of its algorithms, Amazon's model is also distinctly mechanical, which goes against the traditional essence of the publishing industry. Conversely, traditional publishers do a great deal more to ensure that their books will find an audience:

> "Book publishing is a very human business, and Amazon is driven by algorithms and scale (…) When a house gets behind a new book, well over two hundred people are pushing your book all over the place, handing it to people, talking about it. A mass of humans, all in one place, generating tremendous energy—that's the magic potion of publishing . . . That's pretty hard to replicate in Amazon's publishing world, where they have hundreds of thousands of titles" (Packer 2014).

The Consecrating Powers of Translation

Because books in translation tend not to sell well in the U.S., these titles are largely ignored by the major conglomerates. Of course, from time to time, a book in translation will become a bestseller, but this usually only happens once a book has been consecrated by a major literary prize (similarly, a book will attract a lot of attention in the United States if it is featured as part of Oprah's

Book Club). In this regard, it is worth noting that "the greatest proof of literary consecration, bordering on the definition of literary art itself, is the Nobel Prize" (Casanova 1999: 147). To provide an example of this, Chad Post mentions the Portuguese author, José Saramago, who was virtually unknown before he won the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1998 (Post 2011a: 741), adding that, "It's in no way unusual for a literary translation to sell in the 2,000-copy range. And publishers who sell 4-5,000 copies of a translation feel like they did an excellent job" (744). As we've seen, translated titles are at a disadvantage right out of the gate: bookstores acquire very few copies of them, and these books are not displayed or marketed by the major book chains in any way. In other words, "most translated titles are like a horse with a bum leg. It's much more profitable to get world rights to a mediocre American author and sell [translation] rights to a couple dozen countries" (755). This phenomenon is observable at the annual Frankfurt book fair in Germany, which is "all about selling, not buying" (759). More specifically, most of the American publishers that make it to this fair are usually there to sell the translation rights to English titles that have done well in America. As Horace Engdahl, the permanent secretary of the Swedish Academy has said, the U.S. is "too isolated, too insular, [and Americans] don't translate enough and don't really participate in the big dialogue of literature," (qtd. in Post 2011a: 759).

On the other hand, publishing a title that has already been consecrated by a major literary prize is extremely reassuring for houses that might otherwise resist publishing titles in translation due to the additional costs involved in paying for the translation, not to mention the expenses associated with promoting the work of a 'foreign' author who will need to be flown in and put up in a hotel for meetings and promotional events (Buzelin 2006: 137). Conversely, certain independent publishers have found that "Translations are not necessarily more expensive to produce than original texts. In a way, publishing a translation could appear at first sight, as a less

risky enterprise[14]," (2006: 137). This is the attitude that allows small, independent presses to act as discovers of innovative literature in translation. Even when they don't make very much money, these books "retain a small, incipient amount of symbolic capital in the form of esteem and admiration from a small number of 'discoverers:' avant-garde critics and writers, enlightened booksellers and informed readers" (Bourdieu 136). For these people, avant-garde texts are "far more 'interesting' from a literary point of view" (135), and this premise allows a number of small-scale publishers to find their niche in publishing. As Sapiro has noted, "small publishers [in France] seldom translate from English since they cannot afford the expense. This explains the role they play in discovering writers in peripheral or semi-peripheral languages, following the 'niche' strategy[15]" (Sapiro 2008: 157). This idea of cultivating a niche strategy can easily be transposed to the American market, where small-scale publishers of international literature are potentially contributing to a process that allows a great deal of authors to become canonized in the long run – especially since English is often used as a pivot tongue, allowing any book translated into English to be translated to a number of subsequent languages. As Bourdieu has noted, "the more palpable signs of consecration, like the Nobel Prize or the status of 'classic' conferred by the academic community, come about only after the work of conversion carried out by the writers themselves as they are helped along by their entourage of 'discoverers.' Like all such work, this takes a good deal of time," (Bourdieu 2008: 136).

[14] This is certainly true when we consider that independent publishers have less overhead to pay; especially since the publisher who is considering publishing a translation already knows how well the book has done in the original language. Moreover, when it comes to children's literature or graphic novels, depending on the type of contract an author has with their publishing company, publishing a translation can be even less expensive than publishing an original, since the artwork is already done (Buzelin 137).

[15] Half of the small-scale publishers examined in the Bourdieu study do not translate from English. Among the 50% who do, none translate exclusively from English, and translations make up "a sizeable portion of their list (more than a quarter)" (Bourdieu 2008: 135).

The Poles of Production

In the 1990s, Pierre Bourdieu conducted a survey about the publishing industry in France, where he looked at the attitudes of 56 small-scale and large-scale publishing houses, their thoughts on translation, and their relationships with symbolic and economic capital. In 1999, the results of this survey were published in a paper titled, *Une révolution conservatrice dans l'édition*, where Bourdieu devises a field theory to illustrate the poles of production described above. From this perspective, the commercial pole favours economic capital and the production of short-selling bestsellers. The autonomous pole, on the other hand, is correlated with symbolic capital, which is associated with the fame, consecration, and prestige that follows publication, described as follows:

> A publisher is a person invested with the extraordinary power to ensure publication, to confer upon a text and its author a public existence (…) along with the fame and recognition that this entails. 'Creation' of this sort usually involves a consecration, a transfer of symbolic capital (…), bestowed by the publisher not only upon the author but upon the publishing house as well, specifically upon its 'list,' the repertoire of authors, themselves more or less consecrated, that it has published in the past (Bourdieu 2008: 123).

Bourdieu's field theory explains that the larger a publishing company is, the more it will rely on short-sellers rather than long-sellers to maintain and grow its economic capital. At the same time, the more risk-averse a publishing company is, the less 'innovative' its list becomes. At each end of the publishing spectrum, the general profile of the individuals who run houses at the autonomous pole vs. those at the commercial pole are also very different:

> smaller houses are more likely to be headed by younger people and women, originating from a higher social class, benefitting from an extensive background in literature and demonstrating a great intellectual and emotional investment in their work; the major houses, on the other hand, are more likely to be left to heirs of technicians who are either trained on the job or legitimized by the occasional university degree (138).

As a publishing house grows and economic capital becomes more important, the integrity of that company's mission will likely be compromised, underscoring the paradox of business vs. art. Although the coexistence of symbolic capital and economic capital are crucial for a publishing company's ultimate success, "these two passions (…) are, from a sociological standpoint, as incompatible as fire and water;" (138). Because books are dual in nature (they are at once commodities and signifiers), the editor in chief of a publishing company must also present a dual character, capable of reconciling "art and money, love of literature and the pursuit of profit, by devising strategies situated somewhere between the two extremes of cynical subservience and heroic indifference to the house's economic needs" (138).

In this sense, the best time to publish 'interesting' literature is at a publishing company's start, before its reputation has been carved out. With few or no assets to manage, the company is free to focus on generating symbolic capital. "In a way, it is during the house's heroic beginnings that the choice is easiest to make because, all things considered, there really is no choice" (138). At this stage, all publishers are "virtuous by obligation," and according to Bourdieu, this is a "statement corroborated by the translation of foreign works" (138). One of the agents interviewed as part of the Bourdieu survey has even described herself as "fanatical about translations" (135). Unable to afford "the cheap, crowd-pleasing books [that] are very expensive because everyone in the world wants them" (138), small-scale publishers tend to

> import texts by little-known authors commanding small fees and writing in minor languages (they will also translate the more experimental of Anglo-American works). This helps them establish a foundation of economic capital with a minimal outlay of funds. (…) and despite the vagaries of intercultural differences, the risks are lower as well, because books negotiated for translation have already had a measure of success in their countries of origin (147).

As one small publisher has noted, it is important to recognize trends in literature as they emerge, because smaller publishers can't afford to publish authors who have already been consecrated (147). In this sense, it is almost as if the larger houses rely on smaller houses to be the discoverers of great literature, as they go on to follow "the lead of their smaller rivals, which are always under threat of having their discoveries 'stolen away'" (147). Barbara Epler, the Editor in Chief of New Directions Press in the United States, has also noticed this: "There are so many small adventuresome houses and they're doing the most interesting books. The other side of the coin is that they kind of function as talent scouts for the big corporations and there's nothing you can do about that" (Riddle 2016). In this sense, even though it represents a loss for the small publisher, losing an author to a large-scale publishing company might be considered the ultimate mark of success. Even though they may not make the most money, these small, innovative publishing houses are necessary for the evolution of the book publishing ecosystem. "(…) there have never been so many interesting presses or so many young people doing it themselves; it's amazing how much stuff is coming out" (ibid.). Indeed, newer publishing houses help to keep things interesting; "they make themselves competitive through a regime of self-denial and self-exploitation. Their very existence rescues the literary establishments from stasis" (Bourdieu 141).

Selection Processes

According to Sapiro, "In order to understand the significance of a single publisher's selection principles, one has to reconstruct the whole space in which he or she acts and his/her relations with rivals. The perception of this space orients not only the publishers' practices, but also the way writers frame their enquiry when they address a specific publisher" (Sapiro 2008: 155-156). In this regard, publishers and literary agents who start to work with a certain type of literature are more likely to continue in that vein, even if they hadn't planned to build their catalogue that

way. From a sociological perspective, this framework shows that a publishing house that specializes in foreign novels, or avant-garde fiction or poetry will naturally attract more submissions in the same fashion. Literary agent, Nicole Aragi, believes that success in publishing is strongly related to good fortune: "When I started out I thought this business was 10 percent luck. Now I think it's 30 or 40 percent luck," (Aragi qtd. in Lee 2013). Conceivably, this luck factor is related to the idea that at the small-scale pole of production, where most publishers start out by taking a chance on an unknown author, it is impossible to mitigate risk by weighing the past sales performance of a new author:

> Publishers these days are (…) all looking at the numbers—how many books has an author already sold? They're trying to weigh up the risk of publishing that author again. The only time they can't look at the numbers—because there simply *aren't* any numbers—is with a debut novelist. That's when they have to go on instinct, and are perhaps more inclined to take a risk on something that's in some way interesting or exciting or feels new (ibid.).

As Jonathan Lee notes, the past-performance factor is unfortunate, because it means "We may be missing out on great books by writers who take a while to get into their stride," (Lee 2013). Incidentally, Nicole Aragi claims that her biggest successes have been with books that were not obvious, because they had previously been rejected by other agents on grounds that they seemed "too messy to work," (Aragi qtd. in Lee 2013). In this regard, Aragi's roster is mainly made up of hyphenated authors whose writing reflects a multinational experience. "I joke that the more hyphens there are in an author's ethnicity, the more likely it is that the book will end up being sent to me[16]," (ibid.).

[16] In her interview with Lee, Aragi admits that she has "built up a list of authors who were in some way straddling cultures, or writing out of a sense of cultural dislocation" (Aragi qtd. in Lee 2013). This was definitely not intentional. Growing up in Libya and Lebanon with a Lebanese father and English mother, Aragi spent her life living "between different cultures" (ibid.). With the understanding that people read books to understand themselves, she naturally gravitated towards authors who write about being caught between different worlds. As a result, Aragi has been typecast as an agent who is interested in clashing cultures, and unsurprisingly, these types of unsolicited manuscripts often wind up on her desk.

In *Globalization and cultural diversity in the book market: The case of literary translations in the US and France*, Sapiro applies Bourdieu's field theory to the situation in the United States. In this context, she discovers that like in France, the American publishing industry is hierarchized "around the opposition between upmarket and commercial, which overlaps with the opposition between small-scale and large-scale production" (Sapiro 2010: 428). In other words, in the American "literary upmarket sector shows a high linguistic diversity" (428). Conversely, "linguistic diversity strongly decreases when we move from the upmarket to the commercial pole in the US, as well as France" (430). To cite an example, 90% of translated mystery novels published in France are from England or the U.S. (428). Not surprisingly, these same titles occupy the commercial pole in Britain and the United States. Moreover, just as small-scale literary agents in France developed a strategy "to fight the growing hegemony of English" (428), publishers of upmarket literature in the United States are publishing translations "as a means to combat the growing hegemony of English in the world and the closure of American culture as revealed by the dramatic fall of the share of translations in the American book production" (434).

Sapiro also notes that in the United States, the action of publishing translations is becoming somewhat fashionable: "Since the end of the 1990s, a new generation of publishers launched small presses, most of them not-for-profit, devoted to what they call 'international literature' (a term they prefer to 'books in translation'), like Archipelago [and] Open Letter, which both translate from a wide range of languages" (434). This 'trend' is even starting to show signs of appropriation by some of the more commercial American publishers. One of the independent publishers interviewed by Sapiro states that the big publishing houses are starting to become interested in publishing international literature in translation because

> they just want to have everything. It is a kind of aspect of globalization. It is not that they want to present the American people, American readers, authentic voices to explain what

> is really going on in these countries by people who really know, it is not that at all. It is kind of the opposite. It is just they will go wherever they have to go to get a sexy story or the same story with new exotic locations. It is really worse than I can even describe. (Interview with C. in Sapiro 2010: 435-436)

AmazonCrossing

One of the major literary translation publishing projects to emerge recently is AmazonCrossing – a subsidiary of amazon.com – launched in May 2010 with the publication of *The Hangman's Daughter* by Oliver Pötschz, originally published in German as *Die Henkerstochter*. The online magazine, *Publishing Perspectives*, reports that "Crossing is one of Amazon Publishing's 14 trade imprints (not a part of the self-publishing platform), and the company last strode the trade show floors at Frankfurt, where APub's international chief Sarah Jane Gunter announced a US$10 million allocation of funds to facilitate open submissions of work to AmazonCrossing" (P. Anderson 2016). This was in October 2015. Since then, the imprint has received more than 1,000 submissions. Leading up to this campaign, the banner primarily worked with English, German, Spanish, French, and Italian, though it is now contemplating adding Afrikaans, Arabic, Bengali, Bulgarian, Croatian, Farsi, Greek, Hindi, Malayalam, Serbian, Ukrainian, and Urdu to its list. However, it should be noted that the imprint doesn't just translate into English. In 2015, AmazonCrossing announced that it was expecting "to increase its output, projecting 70 new translations into English and 200 into German" (Heyman 2015). The imprint also recently started translating English into French, Italian and Spanish, and has announced that Crossing is "already seeing Kindle bestsellers from authors we're translating into Italian and Spanish" (Gunter qtd. in P. Anderson 2016). In other words, as AmazonCrossing starts publishing more translations from English into the above-mentioned rare languages, it will not be contributing to diversity; in fact, the opposite is true.

Of the two books acquired by AmazonCrossing since launching its recent call for submissions, "One is by the Greek author Lena Manta (…) who has sold more than a million copies of her books in Greece" (P. Anderson 2016). The other is by Croatian writer, Igor Štiks – the winner of two literary prizes in Croatia. These titles showcase the imprint's desire to publish "the best in contemporary literature from around the world" (ibid.), where best implies low-risk titles that have already gathered a certain amount of recognition. But these are just two titles out of hundreds. While the imprint's bestsellers are obviously being lauded to attract readers, one of the major reasons behind Amazon's success is its low-cost e-book model, which allows publishers to adopt a more "long tail" sales model. Since there are no printing costs associated with e-books, electronic publishers can publish a vast selection of books with the idea that selling a single copy of many books is just as good, if not better, than selling a large number of a few titles (Post 2011a: 710).

In April of 2015, *The New York Times* ran a story proclaiming that AmazonCrossing is now the biggest publisher of foreign literature in the U.S. (Heyman 2015). One would think that such a headline would be distressing to American non-profits and independent publishers, especially if we consider that AmazonCrossing symbolizes the commercialization of a non-commercial, "virtuous" idea or literary project. However, Chad Post of Open Letter is more open-minded: "They're doing a lot of things that most translation publishers don't do: romance, thriller, young adult books, things that are definitely in that chick lit category" (qtd. in Heyman 2015). Post insists that although AmazonCrossing's titles might be considered lowbrow, that doesn't make them devoid of literary value. "Mr. Post cited the translation theorist Lawrence Venuti, who has argued that lowbrow authors are as important to translate as literary giants" (Heyman 2015). In this sense, although Amazon is often blamed for the death of the brick and mortar retail industry, AmazonCrossing poses no real threat to small houses that publish books in translation. In fact, in a web log post on the *Three Percent* website, Post writes that he's been "a long-time supporter of

this particular aspect of Amazon, praising the fact that they're doing the books other presses ignore (romance in translation, for example) and giving jobs to translators" (Post 2015b). However, Post also upholds that publishing these books isn't enough; these titles also need to be reviewed and discussed in order to gain recognition. "Sure, there aren't many outlets reviewing translations at all, and I'm sure there's a widespread bias against books coming out from Amazon, but I also don't think they're doing all that they can to get the word out within the existing community of people interested in international literature" (ibid.).

The Virtues of Independence

Because the scale on which they operate is smaller, independent presses don't have as much pressure to make the same sales that commercial presses do. This balances things somewhat, because small presses don't have the advertising budgets required to meet inflated sales expectations. Non-profit salaries are usually lower, but "in terms of total cost per book, non-profits tend to get a lot of bang for their buck" (Post 2011a: 790). This is because after all of the expenses of running a publishing company are factored in (i.e., rent, employee salaries, etc.), the overall costs associated with publishing a book are lower for a non-profit than they are for a commercial house. And trade-oriented publishers that are associated with a university, like Open Letter for instance, have even fewer costs considering that they might not even have to pay rent. They also have access to funding from Alumni, and "an endless supply of interns" (796). In this case, "The stakes are automatically a bit lower, which allows a press to focus more on its mission while [expanding] the possibilities of what it can publish" (796). In other words, an independent or non-profit press "might only need to sell 5,000 copies of a title to break even, instead of the 15-20,000 needed at a commercial publisher. Suddenly, the pressures of finding a best-seller evaporate" (793). Additionally, because they are smaller and have fewer expectations, independent publishers are in

a better position to invest time and effort into promoting their books, be they works of avant-garde literature or books in translation. In this sense, the trope of the independent publisher "as someone who is extremely passionate about the books they're publishing, someone who spends all his/her time obsessing and worrying about the press, about reaching readers, about finding ways to keep the press afloat, really isn't that far off" (801). Having staff that really care about how well a book does also contributes to independent book marketing:

> Indie presses tend to have a stronger editorial identity than commercial houses, and cultivate a sense of customer loyalty that doesn't exist for Random House or Simon & Schuster, or others. Soft Skull, Archipelago, New Directions, these are presses that are clearly branded, that readers trust in, and that fans are willing to take chances with. An obscure Finnish author published by Archipelago means something entirely different than one published by S&S. Although indies and nonprofits have fewer resources, there are some advantages to being small, nimble, and focused (806).

Moreover, in a world where social media is becoming one of the most important vehicles for marketing, interacting with customers is of utmost importance, and "people who feel engaged with a project or organization are much more likely to do the sorts of things that will spread the word and increase sales and readership" (924). In this regard, one of the publishing categories that has experienced the most growth in recent years is the field of graphic novels. As Post mentions, "there are a lot of reasons for this, but one significant reason is the fact that graphic novels (and comic books more broadly) have always cultivated a fan culture in which readers interact closely with the publishers, writers, artists, etc." (922). This means that by virtue of being small, independent and non-profit bookstores and presses are able to interact with customers on a level that bookstore chains and publishing conglomerates will never be able to replicate in an authentic manner. As far as dealing with uncertain economic times, non-profit publishers are further advantaged in the sense that 50% of their revenue usually stems from donations, while the other 50% stems from sales. Accordingly, these houses "are more protected than other presses when the

bottom falls out of the market" (937). All this to say that independents are perhaps better equipped to deal with a changing book market; and since 80% of translations are published by independent presses, it is very likely that this category of books will have a chance to grow in the coming years:

> As the industry retracts and readers of the literary community consolidate, translated literature could come to the fore, attracting new readers. And as more presses like Melville House, Archipelago, Europa Editions, Counterpath, Ugly Duckling, Graywolf, and Open Letter come onto the scene with reasonable expectations and a willingness to experiment with new ways of reaching readers and new models for how to survive and fulfill one's mission, the literary world might not be as bleak as some might think (944).

Building an International Literature Community

Whereas the commercial pole of production may view translating books from minor languages as an unnecessary risk, independent publishers do not necessarily consider this endeavour to be more risky than publishing any other type of book[17]. As Nicole Aragi has pointed out, good book editors are more interested in working with interesting books than books that will sell a lot of copies. "I still believe that book editors are, first and foremost, *readers*. They want to be entertained and excited" (Aragi qtd. in Lee). Accordingly, Aragi believes that "Being a writer is tough wherever you are, but good literary books do often find a way through," (ibid.). By the same token, there are many advantages to publishing international literature in translation: in addition to creating jobs for translators, these projects contribute to building literary communities through book launches and readings at independent bookstores, and generate the type of symbolic capital that has the potential to create economic capital down the road. As this chapter has shown, it may not be so lamentable that major publishers tend to shy away from publishing literature in translation … as long as there are small houses who are willing to step up and do the project justice. Independent publishers like Open Letter, Archipelago, and New Directions are already doing this,

[17] "Publishers take risks on *all* books, and never know how well a title is going to do" (Post: 2009c).

but they still have a long way to go as far as 'solving' three percent problem or even raising that figure by a few percentage a few points. Currently, the main issue involves raising awareness about the issue, and increasing accessibility to international literature.

At the end of 2015, Chad Post revealed that there had been an 8.5% drop in the number of translations published in 2015 compared to 2014[18]. He succeeded this news with the following plea: "if there's one thing that we could do to change this, it's to buy more works of international literature and to get people who don't *usually* read international lit to but one or two books. If all of these books sold an additional 250 copies on average, things would most certainly change" (Post 2015b). Post's reasoning implies that if the market doesn't support literature in translation, presses that might have otherwise published two or three translations in a year will cut that number down to one or zero – and any decrease in the already low number of translations published each year in the United States is at risk of creating a ripple effect. In this sense, one person can really make a difference. Which brings us back to the notion of community, and the compelling idea that a 10% increase in local book sales has the potential to inject several million dollars into the local economy (Post 2011a: 871). From this perspective, international literature really is about fostering global understanding and stimulating healthy local economies, in addition to encouraging a healthy, vibrant book culture.

[18] The Three Percent Translation Database reports that there were 570 new titles published in translation in 2015, which is 31 titles less than 214. However, this number still reflects growth over 2013 (which saw the publication of 542 titles) and every other year since the translation database was started, and it is certainly a far cry from the 361 titles reported in the 2008 database, the first year that Post started tracking translations.

Chapter 4. The Solution: Independent Publishers of International Literature

Considering how often the three percent figure is cited, it is safe to say that the notion that English speakers read few books in translation is a subject of broad and current interest. Recently, a number of opinion pieces have been published in a wide range of news sources, including the New Yorker, the Guardian, the BBC, and the New York Times. These articles report that if publishing houses don't publish more books in translation, it is because English speakers aren't interested in these books, but one of the reasons why English speakers aren't interested in reading these books, is that they don't know they exist. Be that as it may, these pieces don't do much in terms of offering concrete solutions towards resolving the issue.

Conversely, more and more independent publishers are making it their mission to contribute to the body of translated literature published in the U.S. each year. In an effort to understand the underlying views of small publishers and their approaches to publishing books by lesser-known writers in translation, this chapter provides details about the activities of nine independent publishers and one literary magazine, including information about their histories, and how they became interested in publishing literature in translation in the first place. A number of common themes are observable from one publisher to the next. Among other things, most of the publishers covered in this chapter consider that independent bookstores contribute a great deal to their ability to market their releases. Many of these presses also put a great deal of thought into the look and feel of their physical books. Finally, most of the presses on this list agree that now is a great time to publish literature in translation, and that Americans are not as disinterested in other cultures as non-Americans might think.

A Note on Methodology

This list is in no way exhaustive, but it does cover some of the most well-known presses in the corpus of international literature publishers in the United States. Specifically, I made an effort to focus on the independent presses that publish the highest number of books in translation per year in the United States[19], that is to say, Dalkey Archive, New Directions, Seagull Books, Europa Editions, Open Letter, and Archipelago. I decided to include New Vessel Press and Restless Books on this list because they represent a new generation of publishers that have emerged in the last five years, which demonstrates a growing movement. Ugly Duckling Presse (UDP) and Words Without Borders may be the black sheep of this list. Although UDP publishes relatively few books per year, they focus on more avant-garde literature, and the hand-made, grassroots aspect of publishing, which provides a stark contrast to the mainstream models described in the third chapter of this thesis. Finally, Words Without Borders' numbers aren't recorded in the Three Percent Translation Database, but their contribution to the international literary scene deserves to be accounted for, as their archives provide a rich source of diversity through short stories, articles, and book reviews.

Without conducting in-depth case studies, this sample reflects a broad selection of houses, from older presses to more recent ones. The goal has been to provide a range of perspectives from publishers at different levels, encompassing publishers that specialize in both print and digital releases. Lastly, this list is organized alphabetically to avoid drawing attention to the size, prestige, or popularity of any single publisher.

Archipelago Books

Founded in 2004 by Jill Schoolman, Archipelago Books is a small press with an exclusive focus on international literature in English translation. At the time of its inception, there seemed to

[19] According to the 2015 Three Percent Translation Database

be an urgent need for publishing world literature in English: "So many important international writers, both living and dead, were simply not being introduced and read here" (Schoolman qtd. in Trainor 2005). By the time Archipelago celebrated its ten-year anniversary in 2014, the company had published 100 books translated from 25 languages. Schoolman recently told the Washington Post, "We keep everything in print, so many of our books sell slowly but steadily. Our typical print run is 3000 copies for fiction and 1500 for poetry," (qtd. in Shapiro 2014). To offset some of the risks associated with publishing world literature, Archipelago is set up as a non-profit organization. This allows them to accept donations and raise funds to cover publication and translation costs, making it possible to "make leaps of faith with books and writers that [they] believe in who might not appeal to large audiences," (Shapiro 2014).

One might attribute Archipelago's success to Schoolman's attention to detail, from choosing a translator to the type of paper each book is printed on. "Translators are so well respected at Archipelago that (…) Schoolman will sometimes go in search of a book specifically for a translator," (Estes 2014). Aesthetically, books are printed on "high-quality paper, and the covers, each a different color, create a veritable rainbow on a bookshelf without, somehow, having to use any of the primary or secondary colours (…) All of the book jackets have an interesting ridged feel to them, making the books not only visually pleasing, but tactually satisfying as well," (Estes 2014). Indeed, Archipelago's distinctive designs are an integral part of the company's branding, and it is clear that this aspect plays a role in Archipelago's success; producing beautiful works that are pleasant to the touch increases the likelihood that a first-time Archipelago reader will be open to reading additional titles from the press's catalogue as well.

Dalkey Archive Press

Dalkey Archive Press was launched in 1984, out of a literary magazine called *The Review of Contemporary Fiction*[20] started by Irish-American, John O'Brien, who originally started the Review out of a sense of isolation and dissatisfaction with the idea that books were mainly judged by their market value. O'Brien has always cared about international literature: "I wanted the magazine to break down the artificial barriers that exist among countries and cultures. It was my view then and now that one can't properly come to terms with contemporary writing without seeing it in an international context" ("Interview with John O'Brien").

As a Press, Dalkey Archive started when O'Brien decided to invest the remaining revenue from *The Review of Contemporary Fiction* in printing books "that didn't have much of a chance of ever getting back into print through a commercial house and ones that were perfect examples of what the Review was championing" (ibid.). This was borne out of a desire to reflect what was happening around the world; not just what was happening in the United States.

When asked how he would qualify the books published by Dalkey Archive, O'Brien chooses the term, subversive. He likes to publish authors who present ideas that make people uncomfortable; who are saying things that people might not want to hear. O'Brien goes on to cite the Russian Formalist notion "that art alters perceptions and that those altered perceptions can have a rather direct impact on how perceptions are altered elsewhere, the most obvious being in the political realm" (ibid.). In other words, the Press likes to publish books that will incite people to question the status quo.

[20] O'Brien started *The Review of Contemporary Fiction* in 1980 out of a need to review the work of authors who were not being covered by traditional magazines.

Financially, Dalkey Archive relies on donations and grants to sustain operations. Specifically, the Press could not exist without "the support of the National Endowment for the Arts and the Illinois Arts Council" (ibid.). The Press has also launched an endowment campaign[21] in an effort to raise $7.5M to allow the Press to remain active and independent beyond O'Brien's lifetime. This reflects O'Brien's desire to publish books that have "enduring cultural value and therefore need to be available" (ibid.) for years to come:

> I want us publishing the best literary books that we can find from around the world, regardless of sales potential. But I also want us to be able to spend what's necessary to find the readership for these books; with an endowment, we would be able to double or triple our readership, and could insure that these books will be around 100 years from now ("Interview with John O'Brien").

In 2006, O'Brien estimated that 50% of Dalkey Archive's catalogue are translations[22]. The Press has always published translations, but considering how few books in translation commercial publishers are willing to take on these days, O'Brien concedes that now is a good time to put more energy into translated books[23]. He also upholds that it is of utmost importance for the literatures of other countries to be available in the United States, because otherwise, the U.S. will just become a "strange, isolated country that survives only because it possesses the military and economic dominance that it does, not because it is the epitome of civilization and freedom" (ibid.).

Ideally, O'Brien believes that the press should publish around 24 books per year, half of which would most likely be reprints. For Dalkey Archive, volume isn't a problem; the issue

[21] Regarding a potential endowment, The Dalkey Archive website states the following: "When any organization reaches the stage where it has become indispensable to the culture and has demonstrated its value over several years, it must look to the distant future and decide whether its mission and work are of such importance that the organization must both protect itself and reach a level at which it can best serve those for whom the organization was created" ("Endowment").
[22] This figure is up from 35% in the year 2000.
[23] The interview with John O'Brien on the Dalkey Archive website was done in 2000 and was amended in 2004 and then possibly again in 2006 or 2007.

remains how to make sure these books find their audience. “Small publishers are oftentimes awful at getting their books out to people, even though of course the marketplace determines many of the limitations” (ibid.). In the future, O’Brien plans on publishing the same kinds of books the Press has always published, with additional emphasis on works in translation. More specifically, O’Brien is “obsessed with finding writers in unlikely places, or writing that wouldn’t ever be translated into English because of its difficulties or inventiveness” (ibid.). His goal is to shake things up and make people think. O’Brien also hopes that literature professors will start teaching different kinds of writing. He concedes that this may be a tall order, but “Revolutions happen in small ways. Or at least change happens in very small ways. But without change, the culture just falls back upon itself and remains stagnant” (ibid.).

Europa Editions

Europa Editions was founded in 2005 by Sandro Ferri and Sandra Ozzolo Ferri, who also run an independent publishing house in Italy (Edizioni E/O). The initial goal for Europa was to utilize the solid connections the founders already had in the European market “to bring fresh international voices to the American and British markets” (“About Europa Editions”). Since its inception, Europa has won the New Atlantic Independent Booksellers Association Award for Paperback Publication of the year in 2013. Europa is widely known as the publisher of Elena Ferrante’s Neapolitan novels – Ferrante was Europa’s first release in the United States. The House publishes around 35 titles per year, and in its first 10 years, has published books from 26 countries “making it one of the leading US publishers of international fiction” (ibid.).

In an interview with Michelle Anne Schingler of Foreword Reviews, Sandro Ferri mentions that he has three decades of experience in publishing (Edizioni E/O was founded in 1979). After 9/11, Ferri thought it would be a “good idea to draw America into closer proximity with the rest of

the world" (qtd. in Tuhy 2014), only to find that American publishers were not interested in publishing Edizioni E/O's books in translation. As a result, Ferri and his wife decided to take matters into their own hands and to expand their business by starting a publishing house in the United States. Ferri mentions that in the early days, independent bookstores were instrumental in helping Europa reach its audience "by displaying and selling our books" (Hohman 2016). When asked what he found most surprising about the American Market, Ferri mentions "The vitality of independent bookstores, their ability to be real centers for the promotion of books and the cultural life of the country—without receiving federal or state support as happens in France" (Tuhy 2014). He also mentions that the idea that American readers aren't interested in what is going on in the rest of the world is inaccurate.

Today, Europa has offices in New York, London, and Rome. Clearly, the Ferris's years of experience in publishing contribute a great deal to the house's success. That being said, Sandro and Sandra also display obvious personal qualities that allow them to make good business decisions; more specifically, Sandro says that he admires Sandra for her determination, and Sandra has said that Sandro is "courageous but cautious, creative but with a sense of reality" (Tuhy 2014). Suffice it to say, the Ferris team seems to strike that crucial balance of keen business sense and artistic sensitivity that Bourdieu has emphasized in his work on the sociology of independent publishing.

New Directions

Headquartered in New York City, New Directions was founded in 1936 by James Loughlin under the encouragement of Ezra Pound. Following Loughlin's death in 1997, the house is now headed by Barbara Epler, who reminds us that Loughlin "didn't believe in the capital growth thing which I think is correct – that'll kill a literary company" (Riddle 2016). Accordingly, the press seeks to publish books that would make Loughlin proud. This implies publishing works of avant-

garde and experimental literature, because Loughlin was never "interested in anything that repeats itself" (Riddle 2016). In this regard, books in translation have always been a central component of the New Directions list:

> From the beginning, J.L. grew up with (…) Dudley Fits, who was his teacher and who taught him the Classics and also introduced him to Pound. And Pound and Dudley Fits both believed that there's one world and there's one world literature. So you need to know everything. And that it's very possible to know everything. And so he was the first publisher of Borges and Neruda and Sartre, and it goes on and on. And so that was from the beginning, in 1936, and now we do about thirty-five to forty new books a year (Riddle 2016).

More specifically, Epler states that about 25% of the house's front-list poetry and 75% of its fiction are translations. When asked about the future of literary translation, Epler concedes that things have gotten better recently. More specifically, she cites the invaluable support of independent bookstores, including the ones that have survived the economic crisis, and the new ones that are opening. "I think it's really clear that there hasn't been a better time for translated literature here" (Riddle 2016).

New Vessel Press

Founded in New York City in 2012 by Ross Ufberg and Michael Z. Wise, New Vessel Press is one of the newer publishers on this list. Ufberg identifies as a writer and Polish and Russian to English translator. Wise has worked as a foreign correspondent and is an author, and he reads and speaks German and French (Ufberg qtd. in Riddle 2014). The two started New Vessel Press out of their "love for books" (Wise qtd. in Riddle 2014). The 'About Us' section of the New Vessel Press website states that the company specializes in the publication of foreign literature translated into English, in both paperback and e-book formats. Like Archipelago, the house prioritizes production quality, with "beautifully designed covers and high production values" ("About New Vessel

Press"). Citing the three percent figure in its mission statement, along with the notion that a great deal of world literature remains to be discovered across the world, the press is directly seeking to combat the low rate of translations published annually in the United States.

New Vessel's 'About Us' section further states that the press seeks to entertain their audience and give them a chance to travel through reading. It believes that reading books in translation allows people to better understand other cultures, and to keep an open mind about the world. The name 'New Vessel' refers to the idea of translation as presenting great stories in a new form. The press believes that "what matters most is not where the authors hail from, or what language they write in. The most important thing is the quality of the work itself" ("About New Vessel Press").

New Vessel's books have been reviewed by The New York Times, The Wall Street Journal, The New Yorker and O (the Oprah Magazine). The house's list currently features 24 titles from 13 languages; and one of their titles hails from England. The name of each title's translator is prominently included on the cover for most of its books.

In an interview in *Asymptote Journal*, Wise and Ufberg state that the idea for the Press was borne out of their friendship and mutual love of books. Accordingly, the only way for them to share books written in the languages they did not have in common was to translate them into English. In the early days of the Press, neither party had any previous experience in publishing, and they had to learn everything as they went along. Wise states that their biggest challenge remains connecting the books to readers, although he acknowledges that the number of books in translation published each year is increasing; in fact, more books are published than one person could ever read in a year, and this is obviously a step in the right direction.

The unique thing about New Vessel Press is that both founders have four foreign languages between them; this enables them to personally evaluate a wider range of books than a press that

only speaks one or two languages other than English. Furthermore, books that were originally written in a different language sometimes benefit from the wide net cast by France and German (Wise qtd. in Riddle 2014). For instance, a recent title published by the Press was originally written in Spanish – a language neither Wise nor Ufberg speak – which came to them through the German translation. "With our four languages we do have quite a range. We're also working with readers and agents and people whose taste we trust" (Wise qtd. in Riddle 2014).

Ufberg and Wise acknowledge that to be competitive in publishing, you have to offer both print and digital versions of books; they state that around 40% of their sales stem from e-books. They also corroborate the notion that "People who are the best advocates for books are often booksellers," (Ufberg qtd. in Riddle 2014). Finally, both founders are optimistic about the future of literature in English translation, in a growing number of languages, that is to say, languages other than French, German, Italian, and Russian, which are less peripheral than a language like Polish, which the Press happens to specialize in. "As this country becomes more multicultural and as we become more comfortable with looking outside of our borders, I hope in the future there'll be a place for literature in translation" (Ufberg qtd. in Riddle 2014).

Open Letter and Three Percent

Started by Chad W. Post in 2007 "to promote international fiction and poetry" ("Open Letter Books"), *Open Letter* is Rochester University's non-profit, literary translation press. It publishes around ten titles in English translation per year "by top authors from Europe, Asia, Latin America, and Africa" (ibid.). Dedicated to giving English speakers greater access to world literature, this university press aims to open cultural borders and to contribute to a "a healthy and vibrant book culture," ("About Open Letter").

Open Letter runs alongside the Three Percent website – another project initiated by Post to

promote international literature in English translation via weblogs and podcasts about "goings-on in the world of international literature," ("About Three Percent"). The site also publishes book reviews and samples of books in translation. It hopes to serve as a "resource for readers, students, translators, and editors interested in international literature," (ibid.) and maintains a translation database to track all new works of fiction and poetry being made available to American readers in translation every year since 2008. Post started this database when he realized that the three percent figure is really more of a guess; no one in the U.S. had actually been "keeping track of how many translations were being published here, instead relying almost entirely on wistful memories of days gone by and other equally questionable anecdotal evidence" (Post 2009c). It should be noted that Post does not get paid for maintaining this database – instead, this action reflects his desire to give something to the community. More specifically, he has written that non-profits should "do things to benefit culture as a whole (…) that aren't financially motivated" (Post 2015b). Because the translation database accounts for new works of fiction and poetry only, graphic novels, manga, non-fiction, and children's books are not included. Moreover, books must have an ISBN or be registered in WorldCat, and bookstores must be able to order them. This keeps the average percentage of translations published each year *very* low; "in terms of literary fiction and poetry, the number is actually closer to 0.7%" ("About Three Percent").

In September 2011, Open Letter also published an e-book featuring the best articles posted on the Three Percent Blog up to that date, arranged in a cohesive order. The final product, titled, *The Three Percent Problem: Rants and Responses on Publishing, Translation, and the Future of Reading* contains a wealth of information about the publishing industry, with all profits going "directly to paying translators" (Post 2011b). In this regard, a large part of Post's work reflects a desire to spread the word about how important it is for translators to be paid and valued. When we consider how often Post is quoted in various articles and opinion pieces about the low rate of

translations published annually in the United States, it is clear that this project has been very successful at raising awareness about the three percent problem. In fact, it is now virtually impossible to read about international literature in English translation without reading about the work of Chad Post and his team.

Restless Books

Restless books was launched in 2011[24] by "Joshua Ellison, editor of Habitus, a journal of translated Jewish Diaspora writing, and Ilan Stavans, a scholar, translator, and editor" (Watson 2011) as a "digital-only literature-in-translation publisher" (ibid.). Its headquarters are located in Brooklyn, New York. The founders state that they are especially interested in abandoned literary projects, "whose rights have reverted to the translator, and in translating books that have no English print edition" (Watson 2011). The company's mission is "to compensate for the commercial way of thinking the big publishers in New York City (…) The Press aims to publish fiction, non-fiction, and poetry dealing with restlessness as a condition" (Riddle 2015). Stavans, who is originally from Mexico, has said that the press's focus on the theme of restlessness is inspired by "moving from one place to another and from one language to the next" (Riddle 2015). He has told the L.A. Times that his goal is "to make U.S. publishing more 'cosmopolitan' by publishing translations and new, original works by American authors" (Stavans qtd. in Tobar 2013).

[24] Restless Books' year of inception is difficult to identify – it is not mentioned on the company's website, or in any of the articles about the company available online. However, the online magazine, *Publishing Trends*, reports that the company was preparing to launch in 2011, and the Restless Books website was registered that same year.

Like the founders of New Vessel Press, Stavans has cited the three percent figure as one of the press's *raisons d'être*, stating that this figure is "embarrassing (…) This country has become an island. We forget that the rest of the world is out there" (qtd. in Tobar 2013.). As a press that specializes in international literature, Restless Books is distinct in the sense that it publishes books that are not traditionally seen in translation, like science fiction and graphic novels. Stavans admits that this is a combination of intuition and taste. "If you like something, if you're convinced that it's a quality book and you want to share it with somebody else, I think you're in the right business" (qtd. in Riddle 2015). Impressively, Restless Books has connected science fiction with regions that aren't traditionally associated with the genre, like Africa and Latin America. "Restless wants to show literature that's coming from Pakistan, from Nigeria, from Cuba, from Chile, that not only goes beyond our traditional way of looking at literature but ultimately is incredibly well written" (Riddle 2015).

Stavans concedes that although the financial risks associated with digital publishing are much less than those associated with the medium of print, revenue margins are smaller as well. For this reason, Restless Books started out as a digital company "to test the market temperature, getting a sense for our audience. After that, we can build on that connection by offering a print book and making it available to a readership that doesn't necessarily embrace digital books" (Riddle 2015). Because Stavans believes that more and more American readers have the ability to access material in multiple languages, through its digital releases, Restless Books makes a point to deliver the translation along with the original text to "let the reader choose" which version they want to read (Tobar 2013) – illustrating a uniquely innovative approach to publishing literature in translation. Incidentally, Restless has recently started publishing print books, and has struck a deal with Simon & Schuster for the distribution of these (Tobar 2013).

Seagull Books

I wasn't sure whether to include Seagull Books on this list, since this house was founded and is headquartered in India. However, after Dalkey Archive and AmazonCrossing, Seagull Books is one of the largest publishers of translated fiction in the U.S., with registered divisions in New York, London and Calcutta. As a result, it seems worthwhile to look at how a foreign initiative fits into the structure of independent publishers who focus on international literature in the United States.

Seagull Books was launched by Naveen Kishore in 1982 "as an instinctive and highly risky business of publishing books (…) on theatre, visual arts, alternative cinema, philosophy, culture" ("About Seagull"). In 2005, Kishore started Seagull Books London to ensure the distribution of the Press's titles in the UK and in the US (DeMarco 2011). "What we did in 2005 was to reverse the trend of the large corporates settling in India because they perceived it as a great marketplace for their books (…) We decided to explore the opposite: settle in London and New York" (Kishore qtd. in DeMarco 2011). In the U.S. and in the U.K., the Seagull catalogue is currently distributed by the University of Chicago Press. Kishore states that the house's books have been extremely well received "across cultures and languages and nations" (DeMarco 2011), and *Publishing Perspectives* attributes this to the high quality of the Press's books, which are well translated and beautifully designed. "All in all, the books leave a strong impression of good taste and love of literature. Even [the] company's catalogs are printed in beautiful hardcover editions" (DeMarco 2011).

Kishore also emphasizes the importance of building strong relationships with authors and translators. "Only a small handful of publishers have healthy translation lists, but even fewer have the kind of depth to present authors in a meaningful context, and to build real relationships with them and with translators" (qtd. in DeMarco 2011). In the spirit of community, Seagull also offers

a four-month publishing course in Calcutta in hopes of inspiring a new generation of young publishers, particularly in the vernacular languages. Accordingly, the program is said to be "a hands-on course that brings a certain philosophy of working into an industry currently under the shadow of a half dozen corporate entities" (Kishore qtd. in DeMarco 2011). It should be noted here that Kishore isn't so much looking to fill a gap in the industry; rather, he is excited to work with young people and share his passion for independent publishing.

Ugly Duckling Presse

Located in Brooklyn, New York, Ugly Duckling Presse (UDP) started out as a zine[25] in the 1990s, and was eventually turned into a small press "by a volunteer editorial collective that has published more than 200 titles to date. UDP favours emerging, international and 'forgotten' writers" ("About Ugly Duckling Presse"). Accordingly, the press specializes in "poetry, translation, experimental nonfiction, performance texts, and books by artists" (ibid.).

In an interview with Alexis Almeida of *Asymptote Journal*, UDP collective member, Matvei Yankelevich states that between him and the original founders of the press, books were a common language (Almeida 2015). In 2002, after a few years of organic growth, the group moved into its own space. Around that time, UDP became a non-profit, and the collective began applying for grants, which allowed them to work on larger projects (Almeida 2015).

As far as translation projects at UDP are concerned, most notably, the press recently worked on two poetry in translation series: Señal (featuring Latin American poetry) and EEPS (the Eastern European Poets Series). Yankelevich mentions that UDP is able to do more translations as the press becomes more established. "Translations are harder to sell, but as we are able to have more

[25] Merriam-Webster Dictionary Online describes the word zine as follows: "a noncommercial often homemade or online publication usually devoted to specialized and often unconventional subject matter" ("Zine").

publicity for the books, I think it's a better time to do translation than it was in the past, when it was harder to get people to pay attention" (Almeida 2015). More specifically, the more people know about UDP, the easier it is to present them with authors they've never heard of (Almeida 2015). UDP is also distinct in the sense that it likes to focus on "*re*-publishing, re-discovery, reclamation, finding work that has been obscured for various reasons, has been out of print for a while, or has not found wide distribution or availability" (Almeida 2015). This approach gives UDP's audience a chance to discover not only works that they wouldn't have been able to discover outside of translation, but works from authors from another time, who never really got their fair share of recognition.

Words Without Borders

Founded in 2003 by Alane Salierno Mason, Words Without Borders is an online magazine that publishes works from other languages in English translation. To date, the magazine has published "well over 2,000 pieces from 126 countries and 105 languages," including works by works by Nobel Prize laureates J.M.G. Le Clézio and Herta Müller and noted writers Mahmoud Darwish, Etgar Keret, Per Petterson, Fadhil Al-Azzawi, W.G. Sebald, and Can Xue, as well as many new and rising international writers" ("About Words Without Borders").

In The New York Times, Mason states that the idea for the magazine came to her after September 11, when it seemed that much more important to read and understand what other countries were thinking and writing about America and about their own cultures (Salamon 2004). Her awareness of the three percent figure behind books in translation in the United States was also an important driving force behind the project.

Words Without Borders has also partnered with publishing houses to release a number of anthologies of their works, and the team has put together an electronic anthology featuring their

best pieces of the first ten years. Given the website's longevity and the breadth of its catalogue, this organization is clearly making a valid contribution towards increasing the visibility of international literature and raising awareness about the importance of translating international works of fiction into English as a means of cultivating global understanding across cultures. Outside of its print anthologies, Words Without Borders is almost entirely web-based, which reduces the financial risk that small and medium-sized print publishers inevitably face.

Growth in the Category of International Literature

The following table is based on the figures available in the *Three Percent Translation Database*, and shows the number of print titles published in translation by all of the publishers mentioned in this Chapter year over year since 2008 – with the exception of Word Without Borders[26]. These numbers show that as a house becomes more established, its output increases:

		Print Books Published in Translation by Year							
Publisher	**Year Founded**	**2015**	**2014**	**2013**	**2012**	**2011**	**2010**	**2009**	**2008**
New Directions	1936	27	13	8	9	11	16	13	4
Seagull	1982	16	21	15	7	10	6	0	0
Dalkey Archive	1984	19	30	41	32	30	22	19	12
Ugly Duckling	2002	5	2	5	4	1	6	0	5
Archipelago	2004	9	7	10	6	7	7	7	5
Europa Editions	2005	12	19	16	15	9	12	11	11
Open Letter	2007	10	9	10	10	8	9	8	2
Restless Books	2011	4	5	*D/O	*D/O	*D/O	0	0	0
New Vessel Press	2012	4	4	2	0	0	0	0	0
Total:		106	110	107	83	76	78	58	39

*D/O = Digital only

[26] As a magazine, Words Without Borders' contribution to the body of translated literature cannot be quantified in the same context.

Even though the more established houses on this list publish more books per year than the more recent ones, it is fair to assume that newer houses such as New Vessel Press and Restless Books are likely to publish more books in the future. Furthermore, although fewer titles were published in 2015 than the two previous years, it is worth noting that this sample shows overall growth over time. In a web log post written to frame recent database updates, Chad Post mentions that Dalkey Archive switched distributors and changed locations in 2015, "which is obviously going to throw things off for a bit" (Post 2015b). As with any market, figures can fluctuate; a dip in the numbers does not necessarily imply a trend towards publishing fewer translations in the future.

It is worth mentioning that university presses also publish a significant amount of translated literature each year. Most prominently, Syracuse University published eight (8) literary fiction titles in 2015 and six (6) in 2014, and Yale University press has published seven (7) titles in translation per year over the last three years. The American University at Cairo published six (6) titles in translation in 2014 and four (4) in 2013. Most other university presses usually publish one or two literary fiction titles in translation per year. Considering that between 10 and 20 university presses appear in the Three Percent Database annually, the numbers add up. Finally, there are also a number of commercial subsidiaries that publish their fair share of translations, such as Farrar, Straus & Giroux (FSG), Penguin, and Knopf. These publishers tend to cultivate a list of highly literary works, and embrace literature in translation for its "international reach" ("About Farrar, Straus & Giroux"). In this regard, high literature often includes books in translation, not because high quality literature tends to get translated (although it often does), but because "the average quality of translated fiction is relatively high (the rejects not being translated at all)" (Flood 2016). These houses may not display the same activist dimension in their mission statements, but the international fiction they publish is crucial for maintaining a diverse and vibrant book culture in the English-speaking world.

Finally, as Edward Gentzler mentions in an article published by BBC culture, "English-language publishers bring out so many books between them that three per cent is a hefty number – far heftier than Slovenia's 70%" (H. Anderson 2014). Be that as it may, considering that the three percent figure also includes works of non-fiction, and that the output of new fiction and poetry in translation is closer to 0.7%, the number of translated literary fiction titles published annually in the United States does have room for growth.

The future of small-scale publishing houses is that much more promising when we consider that translated fiction sales in the U.K. have nearly doubled over the past 15 years. According to a recent Nielsen Book survey commissioned by the Man Booker Prize, "Though fiction in translation accounts for just 3.5% of literary fiction titles published [in the U.K.], it accounted for 7% of sales in 2015" (Flood 2016). In fact, translated literary fiction sales climbed from 1.3M books sold in 2001 to 2.5M sold on 2014, despite a shrinking market which saw overall fiction sales drop slightly, from 51.6M books sold in 2001 to 49.7M in 2015 (ibid.). Unfortunately, there is no similar study to show the current share of translated book sales in the United States. However, if we consider that the three percent figure has been consistent between the U.S. and the U.K., it is not unreasonable to think that the numbers might be comparable if a similar study were carried out in the United States. Furthermore, as one U.K. book buyer has remarked, "we've now reached a stage where not only are people happy to read fiction in translation, they are positively seeking it out (…). Currently 25% of our top 20 fiction titles are translated and if more were published I'm sure that percentage would be higher still" (Chris White qtd. in Flood 2016). The administrator of the Man Booker Prize, Fiametta Rocco, believes that the rise in translated literature sales is a reflection of people's ability to travel more freely than ever before, stating the "the whole landscape of foreignness is much more even" (Flood 2016). Rocco also acknowledges that the small publishers

"who were set up to deal almost entirely with translated fiction" didn't exist 15 years ago, implying that this contributes to the rise in the popularity of foreign fiction in the English-speaking world (ibid.). Finally, Flood suggests that "Exploring the underrepresented is also a great way to stand out in a crowded market as a publisher" (2016).

Conclusion

Throughout this thesis, my goal has been to present the factors surrounding the three percent problem to show that even though English speakers don't read enough books in translation, independent publishers of international literature in the United States have been working hard to make sure that this can and will change. Although the question, *Why don't English-speakers read more books in translation?* is virtually impossible to answer (or rather, the most obvious answers to this question border on insulting), a better question to ask might be, *How can we get English speakers to read more books in translation?*

When the concept of world literature is positioned as something that one can be either for or against, choosing a side becomes very daunting, especially when we consider that world literature is so difficult to define in the first place. As we have seen, The Editors at *n+1* suggest that instead of speaking of world literature, we should speak of international literature – a category associated with modern and avant-garde literature as opposed to outmoded works of classic and academic literature. But is this semantic change enough to rebrand literature in translation?

In *What is World Literature*? David Damrosch writes, "I take world literature to encompass all literary works that circulate beyond their culture of origin, either in translation or in their original language" (Damrosch 2003: 4). Damrosch believes that if this concept is capable of eliciting such negative reactions, it is because "we're seeing a real paradigm shift underway under the influence of globalization: from the Western European focus of most comparative literature study towards a more global focus" (Damrosch qtd. in Suher 2015). In order to understand the polarized opinions arising out of this debate, we might consider that *any* new movement that is just starting to be discussed in a scholarly context is going to be taking up space that had previously been occupied by other movements, and this is threatening. "Bourdieu uses a military metaphor, the *prise de*

position. And I think to some degree this is not only inevitable but healthy. When it's done well, it's how fields evolve" (ibid.).

Another aspect to consider is that world literature may represent "already overprivileged centers of economic and cultural power, centers of textual representation" (Suher 2015). In a manner of speaking, it is unfair to lump certain works in with texts by authors who haven't been privileged enough to travel extensively or learn English or connect with key players in the publishing industry. More specifically, studying world literature might be seen as studying the views of the privileged few. In this regard, it is important to consider that world literature is based on an unequal system, just as globalization, the literary world system, and translation are unequal. "Certain countries and certain cultures and certain centers have an advantage" (Damrosch qtd. in Suher 2015). However, all literatures require some kind of circulation in order to be read, and historically, the flows of translation have been instrumental in the exchange of ideas across cultures. Unfortunately, the fewer speakers a language has, the harder it is for works in that language to get translated into other languages. In this sense, it is not so much that world literature privileges the existing order, but that methods of circulation are unequal (Suher 2015). Again, it is important to remember that fields evolve. For instance, when comparative literature first became a subject of academic study, the main languages involved were "French, English, German, and some Russian; (…) most of Europe wasn't actually in the discussion" (Damrosch qtd. in Suher 2015). When we consider that comparative literature – and translation studies, for that matter – now routinely deal with languages like Icelandic, Portuguese, Czech, and Polish, it would be inaccurate to say that these fields are not expanding. In this sense, literary studies need time to grow and include more languages. The same might be said of the publishing industry. Moreover, "when a world author really takes off, that actually produces a lot of interest in that culture" (Damrosch qtd. in Suher 2015). Recently, we've seen this happen with the success of Orhan Pamuk and the

popularity "Nordic noir" novels – two examples that have created many new publishing opportunities for a number of Turkish and Scandinavian authors. The problem may be more closely related to the idea that in most parts of the world, "people only encounter world literature within their own cultural space. It's what's available to you in translation or in the languages you can learn in school, which is a very select set of languages" (Damrosch qtd. in Suher 2015). From this perspective, our worldviews are limited to the texts we have access to, including what is translated, "what's in the bookstore, what's reviewed, what's talked about" (Suher 2015). For this reason, the work of small publishers becomes that much more important, because these are the publishers who are willing to take risks on books by lesser-known writers in translation. These are also the people who are working to make sure these books get reviewed, and who strike deals with distribution companies that ensure that these books can be ordered by all bookstores. Finally, because texts in translation tend not to sell in large numbers right away, it becomes that much more important for these titles to get published by small presses that understand the value of creating a strong backlist, which will ensure that titles remain in print. As far as ensuring that books will find an audience, the publishers outlined in Chapter 4 of this thesis are proving their ability to redefine modes of reception by dissociating translated literature from university literature, and by aligning these books with avant-garde literature, subversive literature, and literature that challenges the status quo.

Independent publishers are not the only entities that work towards ensuring a healthy and vibrant international book culture. When I started this project, I wasn't really sure where to begin, but as I dug deeper, I was impressed by the wide range of individuals who are invested in internationalism as a literary project. This scene is not just made up of publishers, it is also filled with bloggers, book reviewers, journalists, and literary agents. In interviews, all of these people speak with fervor about how important it is for translated books to find their audience. If these

people keep doing what they are doing, there is no reason to doubt that the international literature scene will continue to grow.

This project would not be complete without drawing attention to how important it is to recognize the work of translators, without whom literature in translation wouldn't be possible. From this perspective, it is that much more important for translators to champion the books they've worked on and to get involved in the promotional process, possibly embarking on book tours with or even without their authors. In fact, we've seen this happen recently with Ann Goldstein, the translator of Elena Ferrante's Neapolitan Novels. Given that Ferrante has chosen to remain anonymous, Goldstein has stepped up, granting interviews to the Anglophone press about her translation process. Indeed, this is a great way to highlight the effort and subtlety involved in literary translation and to bring translators out of obscurity. If we can get more people to recognize great translators for their work, the critics will be more likely to shake the old idea that reading a translation isn't as good as reading an original, and audiences for translated literature are bound to increase.

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