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## Literary and Translation Prizes in the Cultural Transfer Process. The Path Towards Ultimate Consecration

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# Literary and Translation Prizes in the Cultural Transfer Process

## The Path towards Ultimate Consecration

« Petra Broomans »

Every year, usually on the first Thursday afternoon in October, a door opens in the building of the Swedish Academy in Stockholm and everyone in the big room holds their breath. After the first sentence is spoken by the Swedish Academy's secretary, the world knows the winner of the Nobel Prize in Literature for that year. After weeks of speculation and the nervous bookmakers' anxious wait, everything returns to normal until the prize is handed over in December, except for the laureate, the critics and the publishers. New editions have to be printed, new translations done, and some critics might have to reconsider their previous less positive reviews. When the prize is controversial, as it was when Bob Dylan received the award in 2016, there is some debate about whether or not the award was deserved, for aesthetic reasons in this case. In 2018, no prize was awarded because of a #MeToo scandal that involved the Swedish Academy. Thus, in 2019, two authors were awarded the prize, the 2018 award went to a Polish author, Olga Tokarczuk, and the 2019 award to the Austrian, Peter Handke. The latter was again controversial, for political reasons, as Handke had supported the former president of Yugoslavia, Slobodan Milošević, and also attended Milošević's funeral. The decision of the Nobel committee was condemned by PEN International, among others.

In general, writers, translators, publishing houses and, in the case of the Nobel prize, even bookmakers, benefit from literary and literary translation prizes. There is not only honour – symbolic capital – involved, but also economic capital (see also the contribution by Jos Joosten in this volume). Winning an award is often the motor of greater success, higher sales figures and, especially for young authors, encouragement. The writer feels appreciated, and when a fair amount of

money is attached to the prize, the author might use this for new book projects, or no longer need to write applications for grants or have another profession. Winning awards also means consecration. As Pascale Casanova (1959-2018) writes in her seminal study, *The World Republic of Letters*, the Nobel Prize in Literature is ‘the greatest proof of literary consecration’<sup>1</sup> and, furthermore, ‘its juries managed not only to establish themselves as arbiters of literary legitimacy but also to preserve their monopoly on worldwide literary consecration’ (see also the contribution on the Nobel Prize in Literature by Jana Rüegg in this volume).<sup>2</sup> In addition, James English argues that literary prizes have the function of promoting writers, with such awards having the capacity to predict or determine an eventual canon of esteemed works.<sup>3</sup> The main methodological framework used by English in his study *The Economy of Prestige: Prizes, Awards, and the Circulation of Cultural Value* (2008), which to date is one of the few major academic works on the topic, is the field theory developed by Pierre Bourdieu (1930-2002). William Marling also includes literary prizes in his work, *Gatekeepers: The Emergence of World Literature and the 1960s* (2016), and he applies the insights of English and Bourdieu in his research on the importance of gatekeepers in the creation of world literature.

In this article, I will discuss the importance of literary prizes and literary translation prizes in the cultural transfer process. I will reflect

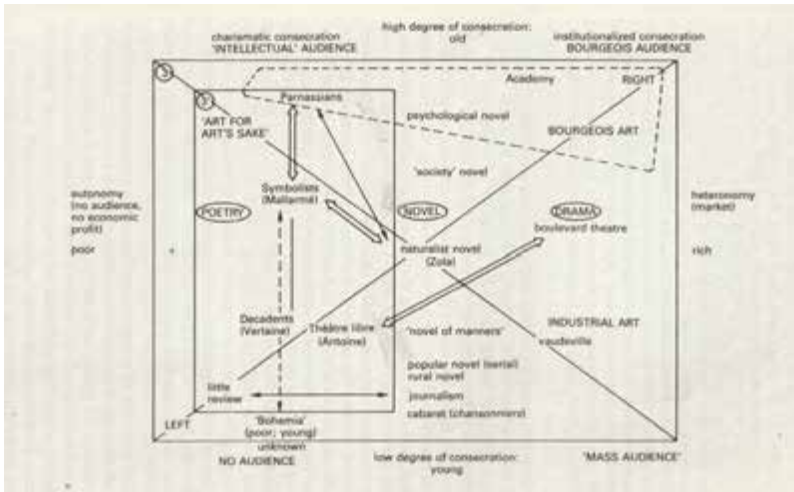
- .....
- 1 Clayton Childress, Craig M. Rawlings and Brian Moeran, ‘Publishers, authors, and texts: The process of cultural consecration in prize evaluation’, *Poetics* 60 (2017), pp. 48-61, provides an insightful overview of how cultural consecration works in the case of the Booker Prize for Fiction. As a basic definition of literary consecration, I propose: the act in which an author is elected and chosen by other writers, by literary critics as the *prima inter pares*. This status can be strengthened by literary prizes such as the Nobel prize.
  - 2 Pascale Casanova, *La république mondiale des lettres* (1999) (*The World Republic of Letters*, Cambridge, MA, 2004), p. 147. I prefer the term ‘literary consecration’, used by Casanova, rather than ‘cultural consecration’. However, in this article, I will simply use the term ‘consecration’, originally a religious term, see for example: <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/consecration>.
  - 3 James F. English, ‘The Economics of Cultural Awards’, in: Ginsburgh, V. and Thorshby, C.D., eds., *Handbook of the Economics of Art and Culture*, Volume 2 (2014), pp. 119-143, p. 119.

on consecration and canonisation in connection to literary prizes, and define the actors, moments and places. In order to do so, I will follow the phases of the cultural transfer process that I have defined in previous studies.<sup>4</sup> The question of the extent to which there is any difference between literary prizes in one's own literary field and translation prizes in another literary field will also be addressed. Do local and national literary prizes contribute to the cultural transfer process or does cultural transfer start when an author is translated and enters the international field or the new global field of 'world literature'?<sup>5</sup>

### *Consecration and canonisation*

In his study, *The Field of Cultural Production* (1993), Bourdieu visualises actors, literary genres and several types of consecration in his scheme of the literary field in the nineteenth century. Bourdieu's field theory can still be regarded as an important point of departure for cultural and literary field studies today. Literary prizes are fine examples of rituals in the field, with competitions, negative and positive power poles, social, economic and symbolic capital. Are literary prizes visible in the following overview of a literary field compiled by Bourdieu?<sup>6</sup>

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- 4 The first proposal of the phases is included in the introduction to Marta Ronne and Petra Broomans, eds., *In the Vanguard of Cultural Transfer. Cultural Transmitters and Authors in Peripheral Literary Fields*. Studies on Cultural Transfer and Transmission (CTaT), Vol. 3 (Groningen, 2010), and was further developed in other articles. A more elaborated version is applied in Petra Broomans, 'The Meta-literary History of Cultural Transmitters and Forgotten Scholars in the midst of Transnational Literary History', in: Steen Bille Jørgensen and Lüsebrink, Hans-Jürgen, eds., *Cultural Transfer Reconsidered. Transnational Perspectives, Translation Processes, Scandinavian and Postcolonial Challenges* (Leiden, 2021).
  - 5 World literature has been studied by various scholars, including Franco Moretti and David Damrosch. A useful definition of world literature is: 'all literary works that circulate beyond their culture of origin, either in translation or in their original language', David Damrosch, *What is World Literature?* (Princeton, 2003), p. 4.
  - 6 Pierre Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production* (Cambridge, 1993), p. 49.



**Figure 1:** French literary field in the second half of the 19th century; + = positive pole, implying a dominant position, - = negative pole, implying a dominated position.

Source: Pierre Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production. Essays on Art and Literature*. Edited and introduced by Randal Johnson (Cambridge, 1993), p. 49.

This scheme shows that the type and level of consecration are both divided along power lines or poles, between the dominated (negative pole) and the dominant groups (positive pole), between young and old, rich and poor. The scheme includes more opposites: no audience versus mass audience, intellectual audience versus bourgeois audience, and autonomy (thus no economic profit) versus heteronomy (market, thus possibility of profit). Other opposites are 'art for art's sake' versus bourgeois art and - also at the dominant pole - industrial art. Bourdieu also makes a division between genres: poetry is situated on the side of autonomy and intellectual audience; the novel and theatre, especially boulevard theatre, on the side of bourgeois audience and industrial art. There are also two levels of consecration. Firstly, a low degree of consecration, which has two poles of no audience, young and poor versus authors who attract a mass audience with popular fiction. Secondly, there is a high degree of consecration, which also has two poles. Charismatic consecration is attributed to an author by a small but professional group of literary critics and/or fellow authors. Institutionalised, and thus more profitable, consecration is awarded to established authors who have already entered institutions with economic capital.

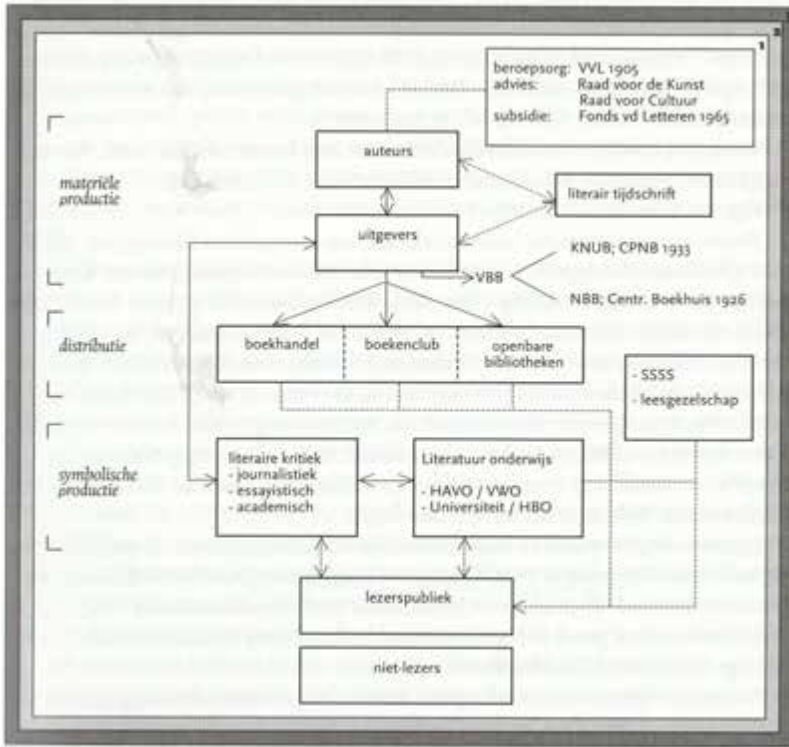
Bourdieu's scheme is based on the situation during the nineteenth century but much can be applied to our times using comparable opposites; for example, modernist and experimental drama versus musicals and cabaret. Different groups of writers also exist today: those who cannot make a living solely from writing versus bestselling authors.<sup>7</sup> The influence of social media on a mass audience became a new factor at the end of the twentieth century and plays an increasingly influential role in the twenty-first century. In relation to the production process, new production techniques, such as print on demand and the possibilities offered by the internet, are now at stake. Everybody can be a writer or a poet and publish stories and poems on the internet. The question is whether or not these new possibilities are a token of inclusiveness. Regarding the literary prize system, the public has indeed become more influential (see the contributions by Lore De Greve and Gunther Martens, as well as Jos Joosten in this volume). However, prestigious prizes such as the Prix Goncourt still use professional juries consisting of esteemed literary critics and authors, and for a long time only awarded the prize to writers who met the 'standard' of white and male (see the contribution by Jeanette den Toonder in this volume).

There are also elements missing from Bourdieu's scheme – literary prizes, translations, as a genre, and cultural transmitters. The absence of translated literature, the cultural transmitter (translator) and literary prizes is also notable in later studies. In an overview of the literary field in the Netherlands at the end of the twentieth century by Dorleijn and Van Rees – based on Bourdieu's field concept – neither translated literature nor literary prizes are included.<sup>8</sup> Their overview is focused on institutions, literary critics and readers.

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7 Ann Steiner gives a clear overview of the different incomes for writers: royalties from book sales, library loan fees, fees for lectures and writing assignments and literary prizes, see Ann Steiner, *Litteraturen i mediesamhället* (Lund, 2012), p. 61.

8 Other overviews in this chapter by Van Rees and Dorleijn are of the fields around 1800 (p. 32) and around 1900 (p. 33). In this volume, publishing houses that produce translations and translators are discussed in an article by Laurens van Krevelen on the publishing house Meulenhoff where they are briefly mentioned, and in the article by Kees van Rees, Susanne Janssen and Marc Verboord on classification in the Dutch cultural and literary field.



**Figure 2:** Schema literaire veld tegen het eind van de 20e eeuw (1), ingebed in het culturele veld (2), dat weer is ingebed in het maatschappelijke veld (3).

Source: Gillis J. Dorleijn en Kees van Rees (red.), *De productie van literatuur. Het literaire veld in Nederland 1800-2000* (Nijmegen: 2006), p.19.

Neither consecration nor canonisation are explicitly mentioned, but Van Rees and Dorleijn do add the notions of material production, distribution and symbolic production. Literary critics are situated in the latter category, as is literature education in schools and universities, while libraries function at the level of distribution, all places where consecration occurs and where, as Svedjedal argues, the path to canonisation begins.<sup>9</sup> Canonisation in fact means that a writer is read in

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9 Johan Svedjedal, 'Bortom bokkedjan. Bokmarknadens funktioner - en ny modell och några exempel', *Tidskrift för litteraturvetenskap Litteraturen och den nya teknologin* 3-4 (1999), p. 10.

schools and at universities, that research is done on them and that the literary work is stored in libraries.

Looking at Bourdieu's scheme once again, we can observe that the writers Stéphane Mallarmé (1842-1898) and Paul Verlaine (1844-1896), who belong to the left field, with charismatic consecration and an intellectual audience, have now been canonised and are well-known names in literary history. Émile Zola (1840-1902), who is in the middle of the literary field, was the pioneer in the genre of naturalism, and was consecrated by French and foreign audiences, and is now included in the Western canon. The centre of this field is in my opinion a transit zone: in the last decades of the nineteenth century, the novel developed into the dominant genre, with other subgenres already visible – the psychological novel, the novel of 'manners' and the society novel. In this transit zone, the arrival of the popular novel marks the start of a more rigid division between high-brow, middle-brow and low-brow literature in the literary fields of the twentieth century. As with all networks, literary fields change over time; thus, in a visualisation of a literary field in another period, other genres will be on the rise and become dominant.

In addition to genres, authors and audiences, literary critics are only mentioned implicitly on the left pole of Bourdieu's schema, with an observation regarding low consecration: 'Little review'. According to Ann Steiner, consecration by literary critics has time limits, for example with respect to reviews in daily newspapers.<sup>10</sup> Nevertheless, literary critics and intermediaries play important roles. As Casanova states, they are an invisible society with an 'immense power of consecration, of determining literary quality' (my emphasis).<sup>11</sup>

A Bourdieuan scheme of the literary field in the second half of the twentieth century should certainly also include literary prizes. As English demonstrates, after the Second World War, literary awards and prizes became a booming business.<sup>12</sup> Furthermore, Steiner argues that literary prizes have the potential to consecrate an author

10 Steiner, *Litteraturen i mediasamhället*, p. 62.

11 Casanova, *The World Republic of Letters*, p. 22.

12 See his chapter 'The Rise of the Prize', Appendix A, in: James F. English, *The Economy of Prestige: Prizes, Awards, and the Circulation of Cultural Value* (Harvard, 2008), pp. 323-328. Figure 15 on p. 324 shows the rise of literary prizes.



and also lead to canonisation in the long run. This process is of longer duration and concerns a higher level of sustainability.<sup>13</sup> To be included in literary history and to conquer an eternal place in national and international awareness, is to become the protagonist of the most successful romantic plot in literary history; the writer is conceived of as a hero who finds his/her own style, succeeds and is canonised.<sup>14</sup> We should, however, not forget that canonisation is in fact a form of classification and that the canon undergoes changes. The 'canon' is a living thing: authors are permitted to enter the canon on aesthetic, ideological or nationalistic grounds, others are removed because they are no longer considered of importance. The latter are no longer read or researched and may enter a zone of lost and forgotten writers. Thus, canonisation also has a limited duration, unless a writer becomes a classic in the hypercanon, such as William Shakespeare (1585-1613).<sup>15</sup> Moreover, to award a literary prize is also a form of classification: after deliberation, a jury selects works from the longlist to be included in a shortlist. The jury members apply criteria they consider to be aesthetic and in accord with the regulations of the prize. Thus, the Nobel Prize in Literature is not the only important factor in the canonisation process, as all literary prizes play a role in the circulation of literary works in the field of world literature.

### *Literary prizes and world literature*

Writers are translated into other languages; although, over recent decades, this has meant mostly into English. Thus, world literature after the 1960s has increasingly become Anglophone. Paradoxically, compared with small literary fields, the percent of all works translat-

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13 Steiner, *Litteraturen i mediesamhället*, p. 62.

14 In my work on literary history (1999), I applied Hayden White's theory of discourse modes in history writing on texts in literary histories. My analysis demonstrates that the romantic plot is the most used in literary history. For an explanation in English, see Broomans, 'The Meta-literary History of Cultural Transmitters', p. 65.

15 The hypercanon includes all major writers from the past who are still read and studied, often from new perspectives. See D. Damrosch, 'World literature in a post-canonical, hypercanonical age,' in: Saussy, H., ed., *Comparative literature in an age of globalization* (Baltimore, 2006), pp. 43-53.

ed into English is in fact very low. In 2009, the percentage of literary translations into English was three percent, while from English into other languages, it was more than 60 percent.<sup>16</sup> Even if this so-called three percent rule has changed over the last decade, it is still low compared with the translation of books from English as the source language.<sup>17</sup>

In the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, literary prizes became significant instruments in the literary field (see also the contribution here by Lore De Greve and Gunther Martens). James English regards literary and cultural awards as the ‘best instrument for negotiating transactions between cultural and economic, cultural and social, or social, or cultural and political capital – which is to say that they are our most effective institutional agents of *capital intraconversion*’.<sup>18</sup> Capital intraconversion thus means the exchange of cultural and economic capital, among other things.<sup>19</sup> All actors in national literary fields and in the field of world literature are located in the zone of ‘capital intraconversion’. However, in this zone where culture is capitalised upon, literary prizes stimulate further capital intraconversion, and thus the translation business and the literary translation prize markets play a significant role.

The consequences of receiving a major prize also demonstrate this stimulation of capital intraconversion. When a writer receives a prestigious award, the parties involved begin trading cultural, economic and medial capital. As stated in the introduction, after a writer has been awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature, publishing houses act to capitalise on and merchandise the literary works of the author involved. Translators also benefit from these prizes. If the author has not yet been translated, new translations have to be done or earlier translations republished. A prize may also influence or change the opinion of the public and the reviewers.

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 16 See <https://www.ceatl.eu/policy-recommendations-of-the-european-civil-society-platform-on-multilingualism> (consulted on March 21, 2021).

17 See for example <https://publishingperspectives.com/2019/03/nielsen-reports-translated-literature-in-uk-grows-5-percent-in-2018-booker/> (consulted on March 21, 2021).

18 English, *The Economy of Prestige*, p. 10.

19 *Ibidem*.

William Marling criticises James English for tracing prizes and the circulation of cultural value in 'North American, European, and African circuits', but failing to extend this to Asia.<sup>20</sup> Marling points out that there are approximately 150 prizes in the Anglophone world (United States, Great Britain, Canada, Australia and South Africa; on literary prizes in South Africa, including the Afrikaans literary field, see the contribution by Margriet de Waal in this volume). Anglophone literature thus receives the most awards in the world, compared to the number of literary prizes in any other language area. Marling further observes that publishers have launched prizes and awards with the aim of marketing their authors.<sup>21</sup> He demonstrates that in the global literary field, which has changed dramatically since the 1960s, only five large Anglo-American publishers control most of the world's literature in translation, creating a genre called 'world literature'. After the 1960s, this genre began to align itself with contests, prizes and popular media (e.g. Oprah's Book Club); but above all, according to Marling, it became Anglophone.<sup>22</sup> Literary prizes are part of the marketing, as English demonstrated. Moreover, and according to Marling, literary prizes are a symbol of the industrialisation of literature.<sup>23</sup> Thus, literary prizes are important in the cultural transfer process, in which trading, negotiating and economic capital all play roles.

### *Literary prizes in the cultural transfer process*

Translation plays an important part in the Nobel committee's selection process, especially when the nominated authors belong to peripheral and semi-peripheral languages.<sup>24</sup> Sometimes authors are already world famous or beloved among a small but prominent pub-

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20 William Marling, *Gatekeepers: The Emergence of World Literature and the 1960s* (Oxford Scholarship Online, 2016), p. 117.

21 Marling, *Gatekeepers*, p. 7.

22 Marling, *Gatekeepers*, p. 17.

23 Marling, *Gatekeepers*, p. 218.

24 Literary works by authors who write in a central language, such as English, can be read in the original language. See also the contribution by Jana Rüegg in this volume.



*Tomas Tranströmer. Photo: Frankie Fouganthin.*

Source: [https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/9/99/Tomas\\_Transtr%C3%B6mer\\_feb\\_2014.jpg](https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/9/99/Tomas_Transtr%C3%B6mer_feb_2014.jpg).

lic. One fine example of such a semi-peripheral author is the Swedish poet Tomas Tranströmer (1931-2015). While only one poem from his debut in 1954 was translated into English by Grace Hunter,<sup>25</sup> by 2000 he had been translated into 30 languages, and by 2011 into 48 languages, the year he was awarded the Nobel prize. Tranströmer had very good contacts with his translators, often poets themselves, such as the Dutch poet Hendrik Jan Marsman (pseud. Bernlef, 1937-2012), who became the most important Dutch cultural transmitter for Tranströmer, although he only started to translate his work in 1982. The first Dutch translations appeared in 1968 and during the 1970s. One of the important cultural transmitters in English for Tranströmer was Robert Bly, who published *Twenty Poems* in 1970. Thus, Tranströmer already had a large international network in peripheral, semi-pe-

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25 'Ode to Thoreau' ('Fem strofer till Thoreau'). Translated by Grace Hunter, *The Western Humanities Review*, Salt Lake City, Utah 8 (1954): 2, p. 86, source: Tomas Tranströmer. *En bibliografi*. Sammanställd av Lennart Karlström (Stockholm, 1990), p. 114.



*Bernlef. In his home at the Waldeck Pyramontlaan, Amsterdam, 2002. Photo: Michiel Hendryckx.*

*Source: [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:BERNLEF\\_675.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:BERNLEF_675.jpg).*

ripheral and central languages before receiving the Noble prize. Nevertheless, after 2011, the number of languages into which Tranströmer's work was translated increased to 60. Thus, this case also demonstrates that literary prizes are one of the instruments driving the cultural transfer of literature.

In which phase of the cultural transfer process do literary prizes and translation prizes play a role? What roles do the various actors play – whether individuals or institutions? To what extent do local and national literary prizes fulfil a role in cultural transfer and in paving the way for authors to enter the field of world literature, which we might perceive as the ultimate consecration?

While cultural transfer basically refers to the process of mediating and/or translating a literary text from one linguistic area to another,<sup>26</sup> if we take into account the various roles of a cultural transmitter, it becomes apparent that the cultural transfer process is more complex than simply translating a text. In addition to the translator, the editor of a publishing house, a reviewer and even booksellers can also take on the role of cultural transmitters.<sup>27</sup> After the translation has been done, the editing and production processes start. In this movement towards successful cultural transfer, there are moments of potential quarantine. The book is produced, but will it be distributed and bought? If it is bought, will it be reviewed? Between translation,

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 26 Petra Broomans, 'Preface', *From Darwin to Weil. Women as Transmitters of Ideas*, Studies on Cultural Transfer and Transmission (CTaT), Vol. 1 (Groningen, 2009).

27 I developed a definition of a cultural transmitter in 2006 in Dutch (Broomans, 2006, p. 64), in 2009 it was included in a revised version in the introduction to the first volume of the series, *Cultural Transfer and Transmission* (Broomans, 2009, p. 2): 'A cultural transmitter or mediator basically works within a particular language and cultural area. She/he often takes on various roles in the field of cultural transfer: translator, reviewer, critic, journalist, (literary) historian, scholar, teacher, librarian, bookseller, collector, literary agent, scout, publisher, editor of a journal, writer, travel writer, counsellor, or even businessman. Transmitting another national literature and culture, and its cultural context to one's own national literature and cultural context is the central issue in the work of a cultural transmitter. Transmission often reflects a bilateral situation. Even the transmission of one's own literature and culture takes place. The motivation can be aesthetically, ideologically, politically and/or economically based.'

production and distribution to bookshops, cultural transfer may be put on hold at different phases prior to a successful transfer. At the same time, translations of books that have been awarded a literary prize in the source area might have more chance of successful cultural transfer and might profit from a literary translation prize in the target language. Moreover, bilateral cultural transfers pave the way for inclusion in the canon of world literature.

Defining the different steps in the cultural transfer process, the first phase finds individual or groups of cultural transmitters looking for literary works in the source literature that have already attracted many readers and even been awarded a literary prize. Publishing houses, which might be regarded as institutional cultural transmitters, will regard an award as a welcome addition that may ensure economic success, when deciding whether to have a work translated and published.

Thus, a national literary prize, although situated outside the main cultural transfer process of transmitting literary works from one linguistic area to another, can play an important role in enabling the start of such a cultural process. Well-known examples can be retrieved from the history of the Nobel Prize in Literature. For example, the Canadian writer Alice Munro, who was awarded the prize in 2013, was a relatively unknown writer in the Dutch-speaking region beforehand. The first Dutch translations appeared in 1987, 1990 and 1991. The next translation was only published 12 years later in 2003 by the publishing house De Geus, followed by another in 2008. However, after she won the prize in 2013, eight translations appeared in the period 2013-2015, most of which were done by Pleuke Boyce.<sup>28</sup>

Another example of the impact of winning the Nobel Prize in Literature on new translations is the Polish author Olga Tokarczuk, who received the Nobel prize in 2019 (2018). In the timeline of the Dutch translations, gaps can be also observed. The first Dutch translation by Karol Lesman was published in 1998, followed by a second translation in 2013, also by Lesman. Between 2013 and 2019, there were no translations into Dutch, although an E-Book was published in 2013. After her Nobel prize in 2019, two books were published in Dutch in

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 28 Altogether 12 translations, of which some are reprints: source SmartCat. See for an overview Appendix 1. The overview includes the names of the translators.



*Olga Tokarczuk at the Frankfurt Book Fair 2019. Photo: Harald Krichel .*

*Source: [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Olga\\_Tokarczuk-9739.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Olga_Tokarczuk-9739.jpg).*



*Karol Lesman. Photo: Robin De Puy.*

*Source: [https://www.poleninbeeld.nl/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/01\\_PBF\\_Karol\\_Lesman\\_cRobinDePuy-900x444.jpg](https://www.poleninbeeld.nl/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/01_PBF_Karol_Lesman_cRobinDePuy-900x444.jpg).*

2019 and two more in 2020.<sup>29</sup> Looking at translations of her work into English, a similar sequence can be observed: books were published in English in 2002, 2009 and in 2018, in fact fewer titles than in Dutch. After the Noble prize, one translation appeared in English in 2019 and two in 2021.<sup>30</sup>

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29 See Appendix 2. The overview includes the names of the translators.

30 See Appendix 3. The overview includes the names of the translators.



As previously mentioned, the question of the extent to which translation prizes are different from literary prizes can be approached in terms of cultural transfer. It can be argued that literary translation prizes are awarded to works that have already been through the cultural transfer process and successful cultural transfer. The translation would have been read and esteemed in the new language area, often in the form of high sales rates and positive reviews. There are, however, examples of works in translation that have had interrupted or delayed success in their cultural transfer.

One well-known example in the Dutch-speaking area is the translation into Dutch of the novel, *Änglahuset* (1979) [Angel House] by Kerstin Ekman, which was the third part of her *Women and the Town* tetralogy. This novel had been translated into Dutch by Bertie van der Meij. However, because of the low sales figures for the first two novels, published in Dutch in 1984 and 1985, respectively, the publisher decided not to launch the third novel. It was only when Ekman received the Nordic Council's literary prize for her novel *Blackwater* (1993) in 1993, that an international breakthrough occurred, with *Blackwater* translated into 20 languages, including a Dutch translation in the Netherlands. This resulted in the publisher deciding to publish *Änglahuset* after 14 years, in 1998,<sup>31</sup> undertaken by two other translators: Elina van der Heijden and Wiveca Jongeneel. According to the cultural transfer process, this period of hiatus is called a phase of quarantine, as mentioned above. *Blackwater* is a fine example of the importance of national and regional literary prizes. The novel had received the prestigious August prize in Sweden, as well as the prize for the best crime novel in 1993, the same year it was published. Thus, a literary prize, whether or not it is national or supranational, such as the Nordic Council literary prize, and even when it refers to a small and specific language area such as Scandinavia, can enable the start of successful cultural transfer.

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31 See Petra Broomans and Ester Jiresch, 'The Invasion of Books', in: Broomans, P. and Jiresch, E., eds., *The Invasion of Books in Peripheral Literary Fields. Transmitting Preferences and Images in Media, Networks and Translation*. Studies on Cultural Transfer and Transmission (CTaT), Vol. 3 (Groningen, 2011), pp. 12-13.

A prize can stimulate an important phase in the process of cultural transmission – the translation. Sapiro argues that translation is in fact an act of consecration.<sup>32</sup> Sometimes this may also mean having at last found the right translator, as Marling has pointed out.<sup>33</sup> In the Dutch-speaking area, Ekman had various ‘right’ translators in the Netherlands, but not one special translator. This might reflect the fact that her literary work is of high quality, combined with the significant skills of the translators involved. As suggested above, after her international breakthrough, the literary work of Kerstin Ekman underwent ongoing successful cultural transfer, with all her other books translated.

The next phase in the cultural transfer process is the publishing and production phase. In this new phase, a translation prize is of relevance, as it could promote sales and reviews in the new language domain. The Booker International Prize and the European Prize for Literature (see the article by Mathijs Sanders in this volume) are literary prizes that celebrate the winning author as well as the translator. This dual recognition is new to the landscape of literary and translation prizes and is a relatively new phenomenon in the history of cultural transfer. However, a common feature of all *translation* prizes is that the translator is highlighted. Although translators are not mentioned in the literary fields discussed by Bourdieu and Van Rees and Dorleijn, translators have been, and remain important actors in the literary field. There are many national translation prizes that celebrate the efforts of translators. In the Dutch-speaking region, the most important translation prize is the Martinus Nijhoff prize (see the contribution by Stella Linn in this volume). These national or regional translation prizes have a bilateral character. They award prizes for translations from one specific language area, such as French, German, Spanish or Russian, into another specific language. Another fine example is the Filter translation prize for translations from any language into Dutch.<sup>34</sup> This is also the case for the European Prize for Literature, founded in 2010.

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32 Gisèle Sapiro, ‘The metamorphosis of modes of consecration in the literary field: Academies, literary prizes, festivals’, *Poetics* 59 (2016), pp. 12-13.

33 Marling, *Gatekeepers*, p. 40.

34 See <https://www.vertalerslexicon.nl/filter-vertaalprijs/> (in Dutch).

To celebrate its 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2020, the European Prize for Literature was awarded to two authors and their translators: *Meer dan een broer* ('More than a brother', original title, *Frère d'âme*, 2018) by David Diop, translated from the French by Martine Woudt, and the novel *Lente* (*Spring, A Novel*, 2019) by Ali Smith, translated by Karina van Santen and Martine Vosmaer. Receiving such an award may contribute to the author laureates becoming better known in the source area and in new areas such as the Dutch-speaking region. The source region might be small, for example Finnish, but there are also large source areas such as the Francophone. Thus, for authors from small language areas, the consequences of winning such an award and becoming better known in other language areas will greatly extend their success (see the contribution by Mathijs Sanders).

The bilateral effects of awards for literary works in translation can also be observed for prizes such as the internationally known Booker International Prize, mentioned above. However, here it is much more likely that the winning author will attract worldwide attention and be translated into more languages, potentially even entering the field of world literature. It goes without saying that winning an Anglo-American award will promote a writer translated into English. For example, the Booker International Prize 2020 was awarded to the Dutch author Marieke Lucas Rijneveld and her translator Michele Hutchison for the novel *The Discomfort of Evening* (in Dutch *De avond is ongemak*, 2018). This achievement could mark the start of her successful cultural transfer into the field of world literature, only time will tell. It can also be argued that Hutchinson should be regarded as the right translator for Rijneveld, her translation skills winning the work such esteemed recognition, and appreciated especially by those familiar with the language of the original. As argued by Marling, in order to enter the field of world literature, such writers need cultural transmitters, gatekeepers, scouts, literary entrepreneurs, translators, big and small publishing houses, agents, foreign publishers and foreign reviewers.<sup>35</sup> This list reflects my description of the cultural transmitter presented in previous studies.<sup>36</sup>

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 35 Marling, *Gatekeepers*, p. 2.

36 See footnote 27.

### *Actors in the cultural transfer process*

As pointed out by many cultural transfer scholars (e.g. Michel Espagne) and early comparatists (e.g. Paul von Tieghem), the cultural transmitter and the important role he/she plays in disseminating foreign literature, has been neglected in literary history for a long time.<sup>37</sup> Scholars in the field of cultural studies have also considered the importance of cultural transmitters and translations. Examples include Peter Burke's article, 'Lost (and Found) in Translation: A cultural history of translators and translating in Early Modern Europe' (2005) and, more recently, Orlando Figes's fascinating book, *The Europeans: Three Lives and the Making of a Cosmopolitan Culture* (2019). Figes's aim is to approach Europe as a 'space of cultural transfers, translations and exchanges crossing national boundaries, out of which a "European culture" – an international synthesis of artistic forms, ideas and styles – would come into existence and distinguish Europe from the broader world'.<sup>38</sup>

As Casanova has stated, gatekeepers and cultural transmitters have the power to select literary texts.<sup>39</sup> The term 'gatekeeper', adopted by William Marling, is usually used to describe editors working for publishing houses, whose aim is to introduce good literature into the literary field. In Marling's study, gatekeepers play a broader role, while in my description of a cultural transmitter, I also defined various roles: the translator is, of course one, of the most important actors, but in order to introduce literature, the act of discovery has to be the first step. According to Philippe von Tieghem, a cultural transmitter should have 'flair', an ability to discover authors who could add something new to their own literary field and thus to the receiving culture.<sup>40</sup>

37 See Broomans 'The Meta-literary History of Cultural Transmitters'.

38 Orlando Figes, *The Europeans: Three Lives and the Making of a Cosmopolitan Culture* (New York, 2019), p. 4.

39 The terms 'intermediaries' and 'mediator' are also used. I regard these terms as reflecting a position 'in-between' and reflecting a more passive role. The term 'gatekeeper' and 'cultural transmitter' reflect a more active role of taking a position in the different phases of the cultural transfer process.

40 Philippe van Tieghem, *Les influences étrangères sur la littérature Française 1550-1880* (Paris, 1961), p. 4.

Thus, while Marling works with the term gatekeeper and the role gatekeepers play for a writer, it is fruitful to compare some of his ideas with the notion of the cultural transmitter, particularly with respect to the importance of translation, as well as the role of literary prizes and what these mean in the context of world literature. Marling's main emphasis in his notion of a gatekeeper is that writers are given opportunities to publish their work by collaborating with others, or one could also say, by using their networks: 'The older, romantic notion of authorship, of isolated genius, has been chipped away by studies showing that collaboration, copyright law, and changes in media have contributed much to literary invention.'<sup>41</sup>

Marling's notion of a gatekeeper can also be understood at different levels: the private level, including friends and family, and the public and institutional level. The latter includes:

(...) editors, agents, lawyers, bookstore owners, other artists, patrons, partners, and publishers play an important role in the creative process. Even rivals may help by pushing writers toward new aesthetic paths or by re-dimensioning the creative field or its rules, the *doxa* as Pierre Bourdieu termed them. We see the value of such aid when we look at writers around us, who are helped by numerous people, not to mention tenure and grants, prizes, and sinecures.<sup>42</sup>

Marling focuses on agency and actors and is especially interested in literary entrepreneurs such as scouts, small publishers and agents. Furthermore, Marling regards distributors and bookstores as gatekeepers and book reviewers as 'distribution-side gatekeepers'.<sup>43</sup> Among the entrepreneurs, Marling also includes translators. Without these entrepreneurs, there would be no discovery of new authors. This is in accordance with the first phase of the cultural transfer process. Marling claims that 'gatekeepers have acquired the cultural resources to be aware of the literary artifact's possibilities

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41 Marling, *Gatekeepers*, p. 1.

42 *Ibidem*.

43 Marling, *Gatekeepers*, p. 29.

beyond its home field'.<sup>44</sup> This endorses the notion of 'flair'. According to Marling, there are two areas to take into account and thus two sets of 'the rules of the game' – in the culture of origin and in the culture of reception.<sup>45</sup>

These notions can be associated with different definitions of cultural transmitters, who use their flair and bring something new to foreign cultures. We might also think of these roles in terms of polysystem theory, developed by Even-Zohar in the 1970s.<sup>46</sup> Polysystem theory divides national fields into strong and weak. The latter, which may be young fields or fields in crisis are, according to Even-Zohar, more receptive to foreign (translated) literature than strong fields.

Marling and many other scholars in different disciplines (cultural studies, translation studies, sociology of literature and cultural transfer studies) describe various categories of cultural transmitters, but they do not adopt a historical perspective or demonstrate an awareness of what has been done in the field by scholars such as Van Tieghem, Peter Burke and Michel Espagne.<sup>47</sup> Nevertheless, Marling includes literary prizes, gatekeepers and translators in the study of national authors who become renowned in the realm of world literature.

### *Translators and capital*

Marling discusses different notions of capital and gives examples of translators who receive translation work due to symbolic capital – translators who have already published a work by a famous author – or due to social capital – those who are friends of important publishers or literary critics. Marling also mentions the possibility of economic capital but argues that 'the *availability heuristic* of Kahneman and Twersky gives it more precision'.<sup>48</sup> The possibility of a translator being assigned a book that will become a bestseller will certain-

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44 Marling, *Gatekeepers*, p. 5.

45 *Ibidem*.

46 See, for example, Itamar Even-Zohar, 'Translation and Transfer', *Poetics Today* 11 (1) (1990), pp. 73-78.

47 Broomans, 'The Meta-literary History of Cultural Transmitters'.

48 Marling, *Gatekeepers*, p. 6.

ly mean that they will be more likely to be offered other books for translation in the future. The ‘availability heuristic’ means that publishers think of the most accessible translator they know and trust. As publishing houses are usually situated in major cities, translators who live in smaller cities and are not visible at events will not attract attention so easily. Thus, ‘geographic visibility’ – being in the right place at the right time – also plays a role in determining who becomes the ‘right translator’.

Regarding economic capital, Marling gives an overview of financial risks, claiming that agents and publishers do take financial risks when they launch and introduce a literary work into other literary fields. He refers to English, who argues that publishers have ‘evolved “prizes and awards” by which to gauge the marketability of new authors, and then to promote their best bets’.<sup>49</sup> According to Marling, gatekeepers such as bookstore owners face less risk, although they do have to sell the books they buy. Reviewers, who are the most important gatekeepers, take the fewest risks. In this observation, we can hear an echo of Casanova’s statement, quoted above, that literary critics play an important role in cultural transfer.

As described above, Marling includes literary prizes when he deals with the topics of world literature and the importance of gatekeepers. He writes that the prize system is even ‘a major pillar of World Literature, whose instrument value is nakedly to boost sales’.<sup>50</sup> He also includes the sponsorship of literary prizes by, among others, newspapers and publishing houses, who use the competitive stage as a talent and screening system.

Marling also reflects on the situation of women writers, who have less access to the gatekeeping system due to ‘a lack of patrons, of visionary agents, of entrepreneurial translators, or an inability or disinclination to dominate the field of discourse’.<sup>51</sup> Women writers indeed have problems finding ‘*the older writer, the mentor, the agent, the editor* – in other words a notion that while the creative genius is theirs, the process of bringing it to market involves liberal help from

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49 *Ibidem*.

50 Marling, *Gatekeepers*, p. 117.

51 Marling, *Gatekeepers*, p. 142.

a wide variety of gatekeepers'.<sup>52</sup> (On gender and diversity in literary prizes, see the contribution of Jeanette den Toonder in this volume.) The percentage of women writers who have won the Nobel Prize in Literature is extremely low. This is also the case for other literary prizes discussed in this volume. Of interest in this regard is whether the support of an active and 'right' translator, as well as being discovered by the 'right' cultural transmitter in the process of moving towards successful cultural transfer, would give a woman writer a greater chance of winning a literary or translation prize, whether in a national field or in the field of world literature.

### *Conclusion*

In this article, I have discussed the importance of literary prizes and literary translation prizes in the cultural transfer process. I reflected on consecration and canonisation in connection with literary prizes and pointed out where literary prizes might fit in the various phases of the cultural transfer process. I also discussed different descriptions of the cultural transmitter. While it is apparent that cultural transmitters and literary prizes are important factors in the cultural transfer process, they are not visible in the literary field described by Bourdieu and others. Here, it was shown that cultural transmitters enable authors to be introduced into new literary fields.

We can also conclude that local, national and international literary prizes contribute to the cultural transfer process. Moreover, translation prizes, awarded after the successful cultural transfer of a literary work, enable further success in the field of world literature, which we might call ultimate consecration. Currently, one important condition of such success is that at some point in the cultural transfer process the literary work is translated into English. However, as we found, compared with small literary fields, the percentage of translations into English is in fact very low. Thus, authors translated into English who go on to win literary prizes belong to the 'happy few'. When their books become bestsellers, they might become celebrities, torn between aesthetic expectations and industrialised mass literature. But that is another story. Nevertheless, literary and translation

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52 Marling, *Gatekeepers*, p. 144.



prizes that are institutionalised and bring profits, in terms of both symbolic and economic capital, might also bring the writer ultimate consecration. Finally, it is clear that many human actors, whether we term them gatekeepers or cultural transmitters, play a significant role in any individual's success within the literary field.

## Appendix 1

Alice Munro: translations into Dutch (source SmartCat)

- Munro, Alice. *Wie Denk Je Dat Je Bent?* Translated by P. de Vos. Tricht: Goossens, 1987.
- Munro, Alice. *Liefdesvorderingen*. Translated by Pleuke Boyce. Tricht: Goossens, 1990.
- Munro, Alice. *Vriendin Van Mijn Jeugd: Verhalen*. Translated by Dorien Veldhuizen. Baarn: Anthos, 1991.
- Munro, Alice. *Liefde Slaapt Nooit: Verhalen*. Translated by Kathleen Rutten. Breda: De Geus, 2003.
- Munro, Alice. *Het Uitzicht Vanaf Castle Rock*. Translated by Pleuke Boyce. Breda: De Geus, 2008.
- Munro, Alice. *De Liefde Van Een Goede Vrouw: Verhalen*. Translated by Pleuke Boyce. 2nd ed. Colibri-Bibliotheek, 5. Breda: World Editions, 2013.
- Munro, Alice. *Lief Leven: Verhalen*. Translated by Pleuke Boyce. 4th ed. Breda: Geus, 2013.
- Munro, Alice. *De Liefde Van Een Goede Vrouw: Verhalen*. Translated by Pleuke Boyce.
- Munro, Alice. *Weg Van Haar*. Edited by Sander van Vlerken. Translated by Kathleen Rutten. Amsterdam: De Geus, 2013.
- Munro, Alice. *Stilte*. Translated by Pleuke Boyce. 2nd ed. Breda: De Geus, 2014.
- Munro, Alice. *De Manen Van Jupiter*. Translated by Ton Heuvelmans. 2nd ed. Breda: De Geus, 2014.
- Munro, Alice. *Te Veel Geluk: Verhalen*. Translated by Pleuke Boyce. 4th ed. Colibri-Bibliotheek, 37. Breda: World Editions, 2014.
- Munro, Alice. *De Droom Van Mijn Moeder*. Translated by Pleuke Boyce. Colibri-Bibliotheek. Breda: World Editions, 2014.
- Munro, Alice. *Stilte*. Translated by Pleuke Boyce. 3rd ed. Colibri-Bibliotheek, 51. Breda: World Editions, 2015.

*Appendix 2*

Olga Tokarczuk: translations into Dutch (source SmartCat)

Tokarczuk, Olga. *Amos*. Translated by Karol Lesman. Breda: De Geus, 1998.

Tokarczuk, Olga. *De Laatste Verhalen*. Translated by Karol Lesman. Amsterdam: De Geus, 2013.

Tokarczuk, Olga. *De Jacobsboeken, Oftewel Een Grote Reis Over Zeven Grenzen, Door Vijf Talen En Drie Grote Religies, De Kleine Niet Mee-gerekend: Verteld Door De Doden, En Door De Auteur Aangevuld Met Behulp Van Conjunctuur, Uit Vele Uiteenlopende Boeken Geput, Alsmede Geholpen Door De Imaginatie, Die De Grootste Natuurlijke Gave Is Van De Mens: Voor De Wijzen Pro Memorie, Voor Mijn Landgenoten Ter Reflectie, Voor De Leken Tot Lering, Voor De Melancholici Evenwel Tot Vermaak*. Translated by Karol Lesman. Amsterdam: De Geus, 2019.

Tokarczuk, Olga. *De Rustelozen*. Translated by Greet Pauwelijm. 6th ed. Amsterdam: De Geus, 2019.

Tokarczuk, Olga. *Jaag Je Ploeg Over De Botten Van De Doden*. Translated by Charlotte Pothuizen. Amsterdam: De Geus, 2020.

Tokarczuk, Olga. *Oer En Andere Tijden*. Translated by Karol Lesman. 2nd revised ed. Amsterdam: De Geus, 2020.

### Appendix 3

#### Olga Tokarczuk: translations into English (source SmartCat)

- Tokarczuk, Olga. *House of Day, House of Night*. Translated by Antonia Lloyd-Jones. London: Granta, 2002.
- Tokarczuk, Olga. *Primeval and Other Times*. Translated by Antonia Lloyd-Jones. Prague: Twisted Spoon, 2009.
- Tokarczuk, Olga. *Flights*. Translated by Jennifer Croft. First American ed. New York: Riverhead Books, 2018.
- Tokarczuk, Olga. *Drive Your Plow Over the Bones of the Dead: A Novel*. Translated by Antonia Lloyd-Jones. Place of publication not identified: Penguin Publishing Group, 2019.
- Tokarczuk, Olga. *The Lost Soul*. Translated by Antonia Lloyd-Jones. Illustrated by Joanna Concejo. New York, NY: Seven Stories Press, 2021.
- Tokarczuk, Olga. *The Hearing Trumpet*. Translated by Leonora Carrington. New York: NYRB Classics, 2021.