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## **From Frankfurt Book Fair to Frankfurt Book Fair: Dutch-Language Literature in Germany, 1990-2015**

Van Frankfurter Buchmesse tot Frankfurter Buchmesse:  
Nederlandstalige literatuur in Duitsland, 1990-2015

*Sandra van Voorst, Groningen University*

**Abstract:** In 2016 Flanders and the Netherlands were joint Guests of Honour at the 68th Frankfurt Book Fair with a broad cultural presentation. In 1993 the Netherlands and Flanders had already had the honour of being the so-called *Schwerpunkt* [focus of interest] of the Book Fair. In the years before 1993, an average of fifteen titles per year were translated into German, while after this event around this number rose to about thirty. This can be considered a modest breakthrough of Dutch-language literature in the German language area. This article discusses the developments regarding the Dutch-language literature on the German book market until 2015. Is there a sustained interest and appreciation for the Dutch-language literature in Germany since 1993 or does this 'literary fashion' seem to fade? Are the German translations of Dutch literary works seen as representatives of 'the' Dutch literature, or are they judged by the prestige of their individual authors? This contribution will investigate the role of author reputations, the functioning of the Dutch Foundation for Literature as well as the relationships between Dutch and German publishers and translators in the promotion of Dutch literature in the German language area.

**Keywords:** Frankfurt Book Fair – Frankfurter Buchmesse, Dutch literature – Nederlandstalige literatuur, literary translation flows – literaire vertaalstromen, German Book market – Duitse boekenmarkt, Dutch Foundation for Literature – Nederlands Letterenfonds

In 2016 Flanders and the Netherlands were joint Guests of Honour at the 68th Frankfurt Book Fair, with a broad cultural presentation. The Frankfurt Book Fair is held annually in October and with about 7,300 participating exhibitors from more than 100 countries, over 9,000 journalists and approximately 275,000 visitors, it is the world's biggest and most important book fair. Recent Guests of Honour were Brazil (2013), Finland (2014) and Indonesia (2015).<sup>1</sup> The Netherlands and Flanders were a *Schwerpunkt* [focus of interest] once before at the Frankfurt Book Fair, in 1993, which led to a breakthrough of Dutch-language literature in Germany.

In the twentieth century, there was some interest in Flemish and Dutch literature at various times, but this was often for non-literary reasons. For example, with the first World War, the occupation of Belgium and the German 'Flamenpolitik' aroused interest in Flemish regional literature.<sup>2</sup> Around the Second World War, in Germany Dutch-language literature was generally associated with the genre known as the *Heimatroman* – the Flemish regional novels by authors such as Felix Timmermans and Stijn Streuvels. This image fitted in with the national-socialist views of the time. There was also some interest in light fiction, such as books by Jo van Ammers-Küller and Willy Corsari.<sup>3</sup> After the Second World War, the German translator Georg Hermanowski introduced for the first time Dutch-language literature as literature to the German reader. He translated about 200 novels and short stories, essentially Christian-oriented, temperate realistic Flemish literature.<sup>4</sup> From the 1960s onwards these connotations formed a significant obstacle for Dutch-language literature and sales of Dutch books declined drastically.<sup>5</sup> On the other hand, in that period, thanks to the initiatives of translator Jürgen Hillner, works by authors including Gerard Reve, Louis Paul Boon, Jan Cremer and Jan Wolkers were translated. However, according to Van Uffelen, these translations were presented in Germany in a different light than had been intended. Dutch literature was received as erotic (including homo-erotic) and taboo-breaking, not least because several novels were published by Merlin and Melzer, publishers notorious for their erotic literature.<sup>6</sup>

It was not until the mid 1980s that a small group of German publishers such as Klett-Gott, Hanser and Suhrkamp began to take serious steps to publish a number of famous Dutch-language authors such as Harry Mulisch, Hugo Claus and Cees Nooteboom.<sup>7</sup> Nevertheless, there were only a few Dutch authors who were successful in the German market and therefore also became known to the German public. According to Lut Missinne this was due to the cumbersome translation policy in Germany. The success of these three authors was mainly the

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.besteburen.eu/nieuws/gezamenlijk-gastland-vlaanderen-en-nederland-op-de-frankfurter-buchmesse-2016>.

<sup>2</sup> H. van Uffelen, *Moderne Niederländischen Literatur im deutschen Sprachraum 1830-1990* (Münster: LIT Verlag, 1993), p. 491.

<sup>3</sup> Van Uffelen, *Moderne Niederländischen Literatur*, p. 491.

<sup>4</sup> Van Uffelen, 'Nederlandse literatuur in Duitse vertaling', *Ons Erfdeel* 30 (1987), 455.

<sup>5</sup> Van Uffelen, *Moderne Niederländischen Literatur*, p. 491.

<sup>6</sup> Van Uffelen, *Moderne Niederländischen Literatur*, pp. 491-92.

<sup>7</sup> Van Uffelen, *Moderne Niederländischen Literatur*, p. 492. For the 'Nooteboom-effect' see also H. van Uffelen, 'Cees Nooteboom en het succes van de Nederlandse literatuur in het Germaanse taalgebied', *Literatuur* 10 (1993).

result of the efforts of the German publishers who brought out the books in connection with ‘Begegnungen mit den Niederlanden’ [Encounters with the Netherlands].<sup>8</sup>

## The Frankfurt Book Fair in 1993

At the Frankfurt Book Fair, the biggest international book fair, the literature of one specific country or one specific culture is put in the spotlight. In 1993 the Netherlands and Flanders had the honour of being the *Schwerpunkt* [focus of interest] of the Book Fair.<sup>9</sup> This provided a unique opportunity to draw worldwide attention to Dutch-language literature. On this occasion Dutch and Flemish literature was presented as a coherent whole: ‘Flandern und die Niederlande: weltoffen’.<sup>10</sup>

The Frankfurt Book Fair 1993 Foundation, which was set up especially for the Dutch-Flemish contribution, collaborated closely with the *Koninklijke Nederlandse Uitgeversbond (KNUB)* [Royal Dutch Publishers’ Association] and the *Vereniging voor Uitgevers van Nederlandstalige Boeken (VUNB)* [Association of Publishers of Dutch-Language Books]. The primary focus was on the openness of the Netherlands and Flanders and their focus on the rest of the world, and the presentation was premised on the unity of language. Attention was therefore also paid to the Dutch language all over the world. Authors from the Dutch Antilles, Aruba and Surinam took part in literary activities at and around the Fair. Space was also reserved for the other languages spoken in Dutch territories – Frisian and Papiamentu – and for Afrikaans, as a daughter language of Dutch.<sup>11</sup> Because of the *Schwerpunkt*, many more translations of books from the Dutch language area were published in Germany and there was a great deal of interest in both the domestic and the international media.

In the Bidbook for the 2016 Frankfurt Book Fair, the Dutch Foundation for Literature [*Nederlands Letterenfonds*] looks back on 1993:

At that time Dutch-language literature was experiencing unusual momentum, with a number of big names of Europe-wide stature such as the above-mentioned Nooteboom, Claus and Mulisch, but also a younger generation of talented authors such as A.F.Th. van der Heijden, Margriet de Moor and Tom Lanoye. In addition, there was a structure in place both in the Netherlands and in Flanders to kindle, nurture and maintain this interest.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> L. Missinne, ‘Schluss mit “nie davon gehört”. Die niederländische Literatur in Deutschland’, in *Begegnungen mit dem Nachbarn (II): Niederländische Gegenwartsliteratur*, ed. by Michael Braun & Birgit Lermen (St. Augustin: Konrad Adenauer Stiftung, 2003), p. 60.

<sup>9</sup> <http://ifthenisnow.eu/nl/artikelen/nederland-en-vlaanderen-op-de-frankfurter-buchmesse-13>.

<sup>10</sup> Translation: ‘Flanders and the Netherlands: Open to the World’. All translations are mine, unless indicated otherwise.

<sup>11</sup> [http://www.dbnl.org/tekst/\\_nee003199301\\_01/\\_nee003199301\\_01\\_0104.php](http://www.dbnl.org/tekst/_nee003199301_01/_nee003199301_01_0104.php)

<sup>12</sup> *Bidbook Vlaanderen en Nederland. Gezamenlijk kandidaat-eregast op Frankfurter Book Fair 2016*, [www.letterenfonds.nl/images/issue\\_download/Frankfurt-2016-bidboek.pdf](http://www.letterenfonds.nl/images/issue_download/Frankfurt-2016-bidboek.pdf). Original Dutch tekst: ‘De Nederlandstalige literatuur kende destijds een bijzonder momentum, met een aantal grote namen van Europees formaat als de genoemde Nooteboom, Claus en Mulisch, en daarnaast een jongere, talentvolle en net aangetreden

Did this international promotion campaign, the biggest ever to be held, ever actually have long-term consequences for the position of Dutch-language literature in the German book market?

Research into the title production of Dutch-language literature in German translation can provide an answer to this question. In the context of a research module in the Master's degree programme *Nederlandse taal en cultuur* [Dutch Language and Literature] at the University of Groningen, a list was compiled of the Dutch-language literary fiction titles which had appeared in translation on the German book market between 1990 and 1997.<sup>13</sup> The translation database of what was then known as the *Nederlands Literair Productie- en Vertalingen Fonds (NLPVF)* [Dutch Literary Production and Translation Foundation], now the Dutch Foundation for Literature, turned out to be one of the most complete sources for drawing up a bibliography, because of their collaboration with the National Library of the Netherlands and the Flemish Literature Fund.<sup>14</sup> Because of this, facts about the books produced could be identified: the number of translations, the authors, the titles and other parties involved in literary production such as the Dutch publisher, the translator, the German publisher buying the book, etc.<sup>15,16</sup> For this article, the list of translations for the research module has been supplemented with data for the period from 1998-2015.<sup>17</sup> This made it possible to examine whether the developments associated with the *Schwerpunkt* in 1993 continued in the following decades.

## Dutch-Language Literature in German Translation

Regarding the figures, it should be borne in mind that the number of Dutch-language literary titles in German translation quoted here is of course only a tiny proportion of the total amount

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generatie met auteurs als A.F.Th. van der Heijden, Margriet de Moor en Tom Lanoye. Daarnaast was er in zowel Nederland als Vlaanderen de structuur om deze interesse te wekken, te voeden en te continueren.'

<sup>13</sup> The titles on the list refer to the first impressions of the translations. The obvious reasons for this are firstly the danger that details of reprints may be missing, unclear or difficult to interpret. For example, print run sizes may vary, and the point at which a book is reprinted may depend on the print run of the first impression. Clearly it makes a big difference whether the publisher brings out an initial print run of 1,000 or 50,000 copies. Secondly, the number of copies reprinted may vary depending on the publisher's estimate; for instance, it may be the publisher's strategy to print 50,000 books in one edition, but divided into five print runs of 10,000 copies each.

<sup>14</sup> See also S. Linn, 'Met en weten? Kanttekeningen bij de compilatie van een bibliografie als basis voor receptieonderzoek naar de Nederlandse literatuur in translation', in *Object: Nederlandse literatuur in het buitenland. Methode onbekend. Vormen van onderzoek naar de receptie van literatuur uit het Nederlandse taalgebied*, ed. by A. Bay et al. (Groningen: Barkhuis Publishing, 2006), p. 41.

<sup>15</sup> An article was written, based on this study: S. van Voorst, 'Over de drempel. Nederlandse literatuur in Germaanse translation 1990-1997', in *Object: Nederlandse literatuur in het Buitenland. Methode: onbekend*, pp. 111-22.

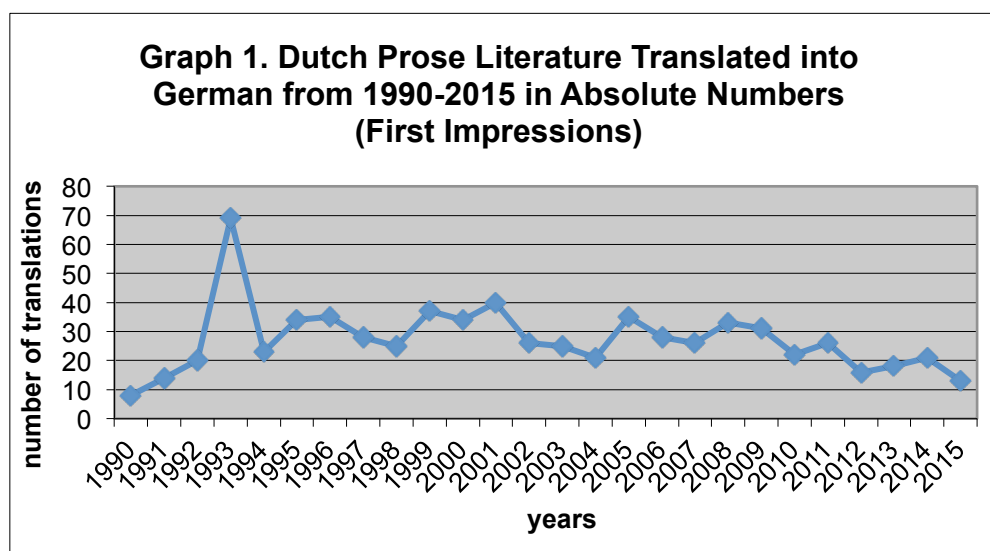
<sup>16</sup> With regard to the inevitable problems of differentiating and classifying titles in translation, it should be noted that the NUR code 300, and more specifically codes 301, 302, 303, 304, 305, 309, served as the point of departure for identifying the Dutch-language literature for adults available in the German language area.

<sup>17</sup> The translation database of the Dutch Foundation for Literature (formerly the NLPVF) provides information about over 19,000 translated Dutch titles, including both subsidised and unsubsidised literature (fiction, non-fiction, poetry, and children's and young adults' literature), <http://www.letterenfonds.nl/nl/vertalingendatabase>. This database is also used in T. Bevers et al. (eds), *Nederlandse kunst in de wereld. Literatuur, architectuur en beeldende kunst 1980-2013* (Nijmegen: Vantilt, 2015).

of literature available on the German book market. According to the *Börsenverein*<sup>18</sup> figures, in 2014 ‘Belletristik’ accounted for 14,111 titles in the entire production of books and ‘German Literature’ occupied the second place with 10,487 titles.<sup>19</sup> That same year a total of 10,812 translations appeared in Germany.<sup>20</sup> On the other hand, according to *Boekblad*, Germany is the biggest export market for Dutch-language literature.<sup>21</sup> This is also referred to in the Bidbook for the 2016 Frankfurt Book Fair:

For Dutch publishers, the German book market is still the most important platform to showcase their international ambitions; the importance of Germany as a portal to other markets can hardly be overestimated. The number of translations into German is greater than into any other language, and that number has grown partly as a result of the *Schwerpunkt* presentation of Dutch and Flemish literature at the Frankfurt Book Fair in 1993. Since then Dutch literature has been on the world map.<sup>22</sup>

Graph 1 shows the development of the production of Dutch literature in German translation. At first sight it seems more moderate than what is suggested by the above quotation.



<sup>18</sup> Börsenverein des Deutschen Buchhandels, Abt. Marktforschung und Statistik, *Buch und Buchhandel in Zahlen - Zahlen für den Buchhandel/2014* (Frankfurt, 2014), <http://www.boersenverein.de/de/182716>. Börsenverein is the German Publishers and Booksellers Association.

<sup>19</sup> This figure includes publications of literary studies.

<sup>20</sup> At the time this article was submitted, I was unable to find out how many of these were literary translations.

<sup>21</sup> [www.boekblad.nl/nieuwe-generatie-editors-neeft-meer-risico-vs-en.255558.lynkx](http://www.boekblad.nl/nieuwe-generatie-editors-neeft-meer-risico-vs-en.255558.lynkx), 24 Nov. 2015. *Boekblad* is the trade journal of the Dutch book industry which tracks turnover in the book trade.

<sup>22</sup> *Bidbook*, p. 10, original Dutch text: ‘De Duitse boekenmarkt is voor Nederlandstalige uitgevers nog altijd het belangrijkste podium om internationale ambities te etaleren; het belang van Duitsland als *portal* naar andere markten kan nauwelijks overschat worden. Het aantal vertalingen naar het Duits is groter dan die naar enig andere taal, wat mede is gegroeid dankzij de *Schwerpunkt*presentatie van de Nederlandse en Vlaamse literatuur op de Frankfurter Buchmesse van 1993. De Nederlandse letteren staan sindsdien op de wereldkaart.’

In the entire period examined between 1990 to 2015, almost 700 new German translations of Dutch literary works were published. The number of titles published per year shows a slight upward trend in the first few years; the expected sharp change in 1993 due to the *Schwerpunkt* did in fact take place. In that year, many well-known Dutch authors found a place in German publishers' lists.

A brief overview: in 1993 J. Bernlef, Louis Paul Boon, Margriet de Moor and Harry Mulisch were each represented with two translations. In the *Schwerpunkt* year a book of short stories, a play and a novel by Hugo Claus were published; Louis Couperus was revisited,<sup>23</sup> as was Multatuli,<sup>24</sup> and Nescio's *De Titaantjes* was tackled by a 'translation workshop' at the University of Oldenburg (published by Ammann Verlag). Connie Palmen's *De wetten*<sup>25</sup> was displayed beside *Lexicon voor feestgangers*<sup>26</sup> by Atte Jongstra, a postmodernist author. And no fewer than ten publishers produced books for the occasion – volumes of short stories and anthologies.

There was a relatively sharp decline in 1994, but from 1995 onwards the number of new translations per year remained stable. In the years before the *Schwerpunkt* in 1993, between eight (1990) to twenty titles (1992) a year were translated, and after the turning point around thirty titles a year. The following years up to 2005 show a similar trend: on average, just under thirty titles a year with a few fluctuations, including a significant downturn in 2003. This means that after the *Schwerpunkt* in 1993 the number of Dutch titles translated into German each year doubled, which can be considered as a true breakthrough of Dutch-language literature in the German language area – a breakthrough whose effects were to persist for a decade. German publishers gave Dutch literature a place of its own – albeit it a modest one – in their lists. However, around 2008 this literary fashion seemed to be fading. The number of translations per year declined steadily to about twenty titles a year in 2014. How can we interpret this trend in the dissemination of Dutch-language literature in translation on the German market? To answer this question, we need more information – about the authors, the publishers involved, and the translators.

## The Dutch-Language Authors

For German publishers, novels seemed to be the most eligible for translation. They rarely ventured into poetry or drama – only with authors writing in several genres such as Hugo Claus and Cees Nooteboom, whose oeuvres included novels, plays and poetry. The top half of Table 2 presents an overview of the Dutch-language authors who had more than ten titles translated into German between 1990 and 2015:

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<sup>23</sup> *Die stille Kraft*, a new German translation of *De stille kracht* (1900).

<sup>24</sup> *Minnebrieven* (1861) and *Max Havelaar* (1860), both in new German translations.

<sup>25</sup> Originally published in 1991.

<sup>26</sup> *Lexicon voor feestgangers* was published to mark the turn of the year (1993-1994) by publisher L.J. Veen. The book therefore appeared in translation in Germany before the Dutch book appeared in the Netherlands.

	1990-1997	1998-2007	2008-2015	Total
Cees Nooteboom	13	5	4	22
Maarten 't Hart	1	9	5	15
Margriet de Moor	6	3	6	15
Leon de Winter	5	5	3	15
Renate Dorrestein	5	5	4	14
Hugo Claus	10	3	0	13
Harry Mulisch	9	4	0	13
Arnon Grunberg	1	5	6	12
A.F.T. van der Heijden	3	8	3	11
Hella Haasse	5	4	1	9
Anna Enquist	0	5	3	8
Dimitri Verhulst	0	2	5	7
Willem Frederik Hermans	1	4	1	5
Vonne van der Meer	1	4	0	5
Kader Abdolah	0	4	4	4
Tim Krabbé	0	4	0	4
J.J. Voskuil	0	0	4	4
Gerbrand Bakker	0	4	0	4
Herman Koch	0	0	4	4

Table 2. Dutch Authors with the Most Translations into German, 1990-2015

Cees Nooteboom is indisputably in the lead, with 22 publications. His growing international literary reputation was in fact mainly thanks to the German literary market.<sup>27</sup> Suhrkamp published his new works from 1985 onwards and they were praised in reviews.<sup>28</sup> In response to the publication of *Berlijnse notities* (1990), a reviewer in *Die Zeit* described Nooteboom as an outsider with a keen eye and at the same time great affinity with Germany.<sup>29</sup> Nooteboom now has a literary reputation as a European author according to Wilterdink:

[...] in both the literary and the political sense: a writer in the European continental tradition (seeing things in their philosophical and historical contexts, reflective) and at the same time someone who embodies and promotes the European idea of integration while

<sup>27</sup> N. Wilterdink, 'Schrijvers en hun reputaties', in *Nederlandse kunst in de wereld. Literatuur, architectuur en beeldende kunst 1980-2013*, ed. by T. Bevers et al. (Nijmegen: Vantilt, 2015), p. 119.

<sup>28</sup> Wilterdink, 'Schrijvers en hun reputaties', pp. 119-20.

<sup>29</sup> Quoted by L. Kuitert, 'Cees Nooteboom en zijn Hof van Cassatie. Over de receptie van het werk in het buitenland', in *Cees Nooteboom: ik had wel duizend levens en ik nam er maar één!* Schrijversprentenboek 40 (Amsterdam/Antwerpen: Atlas; Den Haag: Letterkundig Museum, 1997), p. 35.



preserving diversity. He is regularly characterised as a cosmopolitan, someone who is constantly crossing borders both mentally and geographically, who travels all the time, and when he is not travelling divides his time between various places of residence: Amsterdam, the Spanish island of Menorca and for a while also places in Germany.<sup>30</sup>

A good illustration of this is the characterisation of his oeuvre when the *Prijs der Nederlandse Letteren* [Prize for Dutch Literature] was awarded to Cees Nooteboom in 2009 for his entire work. The jury described this oeuvre as ‘profound and philosophical and considers these qualities as the reason why Nooteboom’s oeuvre is so highly esteemed abroad’.<sup>31</sup> From 2003 onwards several volumes of *Verzameld Werk* [Collected Works] were published – a clear indication of Nooteboom’s high literary status.

Two other ‘top ten’ authors are Hugo Claus and Harry Mulisch. Hugo Claus was a major Flemish author in the Dutch language area and for decades Harry Mulisch had been ‘world famous in the Netherlands’. The 1993 translation *Die Entdeckung des Himmels*<sup>32</sup> is seen as his international breakthrough and the beginning of his international reputation.

Among the authors with more than ten translations published in Germany, one who had been published in the Netherlands for a long time and had a good reputation there, was only really discovered in Germany around the turn of the century: A.F.Th. van der Heijden.<sup>33</sup> Van der Heijden writes autobiographical works about the Netherlands from the 1950s onwards, in keeping with his main theme – ‘stretching the breadth of life’, with everything on a grand scale and in spun-out language.

Margriet de Moor and Renate Dorrestein were regularly translated throughout the entire period examined. Their novels can be characterised as historical, realistic, recognisably literary prose. They are also renowned authors who had already more than proved themselves in the Dutch literary landscape and had been translated internationally in many countries, not only in Germany.

The bottom half of Table 2 shows a new group of authors such as Anna Enquist, Dimitri Verhulst, Kader Abdolah, Gerbrand Bakker and Herman Koch, who have gained a firm literary foothold in Germany over the past decade. The other titles in the list of Dutch-language literature translated into German are very diverse and incidental with regard to style, stream and genre. In many cases, they are one-off titles – single try-outs by many different German publishers. The list does provide insight into the level of concentration of titles among German publishers.

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<sup>30</sup> Wilterdink, ‘Schrijvers en hun reputaties’, p. 120. Original Dutch tekst: ‘[...] in zowel literaire als politieke zin: een schrijver in de Europees-continentale traditie (filosofierend, historiserend, reflexief) én iemand die de Europese gedachte van integratie-met-behoud-van-verscheidenheid belichaamt en uitdraagt. Hij wordt stevast getypeerd als een kosmopoliet, iemand die geestelijk én geografisch voortdurend grenzen overschrijdt, die telkens weer op reis gaat en de tijd dat hij niet reist verdeelt tussen verschillende woonplaatsen: Amsterdam, het Spaanse eiland Menorca en een tijdlang ook plaatsen in Duitsland.’

<sup>31</sup> [http://prijsderletteren.org/2009\\_juryrapport/](http://prijsderletteren.org/2009_juryrapport/). For the English text see <http://www.nlpvf.nl/>.

<sup>32</sup> The first impression was published by De Bezige Bij in 1992 in the series BBLiterair, under the title *De Ontdekking van de hemel* [The Discovery of Heaven].

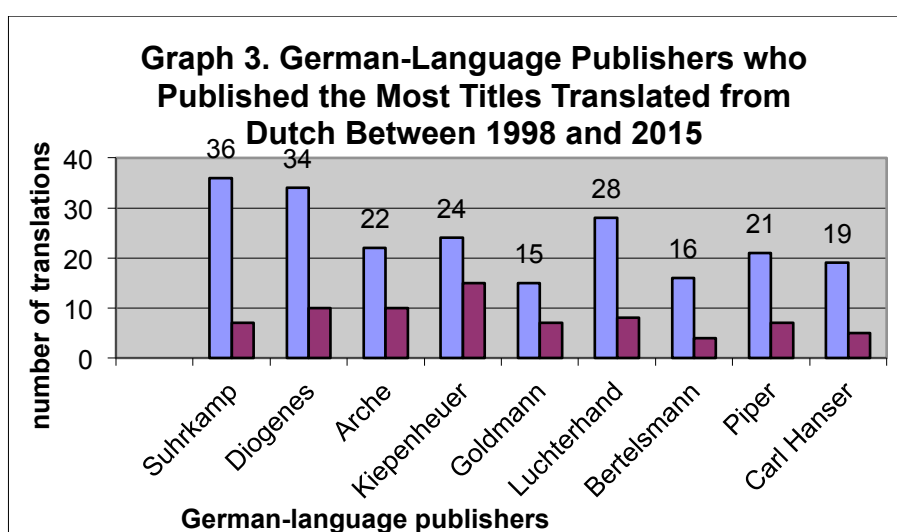
<sup>33</sup> Van der Heijden has been publishing since 1978, ’t Hart since 1971. ’t Hart’s breakthrough came in 1978 with *Een vlucht regenwulpen* [A Flight of Curlews].

## The German Publishers

The more Dutch-language titles a German publisher publishes, the more targeted the publisher's strategy can be considered. Of course, the position of the publisher in question in the literary market must be considered, as well as the possibilities and aspirations that this position entails. The first questions that arise are how many German publishers brought out Dutch-language literature and whether, after the 1993 *Schwerpunkt*, more German publishers started to publish Dutch-language literature. This could be an indication that there is a certain 'kind' of Dutch-language literature that sells on the German market. In fact, the same doubling can be seen as in the case of number of publications: before 1993, 25 German publishers published Dutch-language literature in translation, whereas between 1993 and 1997, 69 German publishers brought out Dutch-language literature. Of course, this does not mean that the entire German reading public was familiar with the translations of Dutch and Flemish authors, given the numbers of translations on the German book market referred to earlier.

In the following period, 1997-2008, the number of translations and the number of publishers remained fairly stable: 71 German publishers brought out one or more titles translated from Dutch. In the most recent period, from 2008 to 2015, 55 German publishers thought it worth their while to publish Dutch-language literature. This is a clear decrease, which matches the decline in the total number of translations. Fewer German publishers published fewer titles translated from Dutch.

In other words, various German publishers ventured to publish Dutch literature in German translation, but for most of them it was a one-off. Nevertheless, there is evidence that several German publishers have a targeted strategy regarding Dutch literature. Between 1990 and 1997 eight German publishers brought out about 75 of the 230 translations. These were the well-known publishing houses such as Suhrkamp, Twenne Verlag, Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag and Rowohlt. With the exception of Suhrkamp, these German literary publishers did not consolidate their lead position in subsequent years.



Graph 3 shows that after 1997 nine German literary publishers each published more than ten Dutch titles. Together they were responsible for over 30% of the total production between 1998 and 2015. Strangely enough not all the publishers listed above reappear: Suhrkamp remained the biggest publisher of literature translated from Dutch, but the other publishers are no longer represented. In the past two decades, the Swiss publisher Diogenes and the German publishers Arche, Kiepenheuer, Goldmann and Piper have become relatively important publishers of Dutch-language literature. This trend is related to the situation in the German book market around and after the turn of the century. In that period the German publishing world was experiencing very turbulent times. After a period of substantial overproduction and problems with very low special offer prices, the literary publishing landscape changed significantly; not only were many publishing houses and groups drastically reorganised, but many editors also changed publishing house.<sup>34</sup> This may explain the changes in German publishers who published Dutch-language literature; many publishing decisions obviously depend on personal contacts and interest. Other factors or agents may also play a role in this interest.

## The Dutch and Flemish Publishers and Translators

Of course, the Dutch and Flemish publishers can play a role in how well their authors are known in other countries. A network analysis of the list of Dutch-language literature in German translation shows that the majority of German publishers do business with major Dutch literary publishers such as Querido (68 titles sold to Germany), De Bezige Bij (84 titles), De Arbeiderspers (67 titles), Meulenhoff (40 titles) and Contact (45 titles). Together these publishers sold 304 titles, almost 45% of the total number of German translations. This is not so remarkable given that most Dutch and Flemish authors want to have their work published by these major literary publishers. What is striking is that over the past eight years the number of titles sold to German publishers has sometimes dropped sharply, as can be seen in Table 4:

	1990-1997	1998-2008	2008-2015	Total
Bezige Bij	28	32	24	84
Querido	31	29	8	68
De Arbeiderspers	22	32	13	67
Contact	18	18	9	45
Meulenhoff	16	23	1	40
<b>Totals for these 5 publishers</b>	115	134	55	304
De Geus	0	9	10	19
Cossee	0	1	17	18
Prometheus	0	13	3	16
<b>Totals for these 3 publishers</b>	0	23	30	53

Table 4. Dutch Publishers who sold the most titles to German publishers from 1990 to 2015

<sup>34</sup> Interview with Christoph Buchwald, <https://www.groene.nl/artikel/in-duitsland-heerst-meer-een-vechtmentaliteit>.

However, there were a few Dutch publishers who entered the German literary market later, such as Cossee Publishers, founded in 2001 by Eva Cossee and Christoph Buchwald. As early as 1986, Christoph Buchwald, as an editor at Hanser Verlag, published a major Dutch novel – *De aanslag* [The Assault] by Harry Mulisch – seven years before the Dutch-Flemish *Schwerpunkt* in 1993. In his later publishing career at Luchterhand Literaturverlag and briefly at Suhrkamp Verlag, Buchwald discovered, published and editorially assisted a large number of Dutch authors: Harry Mulisch, Margriet de Moor, Anna Enquist, Marcel Möring, A.F.Th. van der Heijden, Cees Nooteboom, Thomas Rosenboom, Maarten 't Hart, etc. Buchwald also continued to work on behalf of Dutch literature in Germany within the Dutch publishing firm Cossee Publishers in Amsterdam, in particular as a moderator, presenter and interviewer.<sup>35</sup>

It is not only the publisher who can play an important role as a bridge builder between Dutch-language and German-language literature; translators can also play this role very effectively. Dutch-German translators are not only responsible for good translations of books when commissioned; they often also write book appraisals, either on request or at their own initiative, of titles which might be suitable German literary publishers' lists. In this way translators serve as vital 'feelers' for publishers, helping them to discover new authors to include in their list. If several titles by the same author are published, they are usually translated by the same translator, even if the titles are published by different German publishers.

The list of translations from Dutch into German from 1990 to 2015 shows that a large number of translators translated a small number of Dutch-language novels, but also that a small number of translators were relatively speaking very productive. Table 5 lists the translators who translated the most.

<b>Translator</b>	<b>Number of titles from 1990 to 2015</b>
Helga van Beuningen	62
Hannie Ehlers	44
Walter Hüsmert	40
Marianne Holberg	36
Marlene Müller-Haas	34
Christiane Kuby	33
Rainer Kersten	33
Gregor Seferens	25
Rosemarie Still	25
Total number of translations	332

Table 5. Translators with 25 or more German Translations of Literary Work, 1990-2015

Together, these translators were responsible for half of the translations of Dutch-language literature into German between 1990 and 2015. Helga van Beuningen tops the list in every

<sup>35</sup> From the Dutch Foundation for Literature's nomination for a royal honour, 21-03-2011. <http://www.publisherijcossee.nl/nieuwsbericht/Publisher-Christoph-Buchwald-ontvangt-koninklijke-onderscheiding-N57.php>.

respect: over the past 25 years she has translated no fewer than 62 Dutch-language literary works, of which 33 for Suhrkamp (of a total of 54 translations). She translated all the novels by A.F.T. van der Heijden, Marcel Möring and F. Springer that have been translated into German. She also translated nearly all of Cees Nooteboom's and Margriet de Moor's novels and short stories. She has now received six literary translation awards for her work.

Hanni Ehlers has mainly translated for Diogenes. Of the total of 41 Dutch literary titles published by Diogenes, she translated 23. She has received one translation award and has mainly translated Jessica Durlacher, Renate Dorrestein, Anna Enquist, Leon de Winter and Connie Palmen. Helga van Beuningen and Hanni Ehlers translated 20 of the 33 translations published by Luchterhand. These two translators have supplied a large proportion of the translations for the three German literary publishers who have put the lion's share of Dutch-language literature on the market.

## The Dutch Foundation for Literature

There is another party that may have played a role in the developments of the Dutch-language literature on the German book market: the Dutch Foundation for Literature (2010), formerly the Dutch Foundation for Literature and Translations (1991).<sup>36</sup> Since the 1990s the Foundation has devoted much attention in the Netherlands to the dissemination of Dutch literature in other countries. The Foundation maintains contacts with international publishers and has an annual stand at various major international book fairs, including the Frankfurt Book Fair. Each year the Foundation prepares a brochure for the Frankfurt Book Fair with translations of extracts from a selection of commercially and artistically successful Dutch-language literary titles. The Foundation also seeks to systematically provide information to publishers and translators in other countries, for instance through newsletters and flyers with translations of extracts by and information about a particular author. The Foundation also aims to send as many Dutch authors as possible 'on tour', organising large-scale special events with and around Dutch authors in other countries in collaboration with foreign literary institutions, publishers and book fairs.<sup>37</sup>

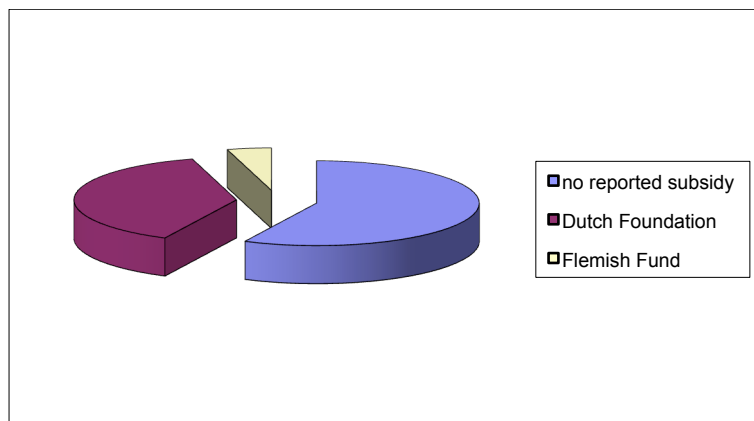
Foreign publishers interested in publishing translations of Dutch-language or Frisian literature (but also other genres) can apply for a grant for the translation costs. Several conditions must be met for a publisher to be eligible to receive a translation grant from the Foundation. The original Dutch-language work by the Dutch author or illustrator must have been published by a recognised Dutch or Flemish publishing house. The translation must be published by a foreign publishing house, which can ensure satisfactory distribution and promotion of the book in its own country, and contracts are required between the Dutch publisher and the foreign publisher and between the foreign publisher and the translator of the work. A maximum of three applications can be submitted for one author or illustrator. For the first two books, up to 100% of the translation costs may be reimbursed; for a third book a grant

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<sup>36</sup> In Flanders the Flemish Literature Fund carries out similar activities; for the sake of simplicity, only the Dutch Foundation is discussed here.

<sup>37</sup> This information comes from the Foundation's website, <http://www.letterenfonds.nl>. The website also provides a full overview of the Foundation's mission and all its activities.

of 50% of the translation costs is regarded as standard.<sup>38</sup> This possibility of obtaining a grant may be a decisive factor in whether or not a Dutch literary work is translated. Graph 6 shows the distribution over the number of publications.



Graph 6. Distribution of German Translations, Subsidised by the Dutch Foundation for Literature, the Flemish Literature Fund, and without Reference to any Subsidy, between 1990 to 2015

The grants given by the Foundation are frequent elements in German literary publishers' publishing strategy. With some caution, it may be said that without this support substantially fewer Dutch literary works would have appeared in German translation. However, as Heilbron rightly points out, the significance of the Foundation cannot be expressed simply in the number of book titles that have received translation grants. The Foundation's qualitative work is just as important.<sup>39</sup> The chance that a Dutch novel is noticed and chosen at all and then later possibly translated is obviously much higher if that novel has been publicised through the Foundation activities described earlier. A few years after the 1993 *Schwerpunkt*, Reintje Gianotten wrote as follows regarding the authors and books that are eligible for this information service provided by the Foundation: 'The book has to have been discussed in the Netherlands, it must be a current title and it must have had some success – but it doesn't have to be a bestseller.'<sup>40</sup> If we now take another look at the Dutch-language authors listed above, we see that these names match the criteria outlined by Gianotten fairly well. In addition, during the period examined all these Dutch authors visited Germany at some point or were included in the Foundation's flyers or newsletters.<sup>41</sup> It is clear that the position of Dutch-language literature in translation in

<sup>38</sup> [www.letterenfonds.nl/nl/vertaling-van-nederlands-literair-werk](http://www.letterenfonds.nl/nl/vertaling-van-nederlands-literair-werk)

<sup>39</sup> J. Heilbron and N. van Es, 'In de wereldrepubliek der letteren', in T. Bevers et al. (eds.), *Nederlandse kunst in de wereld. Literatuur, architectuur en beeldende kunst 1980-2013* (Nijmegen, 2015), p. 51.

<sup>40</sup> The former director of the NLPVF, in *Boekblad* (1996), nos. 29-30, pp. 20-23/21.

<sup>41</sup> Nevertheless, many authors who were presented in this way are unfortunately not to be found on the list of Dutch literature in German translation; it may help, but it is no guarantee. For lists and files see also the Foundation's website: <http://www.letterenfonds.nl/en/>.

Germany is determined by the networks of Dutch publishers, the translators and last but not least the efforts of the Dutch authors, including the tours they undertake.

## The Frankfurt Book Fair in 2016

In the mid 1990s the German translator Dick Schümer made the following optimistic comment: ‘Since the 1993 Book Fair the Germans have increasingly realised that Dutch is a language of culture and not a German dialect, and that a fascinating Dutch literature exists, with great novels’.<sup>42</sup> However, this literary vogue of special interest in and appreciation of Dutch-language literature in Germany seems now to have passed. Wilterdink reports that worldwide the number of book publications translated from Dutch has been declining since 2010, alongside reduced foreign media attention to Dutch-language literature. Apart from causes related to the economic climate, he considers this also to be evidence of a different, less tangible change: ‘A shift in international literary interest, which entails for example that in recent years Dutch writers have not succeeded in arousing as much interest as Scandinavian writers’.<sup>43</sup> He thinks that it is revealing in this context that the decline of the number of translations from Dutch into German is relatively sharp, given that interest in Dutch-language literature has always been the strongest in Germany.<sup>44</sup>

The *Schwerpunkt* at the Frankfurt Book Fair in 1993 led to a breakthrough for Dutch-language literature in Germany. Because Dutch-language literature was still almost unknown throughout the world at that time, it was an obvious strategy to present the authors explicitly as Dutch or Flemish. Now Dutch-language literature has a recognisable profile in Germany, even though the number of translations has been steadily declining each year. At the Frankfurt Book Fair in 2016 the Netherlands and Flanders were the joint Guest of Honour. This time a different approach was taken. The focus was not on authors as representatives of Dutch-language literature, but more on the themes of their work. On this basis dialogue could be sought with other foreign writers or artists. ‘A thematic approach like this does more justice to the author and releases him or her from a kind of “national responsibility”’, says a passage in the *Bidbook*.<sup>45</sup> We shall have to wait and see whether or not this approach bears fruit. In any case, Dutch-language literature will receive extensive German and international attention again and the Frankfurt Book Fair 2016 could well be the precursor of another period of flourishing German interest in Dutch-language literature.

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<sup>42</sup> In *Boekblad* (1996), nos. 29-30, pp. 20-3.

<sup>43</sup> Wilterdink, ‘Schrijvers en hun reputatie’, p. 145.

<sup>44</sup> Wilterdink, ‘Schrijvers en hun reputatie’, p. 145.

<sup>45</sup> *Bidbook*, p. 32.

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