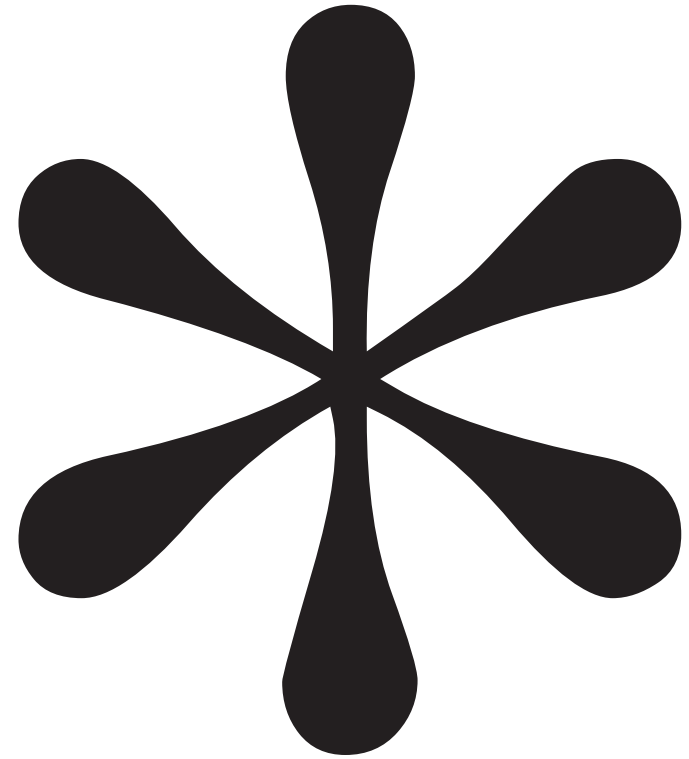


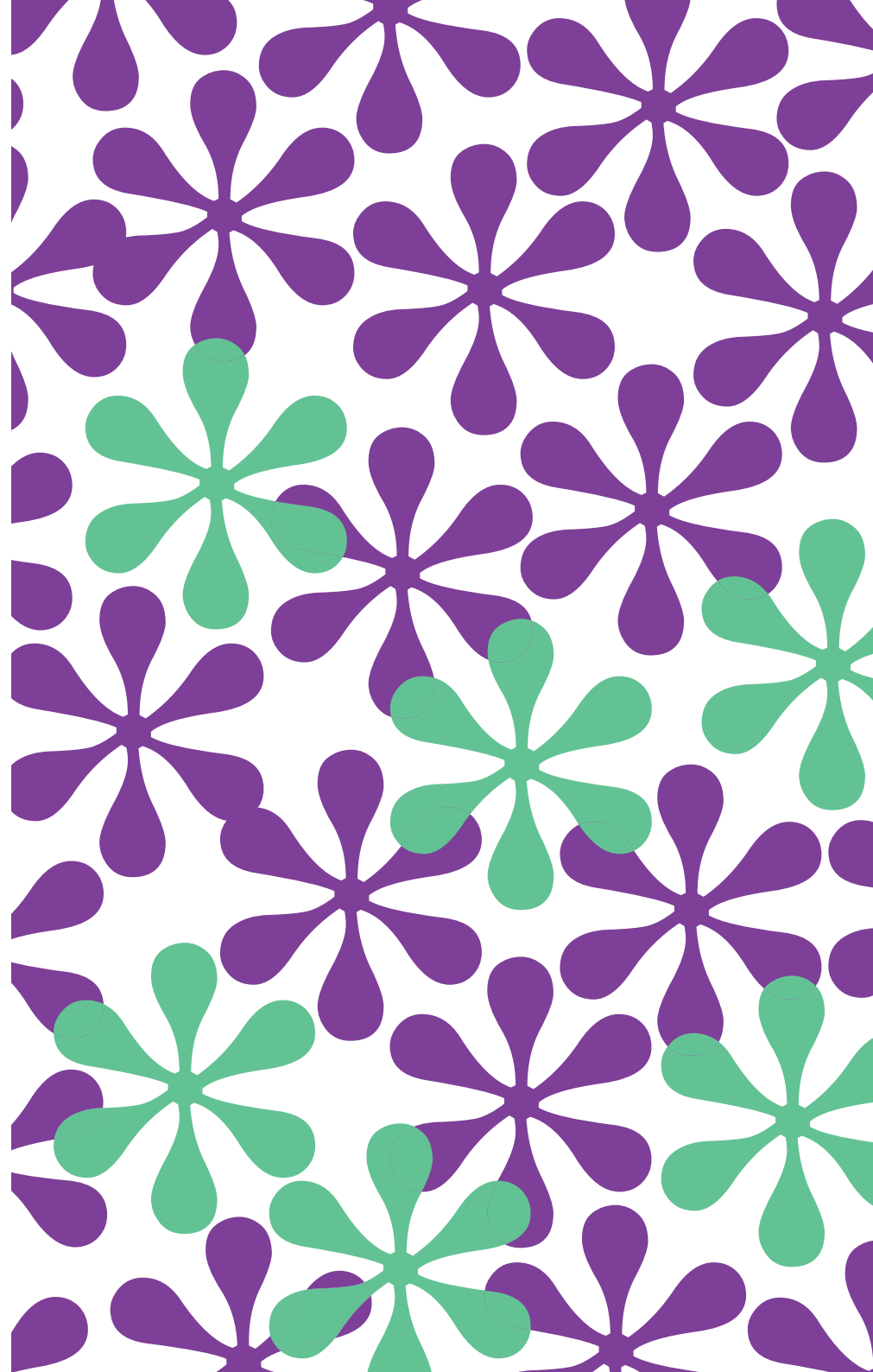
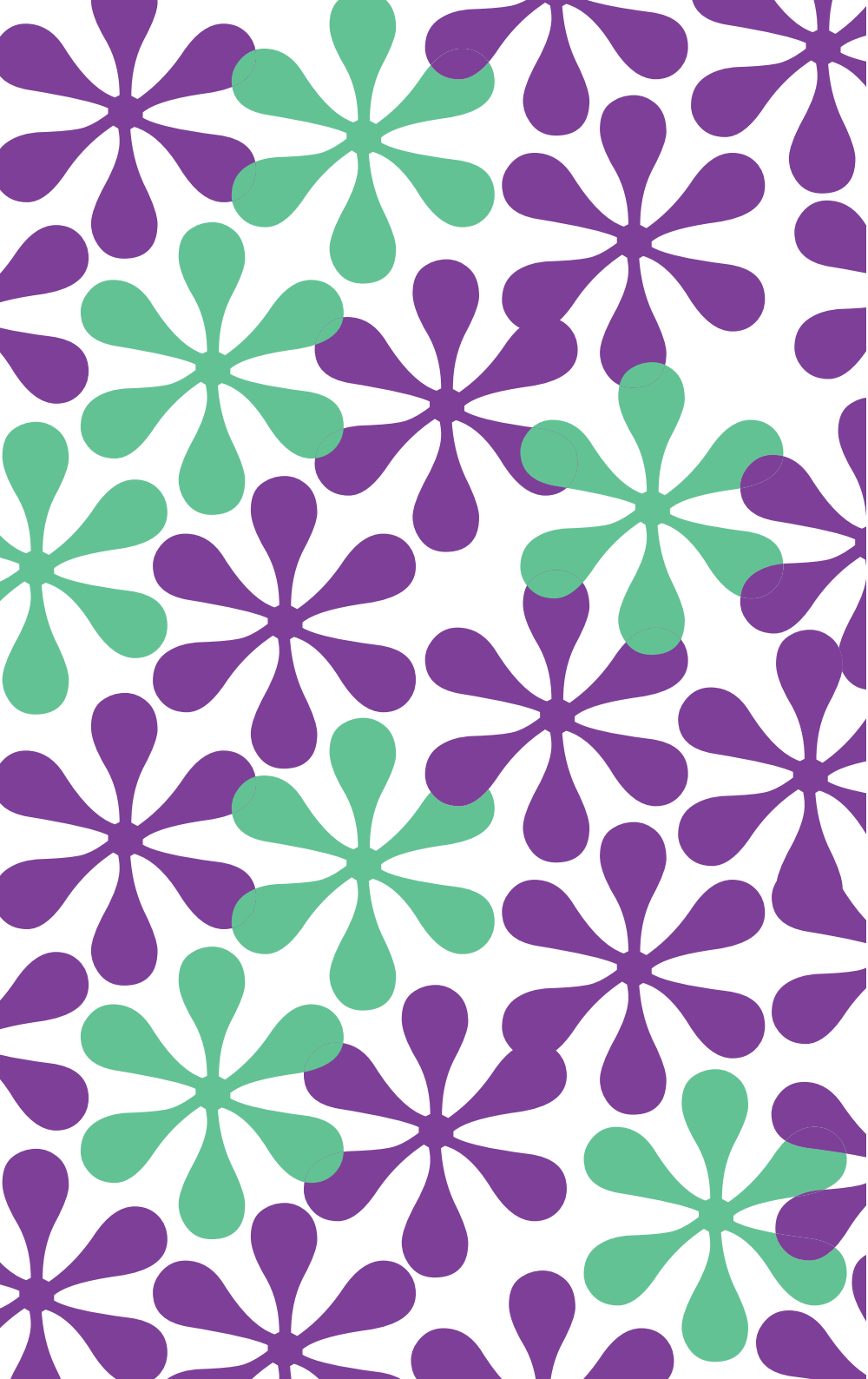
- a new degree programme in literary translation must be set up at university level. Literary translation is a creative profession that requires an academic level of knowledge and critical thinking skills;
- there must be more guidance, in-service training and more opportunities for ongoing development for both novice and experienced translators, in the form of workshops, mentorships and master classes, to establish a system of lifelong learning;
- the economic and cultural position of professional literary translators must be strengthened;
- diversification of supply must be achieved by giving literary funds more scope to finance the translation of 'difficult' books and important works of non-fiction;
- the European Union should embrace literary translation as a European discipline *par excellence*, amongst other things, by providing regular subsidies to European translation centres.

*Great translation by the way

A PAMPHLET FOR PRESERVING A FLOURISHING TRANSLATION CULTURE



*Great translation by the way



‘Translators are the shadow heroes of literature, the often forgotten instruments that make it possible for different cultures to talk to one another, who have enabled us to understand that we all, from every part of the world, live in one world.’¹ **Paul Auster**

1 *To be translated or not to be*,
PEN/IRL report, 2007

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List of abbreviations

CEATL	Conseil Européen des Associations de Traducteurs Littéraires (European Council of Associations of Literary Translators)
ELV	Expertisecentrum Literair Vertalen (Expertise Centre for Literary Translation)
FvdL	Fonds voor de Letteren (Dutch Foundation for Literature)
GAU	Groep Algemene Uitgevers (General Publishers' Association)
KB	Koninklijke Bibliotheek Den Haag (National Library of the Netherlands)
NIAS	Netherlands Institute for Advanced Study in the Humanities and Social Sciences
NLPVF	Nederlands Literair Productie- en Vertalingenfonds (Foundation for the Production and Translation of Dutch Literature)
NMa	Nederlandse Mededingingsautoriteit (Netherlands Competition Authority)
RECIT	Réseau européen des centres internationaux de traducteurs littéraires (European Network of International Centres for Literary Translation)
SSS	Stichting Schrijvers School Samenleving (an association that organises readings and lectures by writers and poets)
VAV	Vlaamse Auteursvereniging (Flemish Writers' Association)
VFL	Vlaams Fonds voor de Letteren (Flemish Literature Fund)
VSNu	Vereniging van Samenwerkende Nederlandse Universiteiten (Association of Universities in the Netherlands)
VUV	Vlaamse Uitgevers Vereniging (Flemish Publishers' Association)
VvL	Vereniging van Letterkundigen (Association of Authors, Scenario Writers and Translators)

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Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, author and translator

‘Nowadays, national literature doesn’t mean much: the age of world literature is beginning, and everybody should do his part to hasten its arrival.’ (Conversation with the poet Johann Peter Eckermann, 31 January 1827)

‘Great translation by the way’

It is with off-hand comments like these that book reviewers typically dismiss the work of a translator – assuming, that is, that they mention the translator at all. Such cursory treatment makes painfully clear where translators stand in the literary pecking order: right at the bottom.

This document is a plea to set matters right and to give a central place to literary translation as a profession. This is a matter of some urgency, as the quality of translations from and into Dutch is under threat and a huge shortage of translators is looming.

More and more Dutch translations of foreign works are sold in the Netherlands and Flanders, while translations of Dutch works are increasingly sold abroad. Literary translation appears to be flourishing in both directions, partly thanks to the grants awarded by the literary foundations.² However, as the demand for translations grows, so does the demand for good translators. And therein lies the rub: new recruits are hard to find. Deterrents are meagre pay, low professional status and a lack of educational facilities.

This pamphlet, which was written at the request of five partners in the book sector, is an outgrowth of a proposal in the 2006 literary manifesto *De uitkijkpost van de literatuur* (The observatory of literature)³ and the 2007 Ten-Point Programme.³ It contains five major recommendations:

- * Translators’ note: The Dutch word *fonds* can be rendered as either ‘fund’ or ‘foundation’ in English. As can be seen from the list of abbreviations above, some of these *fondsen* call themselves ‘funds’, while others opt for ‘foundation’. The two words are used interchangeably here.
- 2 Boekenoverleg, *De uitkijkpost van de literatuur: een manifest uit de wereld van boek en letteren*, 2006. The Boekenoverleg is a system of semi-annual talks between representatives of commercial and non-commercial organisations engaged in literary activities in the Netherlands.
- 3 Vlaams Boekenoverleg (the Flemish counterpart of the talks referred to in footnote 2), *Tien punten programma*, 2007.

- a new degree programme in literary translation must be set up at university level. Literary translation is a creative profession that requires an academic level of knowledge and critical thinking skills;
- there must be more guidance, in-service training and more opportunities for ongoing development for both novice and experienced translators, in the form of workshops, mentorships and master classes, to establish a system of lifelong learning;
- the economic and cultural position of professional literary translators must be strengthened;
- diversification of supply must be achieved by giving literary funds more scope to finance the translation of ‘difficult’ books and important works of non-fiction;
- the European Union should embrace literary translation as a European discipline *par excellence*, amongst other things, by providing regular subsidies to European translation centres.

From language to language

Globalisation

The world is changing at a rapid pace. The European Union goes on expanding, and the volume of international economic and cultural traffic increases by the day. As globalisation inexorably marches on, the question arises of how to preserve local and national identities. To a large extent, the answer lies in language, and thus in translation.

‘The more languages, the more English,’ observed sociologist Abram de Swaan.⁴ It is a neat summary of the situation in Europe and, by extension, the world. As global interaction threatens to become one huge Babel, we increasingly make use of a single ‘hypercentral language’ as De Swaan puts it: English, the new universal lingua franca.

On the face of it, the advance of English would seem to pose a serious threat to the very cultural diversity that UNESCO adopted a Universal Declaration to preserve in October 2005. The decline in foreign language skills among the Dutch and the Flemish may be regarded in the same light.⁵ However, De Swaan makes clear that the situation is not quite as bleak as it might seem: wherever English has established itself as the official language of government or as the lingua franca in certain professional fields, it functions as the second language, alongside an indigenous language spoken at home and in informal situations. The rise of English can be characterised more accurately as the rise of bilingualism; culture, which includes literature, remains largely the domain of indigenous languages.

English as lingua franca

⁴ Abram de Swaan, *Words of the World*, p. 144.

⁵ Since 1991, the percentage of students reading languages at Dutch universities has declined by over half, from 9.3% to 4% of the total intake (source: VSNU, see appendix 1). The business sector regards declining foreign-language skills as a serious problem. In the recent report *Trends in Export 2006*, over half the polled exporters cited an inability to speak foreign languages as one of the biggest threats to Dutch export. In fact, fluency in foreign languages was seen as a leading precondition for export, second only to product quality.

Literature and world literature

Living cultures store their capital in their written traditions. Embedded as it is in language, literature can reveal the uniqueness of a culture, not just because literature is an 'observatory' from which to view the whole world (as posited in the manifesto referred to above), but more importantly because language and national culture are inextricably intertwined.

This is not to say that national cultures are closed, inward-looking systems. Far from it. Cultures are never hermetically sealed off, and they are never 'complete'. They are open systems, fed by a wide variety of often conflicting currents. The history of European literature shows that the borders between languages are largely porous: Dutch novelist Willem Frederik Hermans owes a great debt to Kafka, who in turn was heavily influenced by Flaubert, and so on. Milan Kundera has even said that the true worth of a novel (that quintessentially European art form) only becomes apparent when the work is freed from its national confines and placed in the larger context of 'world literature'.⁶ In coining the latter term Goethe did not envisage a kind of Champions' League of Great Books, but rather a literature that is open to exchanges between cultures.

Literary translation as cultural mediation

For those exchanges to take place, translations are needed. Translators are often represented as ferrymen who pilot texts from one language to another, but in the present context it would be more appropriate to portray them as cultural mediators, since they act as a conduit between two cultures. That mediation is very much a two-way street: not only do translators introduce their domestic readership to a text from another language and culture, they also endow that text with new life and meaning by placing it in a different linguistic and cultural setting, an act that simultaneously enriches their own language and literary heritage. 'Cultural

mediation' is an active process, transforming what it transfers, creating something new, reinventing literature and keeping it alive.

Reciprocity also arises where national literatures meet. A literary translation into Dutch not only enriches Dutch literary heritage, it also augments the author's literary capital, enlarging his potential market as well as, indirectly, the market for his language area. In the same way, a Dutch writer whose works are translated gains both a larger readership and greater status, depending on the size and importance of the target language in question. The rise of digitisation – possibly the most revolutionary development in literary media since the invention of the printing press – is helping to multiply and accelerate these exchanges: literary translation is the future.⁷

7 See the seminal studies *Translation and Globalisation* and *Translation and Identity* by Michael Cronin. In a discussion paper for the Irish EU Presidency entitled 'Bringing Europe to Book? Literature and the Promotion of Linguistic and Cultural Diversity in the European Union', the same author stresses the economic importance of the book sector within the European cultural industry: in 2000, the publication of books and academic journals was worth €19 billion.

6 Milan Kundera, *Le Rideau*, pp. 50-51.

Mark Pieters, publisher
'It's rather worrying that the most competent translators are ageing. Translation is an extraordinarily demanding profession, yet it's neglected and undervalued. Something really needs to be done. We're also short on highly-qualified editors in the Netherlands. On the other hand, when I see fresh, enthusiastic talent every year in the master class, I think perhaps things will be all right after all – and that never fails to cheer me up.'
(*Boekblad*, 6 December 2007)

Increasing number of translations in overall book production

- 8 Figures taken from Heilbron, 2008. See appendix 2. These figures should, however, be viewed with no small measure of caution. In the Dutch language area alone, there is a considerable discrepancy between figures (up to 1997) provided by Stichting Speurwerk, an organisation that carries out surveys commissioned by the book sector, and by the Dutch National Library in The Hague. As for foreign surveys, the definitions used are frequently unclear. A major study would be needed to obtain a truly accurate picture of the national and international situation.
- 9 Source: CEATL. The figures come from an ongoing study of the position of literary translation in Europe.
- 10 Heilbron, 'Responding to Globalisation'. Heilbron goes so far as to suggest that the same rule applies at the level of individual texts: the stronger the international position of the target language, the freer translators tend to be with the source text.
- 11 In that same period, the Dutch population grew by 75% (source: Statistics Netherlands).

Translation culture in the Dutch language area

Flourishing translation culture

The Netherlands and Flanders have long had a flourishing translation culture, which is rightly seen as exemplary in Europe. Hundreds of people work more or less full-time, translating works that account for a huge share (around 30%) of overall Dutch-language book production. (For the fiction category, this figure is a remarkable 70%.⁸) By comparison, in the United Kingdom the corresponding share is 3%, in Germany 7% and in France 14%.⁹ The explanation is simple: the less punch a language packs internationally, the more interest exists among its speakers in events elsewhere, and the more translations result. The same rule applies in reverse: the higher the international status of a language, the more interest it generates elsewhere, and the more translations are made of its literature.¹⁰

The share of translations in overall Dutch-language book production is now greater than it has ever been. In 1946 it was only 5%; it has since increased dramatically. There are a number of reasons for this: the mass availability of cheap paperbacks, a rise in the standard of living, a better-educated populace and, not least of all, the trend of internationalisation, which has increased demand for knowledge of other countries and cultures (especially Britain and America, because of their linguistic hegemony). Book production in general expanded enormously in this same period. The absolute number of translations a year has increased over tenfold in the space of fifty years.¹¹

Dominance of English

That same half century has seen a considerable shift in the share claimed by the various source languages. Most striking is the huge increase in translations from English: from 2% of the market in 1946 (40% of all translations) to 26.7% in 2005 (75.5% of all translations). The number of translations from French (0.6% in 1946, 1.9% in 2005), German (1.4% and 3.5%, respectively) and other languages (1.2% and 3.2%, respectively) rose slightly in that same period, but all other languages lost ground to English as its global dominance grew.¹²

Leaving aside the dwindling share of non-English works in translated literature, which is of special concern in an EU context (apparently we take little interest in the culture of our fellow member states), the rise in demand for translation presents a huge practical problem: how do you find qualified English translators? The perceived ease of translation is a major stumbling block in this regard: it is a common misconception that literary translation can be done by anyone with a dictionary and a reasonable command of a foreign language. As a result, poor-quality translations abound. It is not for nothing that in a recent survey Dutch and Flemish publishers expressed their interest in a vetting system for translators.¹³

A new but ageing profession

The huge increase in translations has of course sparked an equally huge demand for translators. It is hardly surprising that over half the translators featuring in a Dutch study of 1995 had made their debut between 1977 and 1985.¹⁴ There were scarcely any professional literary translators before the 1970s for the simple reason that it had not previously been possible to make a living from this career. But now, thirty years on, the question arises as to who will succeed the first generation of professional translators. User surveys carried out by the FvdL in 1997 and 2007 showed that the group of Dutch

More and better educational facilities are needed

translators working in the subsidised sector has aged markedly: the '50 and over' group has risen from 45% to 52.4%, the '41-50' group has dropped from 41% to 33.5%, while the '20-40' group has remained stable at 14%.¹⁵

Young people continue to join the profession (over a third of those who completed an ELV course managed to obtain a grant between 2001 and 2007), but not in sufficient numbers to counteract the ageing trend. In many respects the situation resembles that of the Dutch education sector, where the combination of low professional status, poor pay and demographic ageing has caused a shortage of teachers. To ensure that new translators join and remain in the profession, extra measures are needed: more and better educational facilities, improved guidance for young translators, a system of lifelong learning and professional development that would also be open to established translators, more opportunities for study/work abroad, a stronger financial position and higher social status.

The financial and economic position of the translator

The huge growth in the number of translations has also affected the financial position of translators. The 1970s, in particular, were a period of economic progress for the profession: many translators joined the Dutch professional association VvL; in 1977, after negotiations between publishers and the VvL, a model contract for literary translations was introduced (it has since been amended);¹⁶ the official minimum rate per word doubled in less than ten years,¹⁷ and a growing number of translators obtained grants from the FvdL (set up in 1965).¹⁸ The 1980 protest action 'Give us this day...', in which a busload of translators and translation students descended on The Hague, brandishing a literal black book of grievance to highlight their financial plight, resulted in a much bigger grant budget. Nowadays, with the help of the literary funds, literary translators can at least earn enough to turn out

15 The recent Humbeek report, which defines 'literary translator' much more broadly (to include translators of popular, non-subsidised fiction genres) backs up the figures: 60% in the 40-60 bracket (average age: 48). In Flanders the average age is lower (41), but almost no Flemish literary translators work full-time; the average age throughout the Dutch-language region is 46.5.

16 In Flanders, the VAV (established in 2006) and Flemish publishers drew up a standard contract with a minimum rate.

17 From 3 guilder cents a word in 1971 to 7.3 guilder cents in 1980. Since then, the rate has increased more slowly, and has now fallen behind collectively-negotiated wages.

18 By way of illustration: in 1976 the FvdL received 185 applications for a supplementary fee; in 1996 this figure was 320.

12 Figures from Heilbron, 2008, and the KB's 'A List'. See appendix 2.

13 Survey by Francine Smink, commissioned by the ELV, in June 2007.

14 IJdens, et al., 1995, p. 10.

good-quality work, but their wages are nevertheless still far below the average.¹⁹ Collectively, the FvdL and the VFL (set up in 1999), which has taken over responsibility for literary subsidies from the Vlaamse Gemeenschap (the Flemish regional authority), disburse around €2 million in the form of project grants and incentive subsidies for translators. However, such funding can only be effective if the supply and thus the quality of new translators is maintained; without competent translators it is pointless to try and correct the market with grants.

Cultural entrepreneurship

Corrective measures in the form of grants are necessary because literary translators have a particularly weak market position – not just in the case of a semi-peripheral language area like the Low Countries (where print runs are fairly small and translation costs therefore account for a much higher proportion of the total publication expenses), but also in that of larger languages. This stems mainly from the invisibility which is almost inherent to the act of translation. In a translated work, the translator's personal artistic contribution is difficult to identify, and as long as the public remains unaware of that contribution, he or she has no symbolic capital with which to enter the market as a 'cultural entrepreneur'. Although under the terms of the Copyright Act translators are considered creators of original works of literature and, as such, enjoy the same status as authors, in the everyday practice of publishing, they are regarded as more or less interchangeable. And in a purely economic sense they *are*, given that the quality of a translation has little impact on sales figures, except in the case of works (almost exclusively in the public domain) of which more than one translation exists. Translators are important culture bearers, but the nature of their work means that the market treats them as mere drudges; they are the last item in the budget.

As a result, translators' income in no way reflects their level of education, their creative efforts

19 On average, a subsidised translator in the Netherlands has a taxable annual income of around €19,000 (source: FvdL; no figures are available for Flanders).

or the amount of time they invest in their work. The problem recently became even more acute when the NMa decided to abolish the agreed minimum rate. A small storm of protest arose, which even elicited questions in the House.²⁰ But the discussion never touched upon the main question at issue: does the perceived economic advantage for the customer outweigh the cultural harm caused by abandoning the official rates?²¹ One may assume that those rates – and with them the quality of translation, particularly in the unsubsidised sector – will decrease if the right to a fair share in the profits or to collective price agreements is not laid down in the Copyright Act.²²

Translation subsidies

Grants for translators, as issued by the FvdL and the VFL, have helped to raise the level of translations. As a result, quality is high in the subsidised sector in the Netherlands and Flanders.²³ For historical reasons, however, that sector consists solely of literature in the narrowest sense, the same category for which the model contract and the GAU/VvL rate were introduced. Outside the literary sector the situation is much less satisfactory: rates are low (the market rates in the Netherlands and Flanders are the lowest of the richer European nations),²⁴ and translation contracts are not infrequently unfavourable. As a result, professional translators tend to favour the more lucrative 'literary' sector.

Yet, particularly in an international and European perspective, cultural-historical non-fiction is just as worthy of translation as literary fiction. This is borne out by the former genre's growing popularity (bucking the trend of the current bestseller culture, with its almost exclusive focus on English-language fiction) and its increasing prominence on the lists of Dutch literary publishers.

The funds are interested in the possibility of promoting the translation of quality non-fiction. Where possible, the subsidy regulations are worded in such a way as to include these texts, but the funds

20 Parliamentary questions (2060711590) by MP Mei Li Vos (Labour) on 6 April 2007.

21 Interestingly, politicians did ask this question with regard to the fixed book price.

22 The provisional solution adopted by the VvL and GAU in consultation with the NMa is to allow the market parties to set a 'reasonable and prevalent rate' each year on the basis of historical data. Most publishers in the literary sector honour this gentlemen's agreement, though legally speaking, the parties are free to apply a different rate. The literary foundations stipulate this 'reasonable and prevalent rate' as a minimum condition in grant applications.

23 See appendices 3 and 4.

24 CEATL survey.

are statutorily obliged to confine themselves to texts of literary importance, and do not have the resources to pursue an active non-fiction policy. Yet the boundaries between literary and non-literary non-fiction are blurring, market pressure is increasing, and demand is growing.

More financial resources would ensure the continuity of a wide range of high-quality translated literature (international classics, poetry, cultural-historical works, biographies, works from new language areas and literatures) that will do precisely what translated literature should do: pique curiosity and transfer knowledge.²⁵ Translators play an important role in this process, not just as the creators of the text, but also as experts in another culture; in short, as cultural mediators.

The Netherlands and Flanders

Separate attention should be given to the relationship between Netherlands and Flanders in the field of literary translation, because it is far from equal. For historical reasons Flemish occupies a peripheral place within the already semi-peripheral position of Dutch among the global language system, and this has far-reaching consequences for literary translation. All the major literary publishers are based in the Netherlands, and the Dutch market is much bigger than the Flemish one.²⁶ Both Dutch and Flemish publishers accordingly prefer translators from the Netherlands: though the 'richness' of Flemish is often appreciated in the case of original work, translations are expected to be completely free of 'southern' Dutch linguistic influence.²⁷ The socioeconomic conditions for literary translators in Flanders are also less favourable than for their counterparts in the Netherlands. Consequently, far fewer literary translators are active there, and most only work part-time.²⁸

Most Flemish translators realise that, to succeed in their careers, they must try to balance between standard Dutch and their own Belgian variant. For this reason some specialise in genres

(poetry, classics) whose language is less rooted in contemporary idiom.²⁹ At an institutional level too, promising attempts have been made (in the form of proposals by the ELV, the Dutch Language Union and the VFL) to strengthen the position of Flemish translators: regular training courses for Flemish translators in the Netherlands, subsidies for Flemish and Dutch translators working in tandem (mentor-student), etc. – plans that could mostly be implemented in the short term, but for which there is no budget at present. Many problems could be solved by introducing a bi-national system of lifelong learning; an exchange programme of this kind would represent a significant cultural and linguistic enrichment for Dutch translators as well.

The Flemish Boekenoverleg (Book Consultation), set up in the spring of 2008, is dedicated to improving the socioeconomic position of Flemish translators and authors. One of its partners is the recently established and highly active VAV, which is working on a number of important matters: a model contract and a minimum rate in consultation with Flemish publishers, the introduction of a system of lending rights, a social statute for writers and translators, etc.

25 A concrete plan in this context is for the network of funds to work together with their foreign counterparts to draw up a list of classic works of literature that have not yet been translated. The list will be placed on a website together with reviews and practical information about publishers and rights, with the assistance of literary translators, who can thus use their knowledge of their literature to act as ambassadors of their own culture.

26 In terms of population, two and a half times as big; in terms of money spent on books, over three times as big.

27 See the recent ELV questionnaire sent to Dutch and Flemish publishers, in which this is one of the main points.

28 Humbeeck, p. 87 et seq.

29 Humbeeck, p. 94.

Ryszard Kapuściński, writer
'Translators are the heroes of the 21st century [...] By translating texts from one language into another we give others access to a new world, and by "explaining" those texts we bring that world closer, we allow others to dwell in it and share our personal experience. Are we not indebted to translators, who by their efforts contribute greatly to expanding our sphere of thought, deepening our understanding, increasing our knowledge and touching our emotions?'

Translations from Dutch have mushroomed

Growing export

It is of course impossible to lump together all translations from Dutch, because the situation differs per country and language area. Even within Europe, countries have vastly different translation traditions, depending on the position their language occupies in the global language system. As a rule, small language areas produce proportionately more translations than large ones. In the case of the language with the strongest position – English – translations account for less than 5% of overall book production, while for a less widely-spoken language like Greek, that figure is 45%.³⁰ The share of source languages in total translation production is governed by a similar rule of thumb: the stronger the position of a source language, the more translations will be made from it. But the recent success of Dutch and Flemish literature, particularly in countries like Germany and France, shows clearly that other factors also play a role: literary fads, subsidies for foreign publishers, good promotion (such as the work done by the NLPVF and the VFL) and of course purely content-related considerations like themes and quality.

Translations from Dutch have indeed mushroomed over the last decade.³¹ Publishers as far away as China are buying Dutch and Flemish books, despite the difficulty of finding translators. At international book fairs like the Frankfurter Buchmesse (which memorably spotlighted the literature of the Low Countries in 1993) Dutch-

³⁰ Johan Heilbron, 2007, p. 4.

³¹ By way of indication: the NLPVF's database of translations lists 1,430 titles (including anthologies and reprints) for the 1981-1990 period, 3,505 for the 1991-2000 period and 3,500 for the 2001-2007 period.

language literature has been very much in vogue for years, and 2007 set a new record in the number of titles sold. Foreign interest is expected to continue rising.

The translator's position

The cultural, financial and contractual circumstances in which all these books are translated vary enormously from country to country. And nowhere is the divide greater than in Europe, where translators are kept busier than on any other continent. A yawning gap exists between the well-organised, reasonably well-paid Norwegian translators, who are subsidised through lending rights, and their extremely poorly-paid Italian counterparts, who have scarcely any rights at all. Roughly speaking, Europe can be divided into two groups: countries where translators can survive reasonably well on their work (the Scandinavian countries, Germany, France, the UK, the Netherlands/Flanders – the latter heading the subsidised sector, while coming last in the unsubsidised sector), and countries where conditions are so poor that there are almost no professional literary translators, or where translators are forced to produce such an incredible volume of work that translations can hardly be said to have any individual artistic value. In general, it can be postulated that the vicious circle of invisibility (low recognition > low pay > low quality > low recognition) obtains everywhere, though the degree of recognition, payment and quality varies from country to country.

Subsidies

The recent success of Dutch-language literature abroad undoubtedly owes much to the active role played by the NLPVF and the VFL, which propose titles and issue subsidies on the condition that the publishers pay translators the going rate. Account is taken of distribution channels, promotional efforts,

the publisher's profile, the translation contract and the proven quality of the proposed translator. As with the number of translations in general, the number of subsidised translations is growing sharply.³² The German-language area remains the largest customer, with over twice as many applications as the French and English-language areas combined. A notable trend of recent years is increasing interest from Turkey, China and the new EU member states, giving the relevant parties in the Netherlands the opportunity to follow up on their plans to focus on emerging countries and migrants' countries of origin. Finding qualified translators to translate purchased works remains a considerable problem; in the case of countries like China, special training pathways have to be set up. Attempts are being made through the ELV to devise a training programme that will tie in with current market demand, but these efforts are ad hoc rather than systematic.

Apart from the Netherlands and Flanders, few countries offer grants to working translators. Only in Finland, Norway and Sweden is there an established system of subsidies, derived from public lending rights, that enables translators to devote themselves full-time to high-quality literary translation. The realisation that translators need a healthy economic foundation so as to ensure a flourishing, high-quality translation culture has been slow in coming elsewhere on the continent; many cultural policymakers are simply not aware of the fundamental difference between 'translation subsidies' (given to publishers to influence supply) and 'translators' subsidies' (given to translators to improve the quality of translation). The Netherlands and Flanders can convey to other member states the huge boost that the FvdL and the VFL have given to the quality of Dutch translation.

³² Whereas the NLPVF received only 39 applications in 1991, by 1994 that number had risen to 100, and in 2007 to 247. In Flanders, 35 translations were subsidised in 2000; by 2007 that figure had almost doubled. See appendices 3 and 6.

Translation centres and Europe

For translators, contact with the source language and culture and with colleagues translating from the same language is crucial. A relatively modest but highly effective way of achieving this is the translation centre system. Many European countries now have one or two such centres, a number of which are united in the RECIT network. The translation centre of the Flemish regional authority, which will be moving from Leuven to Antwerp in the autumn of 2008, hosts fifteen translators a year. The Amsterdam Translators' House, funded by the NLPVF and – on a more ad hoc basis – the EU, annually provides accommodation to over forty translators from more than twenty different countries. During their stay, translators can work on their translations (sometimes in consultation with 'their' authors), do research in libraries, exchange knowledge and experience with colleagues from other countries, and immerse themselves in the language and culture from which they translate – a model of effectiveness in a sphere that is rightly designated a pillar of European cultural policy: intercultural dialogue.³³

Between 2000 and 2006, the RECIT-affiliated translation centres applied annually to the European Commission for a one-year grant, which they were almost always awarded. This was possible because 9% of the total European culture budget was earmarked for translating literature. These funds were used to subsidise publishers, international literary events and translation centres, though, ironically, only after the NLPVF and the Amsterdam Translators' House, supported by the Dutch Ministry of Education, Culture and Science, had intervened in protest at the absence of any reference to literature in the draft Culture Programme. But in the new, 'non-sectoral' Culture Programme for 2007-2013 the situation has changed completely; the Programme no longer provides for a fixed literature budget, and all art forms have to compete for European subsidies. This is a sad

illustration of Europe's failure to comprehend its own cultural identity: a Union in which translation plays such a fundamental role, both culturally and financially,³⁴ should be more willing and better-placed than any other institution to provide ongoing support for literary translation, for instance by maintaining a small-scale but highly effective network of literary translation centres.³⁵

Regular European support sought for translation centres

33 It is interesting to note the shift this concept has undergone in the language of policy-makers: whereas it initially referred to the dialogue between individual member states, it is now (as in 'the Year of Intercultural Dialogue') used almost exclusively to refer to the desired dialogue between Europe's indigenous and ethnic-minority populations.

34 According to Abram de Swaan, in 1999 (i.e. before the latest enlargement rounds) the EU had an estimated translation budget of between €700 million and €1.8 billion (*Words of the World*, p. 172 and note 61). The Union's own estimate was incidentally much lower: €414 million before enlargement; €511 million after (source: Special Report No. 9/2006 concerning translation expenditure incurred by the Commission, the Parliament and the Council). The discrepancy may be due to the way in which the overhead is included in the calculations.

35 Average budget per translation centre per year: €250,000 (source: Amsterdam Translators' House).

August Willemssen, writer and translator

‘Whereas the writer’s challenge is the creation of a work of literature, the translator’s challenge lies in the fact that the work has already been made. This requires inventiveness, craftsmanship, erudition, scholarly knowledge, life experience, but also self-denial (which is not unlike acting talent), and the patience to find the right words in his own language....’
From *De taal als bril* (Language as spectacles), 1987

4

A translator needs knowledge and skills

The educational situation

The importance of specialised training

Like drama and classical music, literary translation is a performing art that requires talent and vision, skill and knowledge. Talent and vision, because the relationship between the source text and the translation is not mechanical, but subjective: like musicians, translators ask themselves how to do justice to an existing work of art while casting it in a new form. The answer to this question will vary from translator to translator, which is why, under international copyright law, a translator is considered to be the creator of a ‘work of literature’ and thus enjoys the same status as an author. Yet realising this vision takes skill and above all, knowledge. Just as conservatories exist for aspiring musicians, appropriate training should be provided for aspiring translators. Besides creativity and a general flair for language, translators need a wide range of intellectual tools: outstanding knowledge of the source language and culture, an excellent active command of the target language and culture, and a strong appreciation for both the kinds of choices they must constantly make and the tradition in which they are working. All these instruments can be acquired; indeed, the importance of knowledge acquisition, both practical and theoretical, cannot be overestimated. Furthermore, systematic study of translation is crucial because research is the lifeblood of education.

The situation in the Netherlands

There is no separate ‘track’ for literary translation within the present Dutch education system. The only tertiary-level translation programme of any kind, offered by the School of Translation and Interpreting at Hogeschool Zuyd (a college of higher professional education in Maastricht) does not train literary translators. To fill this gap a Vocational School of Translation (Vertalersvakschool), where students study part-time under experienced translators, was recently opened in Amsterdam. However laudable, this private initiative is no substitute for a full-fledged course of study at university level. Most of the ageing core group of the current generation of literary translators received their training at the Institute of Translation (Instituut voor Vertaalkunde) at the University of Amsterdam, redubbed the Institute of Translation Studies (Instituut voor Vertaalwetenschap) in 1980 and closed due to budget cuts in 2000. Since then, there have been no other translation programmes at university level, with the possible exception of the MA programmes offered by Utrecht University and Radboud University Nijmegen in a limited number of foreign languages. To be sure, translation in one form or another is part of the curricula of nearly all universities, and various translation classes have been set up since the Dutch higher education system recently adopted a Bachelor’s/Master’s system. However, to go by attainment targets, no single course of study aspires to train students as literary translators. The current MA programmes are only a year long, and literary translation is just one aspect of the total curriculum. For a cultural discipline requiring artistic maturity and breadth of knowledge, one year’s training is simply not enough. Two years would be the minimum, but even then, there is a need for further study, in the form of a system of lifelong learning, which would also be open to established translators.³⁶ The Humbeeck report on the situation of literary translators mentions ‘the need for ongoing, on-the-job training and the promotion of

36 Such programmes can be found abroad, at Trinity College Dublin or the University of Exeter, for example.

Full-fledged programme of study for literary translation

37 Humbeeck, p. 53.

38 Some figures: in Germany there are about 2,700 students of Dutch; in France 2,200; in Poland 500; in the Czech Republic 270; in Hungary 300, in Indonesia 250 at university level and 2,500 in various non-academic courses; in the UK 280, in Ireland 40 and in the US 610 (source: Dutch Language Union).

expertise.³⁷ The time needed to attain the necessary level of expertise is considerable. This is borne out by the experiences of the ELV, which has been offering workshops, mentorships and master classes since 2001. Its input has boosted the number of novice translators, as well as the quality of their work. The ELV has concluded that it takes several years before newly-qualified translators are fully competent to work in their field.

The situation in Flanders

In Flanders, the responsibility for training translators has traditionally fallen to the *hogescholen*, which are institutes of higher professional education. No Flemish university offers translation as a main subject within the curriculum. Unfortunately, no one thought to seize on the introduction of the Bachelor’s/Master’s system to give translation a place in the new academic landscape. Training in literary translation is limited to a brief, extracurricular course at Leuven (taught by experienced translators) and an occasional class on the subject at Antwerp.

Even those institutes that do offer translation as a course of study do not have a full-fledged programme of study for literary translation. Literary translation receives no attention whatsoever in Bachelor’s Programmes; in the case of Master’s Programmes the picture is mixed. Only the Lessius Hogeschool (in Antwerp) places a clear emphasis on literary translation: since 2007 it has offered a literary translation workshop in English, French, German and Spanish.

The situation abroad

There is considerable interest in the Dutch language outside the Low Countries. Dutch is offered as a main or subsidiary subject at over 200 foreign universities, including colleges in Egypt and Morocco. Students of Dutch in Germany actually far outnumber students of German in the Netherlands.³⁸ The Dutch Language Union uses subsidies to encourage such

No single academic programme is dedicated to literary translation

programmes and provides centralised facilities for the use of academic departments, lecturers and students of Dutch. Literary translation plays only a modest role abroad: indeed, no single academic programme is dedicated solely to the discipline. The rapidly growing demand for translators from Dutch makes action necessary, especially in the case of language areas that have no historical ties to the Low Countries or the Dutch language and where the number of ‘cultural mediators’ is small (Eastern Europe, Asia, the Arab world and the BRIC countries [Brazil, Russia, India and China]). Until recently the Language Union subsidised regular literary translation modules at the universities of Münster, Paris, Berlin and London, but to respond more flexibly to demand and better stimulate potential talent, the Language Union, the ELV and the NLPVF recently developed the project Translation Workshops on Location, which will soon be launched on a trial basis. A travelling group of instructors will visit Dutch departments at foreign universities to give literary translation workshops for advanced students and graduates. Each series of workshops will be devoted to the work of one author. If the trial is successful the project will be deepened and expanded. Students outside the Low Countries, too, should benefit greatly from ongoing learning, in the form of workshops, master classes and specialised courses, all of which are already organised on a regular basis by the Amsterdam Translators’ House, the ELV and the VFL.

Expertise centre

In the mid-nineties, Dutch and Flemish higher education institutions, the NLPVF, the Flemish Ministry of Culture and the Dutch Language Union worked together to provide further training and professionalisation to translators from Dutch. With the establishment of the ELV by the Language Union in 2001 this policy was expanded to include translations *into* Dutch, at the initiative of the FvdL, the VFL and other parties. The ELV was also

The ELV formula will have to be further expanded

created to make better use of contacts with Dutch departments at foreign universities to promote the export of Dutch literature. The strength of this formula lies in the unique collaboration between the literary funds and colleges/universities across the entire language area. It enables established, respected translators to work as instructors and mentors, and publishers and editors to give guest lectures on the day-to-day workings of the publishing world. In this way a network of expertise is built up, which can be used by all parties. To meet its dual goal (training new translators and enhancing the quality of active translators), the ELV has various tools at its disposal: intensive courses, workshops on themes of interest to the working translator, and individual mentorships (whereby a novice translator working on an actual assignment receives guidance from an experienced colleague). All this is accomplished on the relatively modest budget of €200,000 a year. The ELV has been in operation for over six years, and the formula is beginning to bear fruit.³⁹ The Centre was therefore recently expanded, prompting a name change from *Steunpunt* (support centre) to *Expertisecentrum* (expertise centre). But it is not enough: many language combinations are not covered, demand is greater than supply, and the lack of a solid, uniform grounding in the discipline (in the form of a degree programme in literary translation) means that the abilities of incoming translators differ, despite the strict selection process. In the light of these pressures, the existing formula will have to be further expanded in the future: more mentorships, more courses, more language combinations. The ELV could also play a greater role abroad, by working with Dutch departments that cannot give full attention to the subject of translation. All these things will require more resources.

The first step has thus been taken, but the link between higher education and real-life professional demands is too tenuous. This is true whether Dutch is the source or the target language: the ELV amasses expertise, but its ad hoc, demand-driven working methods prevent it from employing that expertise

³⁹ Between 2001 and 2007 the ELV organised 58 courses with 405 selected participants.

systematically. Moreover, the progression from journeyman to master often lacks continuity. This should be remedied by instituting a continuous system of ongoing learning, consisting of courses at the highest level. World-class literature deserves world-class translators.

Osip Mandelstam, poet and translator

‘If not protected from himself, a good translator wears out quickly. Translation is, in the strictest sense of the expression, an unhealthy occupation. With the meagre income that their work provides, professional translators have to churn out texts like *blinis* – book after book, year in year out. This ceaseless activity makes them prey to nervous exhaustion. They are at higher risk of aphasia, impairments of the speech centre, the breakdown of communication skills, and acute neurasthenia. Work-related disabilities of this kind must be studied and prevented.’ (Letter to the Union of Soviet Writers, 1929)

A new degree programme for translators

As argued above, the demand for qualified translators (from all languages, though especially English and less widely-spoken tongues) is increasing all the time, while the pool of translators is ageing and substantial pressures exist on overall translation quality. The demand for translators from Dutch is also expected to grow, even while educational opportunities are limited. The only way of ensuring both a sufficient supply and quality is to establish a new degree programme that will train translators from and into Dutch.

In the Netherlands there are a number of good reasons for embedding such a programme of study in the existing academic curriculum. Knowledge of both foreign languages and the theoretical aspects of translation is concentrated at universities, so it is there that specialised translation skills can be cultivated most efficiently. Literary translation is a creative activity that requires an academic level of knowledge and critical thinking skills. Without research, theoretical reflection and historical knowledge, the education of a literary translator is incomplete. A university-level translation course will open new career opportunities for graduates and potentially attract more students, thus strengthening programmes in the smaller languages. Another important argument in favour of such a degree programme, given the present lowly status of the profession, is the anticipated sociocultural effect: elevating literary translation to the level of

a main subject at a university can raise the status of the field as a whole, helping to break the vicious circle of invisibility and neglect. This will in turn give the profession greater recognition and attract more students. Most importantly, though, integrating this proposed programme of study into existing structures is the best way of guaranteeing the quality of the education provided and maintaining a strong connection to the earlier stages of the curriculum, which is devoted to acquiring the needed language and translation skills in the students' respective languages.⁴⁰ Flexible structuring will make it possible to bring in specialists from outside the academic community (experienced translators from and into Dutch, literary critics, publishers, etc.). This is crucial for the ultimate goal: imparting knowledge and skills that will enable professional literary translators to start working immediately after completing their studies. To this end, we must work to close the gap between the academic level attained by graduates and the current range of mentorships, workshops, etc. offered by the ELV.

The best way to integrate literary translation as a specialisation within the regular curriculum would be to introduce a one-year initial Master's Programme in translation followed by another one-year course, to be financed with additional resources. This arrangement offers a number of unique advantages: significant latitude in designing the syllabus, admission requirements that can be adapted to real-life professional demands, the option of admitting lateral entry students, facilities for welcoming talented foreign translators from Dutch through a system of fellowships, and not least of all, the opportunity for bi-national (Dutch-Flemish) or international collaboration in the form of exchange programmes for students and instructors alike, a form of educational cross-pollination that is especially well-suited to the field of translation. If a course of study like the one being proposed is set up in the Netherlands, the institutions involved can establish contact with Flemish institutions where literary translation is already part of the curriculum.

⁴⁰ The upward trend in the number of new language and culture students at Dutch universities since the low point of 2003 is a hopeful sign with respect to the next generation of translators. (see appendix 1)

Literary translation requires an academic level of knowledge

For Flemish students, a bi-national degree programme is an excellent chance to spend time in the Netherlands and familiarise themselves with the idiom expected by the major Dutch publishing firms. For Dutch students, a stay in Flanders can enrich their personal linguistic storehouse and broaden their cultural horizon. The translation expertise that exists in the Netherlands and Flanders can thus be made doubly fertile. It seems self-evident that the course should be offered in those places that possess the most expertise in literary translation.⁴¹

Lifelong learning and professional development

A course of study devoted to literary translation is only meaningful if it reflects the profession as it is actually practised. Traditionally, translation is an occupation with a high ‘drop-out’ rate, especially among beginners, who find it hard to get assignments (publishers see inexperienced translators as a risk), are not yet eligible for subsidies and have no professional network to consult about work-related questions and problems. Publishers lack the resources necessary to support neophytes and give translators little feedback on their work. It is therefore up to the parties behind this pamphlet to work closely with publishing houses and the educational institutions that will offer the degree programme to meet these various needs by:

1. Actively supporting novice translators during the most difficult stage of their careers, by providing mentorships, workshops, flexible master classes, and practical information and guidance – a direct form of supervision that will also benefit the quality of the translator’s work. This whole process depends on the coordination and organisation of the ELV, which must be further strengthened if it is to play this key role. With more resources the ELV can better serve departments of Dutch abroad, with which the Dutch Language Union has close ties as a policymaking body.

2. Devoting special attention to the position of Flemish translators. With the help of mentorships, classes, and subsidised partnerships with Dutch translators, novice Flemish translators can chip away at their double handicap (unfamiliarity with the standard language and the difficulty of getting work from publishers in the Netherlands). The network they will build up in the Netherlands, of both colleagues and publishers, will be invaluable, especially given that this system of lifelong learning is structured around the involvement of the publishing houses.
3. Supervising translators from Dutch, who, after completing their degree in Dutch at a foreign university and obtaining a postgraduate degree (preferably in the Netherlands or Flanders), will be able to take advantage of workshops, courses, master classes and possibly mentorships early on in their careers.
4. Offering experienced translators the option of refresher courses and ‘on-the-job training’. As we have discussed, the profession requires tremendous creative energy – year in, year out. Burnout is commonplace, and it is therefore important that translators be given opportunities for further professional development, greater specialisation, research, and the chance to utilise their skills in a broader cultural context. The literary funds, the Dutch Language Union and the ELV accordingly want to set up workshops and courses for this group. These educational opportunities will serve a dual purpose. On the one hand, translators will be given a chance to immerse themselves in a certain aspect of the profession or become acquainted with new developments in the field, while on the other, the intensive interaction with colleagues will motivate translators and enhance the quality of their work.

⁴¹ See appendix 7 for a blueprint for a Master’s Degree in Literary Translation.

Regular contact with the cultures of both the source and target language is crucial for all translators, whatever their nationality or level of experience. They should therefore be given more opportunities to visit or even live in the homeland of ‘their’ writers and conduct research, build networks, work on translations – in short, to fulfil their role as cultural mediators. But cultural mediation is a two-way street, and literary translators can also function as representatives of their own cultures abroad. In more specific terms this could mean creating fellowships at foreign universities and research institutions, where translators could take an active involvement in the educational programmes for the language and discipline they have chosen as their careers. The Flemish and Dutch government should make these kinds of cross-border initiatives a top priority.

Boosting the position of the translator

Although the overall situation of Dutch and Flemish translators compares favourably to that of their foreign colleagues, thanks to the subsidies provided by the FvDL and the VFL, the Humbeek report reaffirms that literary translators are underpaid, which leads them to take on too heavy a workload.⁴² This problem, which is practically inherent to the profession’s lowly, undervalued status, directly affects translation quality. It would be naïve to imagine that a solution is just round the corner. Yet there are steps the government can take. These fall into two broad categories:

1. Protecting the economic position of literary translators. Since a fixed minimum rate is against the law in the Netherlands, on account of European anti-cartel legislation, translators no longer have a firm guarantee that publishers will pay the going rate. The quality of a translation has little effect on sales figures, so publishers seek to keep fees low, especially in the case of books that were not bestsellers in their original language and therefore tend to have small print runs.

Increasing visibility

2. Taking initiatives to increase the visibility of the translators. One of the most obvious is to enable them to make use of their expertise in areas that go beyond translation in the strictest sense. Translators can act as ambassadors in the source-language country (see above, under ‘Ongoing learning and professional development’) and scouts and mediators in their own countries (especially for the smaller languages, where few literary agents and scouts are active). They can give lectures and take part in educational projects. Organisations like the SSS and the Flemish Reading Association, which have considerable knowledge and experience in that area, can lend their support to these activities. All this will have the double benefit of not only unlocking a major, hitherto untapped source of cultural expertise, but also strengthening the cultural and economic position of the translator. This will require additional resources.

Maintaining the minimum rate

⁴² Humbeek, p. 36.

Promoting literary diversity

Literary diversity is under threat. The literary funds face the important challenges of protecting and, wherever possible, expanding this diversity: 'difficult' books or genres pose a direct risk for publishers and demand a great deal of expertise and time on the part of the translator. Fortunately, there are still publishers out there who are willing to take that risk, but the translator's fee is often a major stumbling block. Through a combination of translation and production subsidies these 'difficult' books, which are often an established part of the literary canon, can reach a new audience without placing an undue burden on the translator. To accomplish this, the funds request greater financial scope.

Translations of culturally significant works of non-fiction play an essential part at the interface of art and knowledge. Literary translators are exceptionally well equipped to unlock these texts for Dutch readers. Because much non-literary non-fiction (e.g. cultural-historical texts) falls outside the mandate of the literary funds and is thus ineligible for subsidies, professional translators generally prefer to work on literary projects. Increasing scope for funding translations of non-literary fiction would greatly benefit the quality of such translations.

Intercultural dialogue

In the current, non-sectoral European Culture Programme for 2007-2013, regular support is given only to major cultural organisations that operate in at least seven member states. The EU wants to promote 'intercultural dialogue' in the (correct) belief that such a dialogue forms the core of European citizenship. Yet the Union misunderstands its own basic assumption: it is not the organised cacophony of seven or more voices talking over one another that gives Europe its 'polyphony', but the sum total of all cross-cultural exchanges that have been taking place across the old continent for centuries, despite (and even because of) the language barriers. The

translation of literature, in the broadest sense of the term, is the most privileged form of intercultural dialogue, and as argued above, it is through their written tradition that cultures preserve their capital.

For Europe, literary translation is not just any art form, it is the art form that embodies and facilitates European cultural unity. In deciding whether to support it, e.g. through regular subsidies for translators' centres, the EU should not look at sporadic partnerships between parties from several member states, but rather at those qualities that make this exchange into a true dialogue: the tangible interaction of cultures, the sharing of ideas and values, and the understanding that emerges from this. If this multilingual continent truly wants to take its cultural diversity seriously and promote intercultural dialogue to 'enhance the cultural area shared by Europeans', as claimed in the EU's own policy documents,⁴³ it will have to give the member states' written tradition a separate status in the next Culture Programme (2014-2021). As Umberto Eco has said, 'The language of Europe is translation.'⁴⁴

43 Decision No. 1855/2006/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 12 December 2006 establishing the Culture Programme (2007-2013).

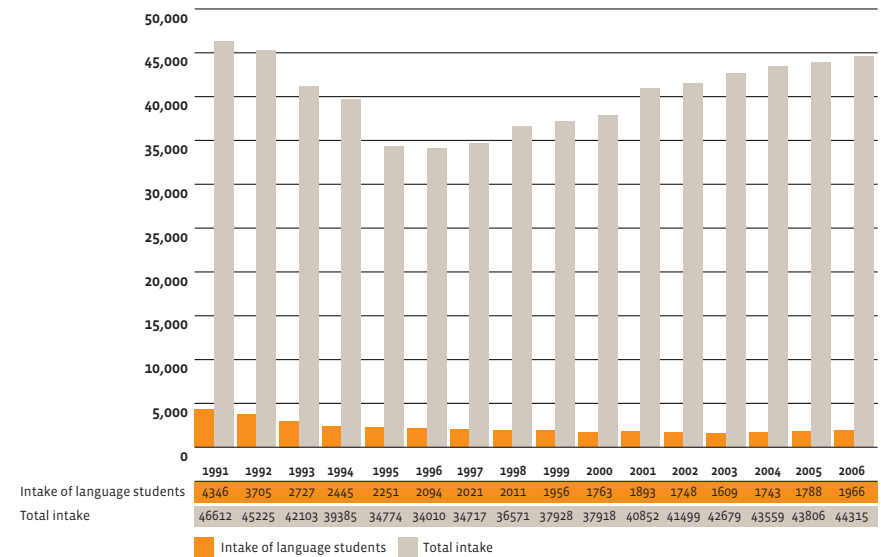
44 Umberto Eco, *The Search for the Perfect Language*.

Rien Verhoef, translator
 ‘Translators are the caretakers
 of our language.’
 (Utrecht Translation Days, 2007)

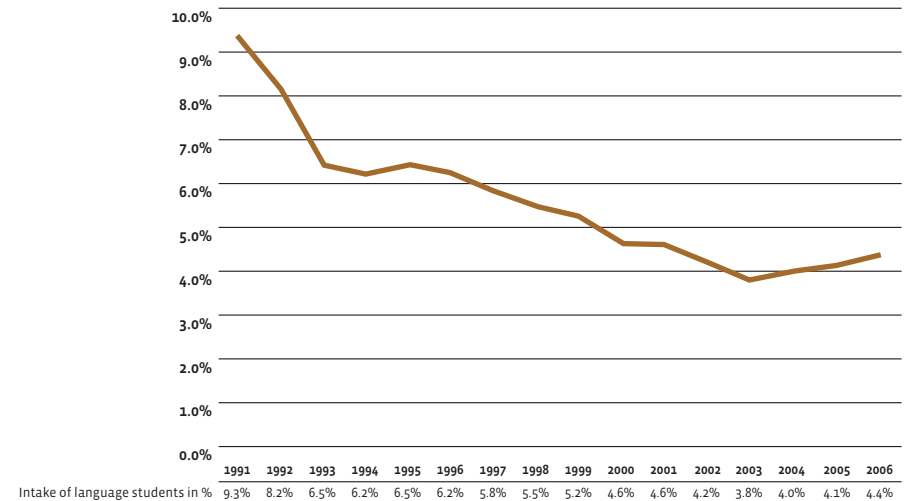
Appendices

Appendix 1

A. Students entering Dutch universities, 1991-2006 source: VSNU



B. Language students entering Dutch universities, 1991-2006 source: VSNU

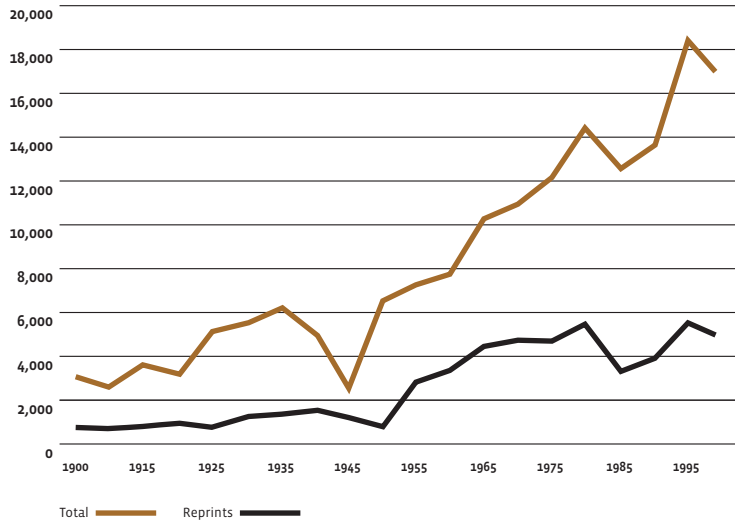


Appendix 2

The figures on Dutch book production are derived from two sources: Stichting Speurwerk (figures provided by Johan Heilbron, covering the period up to 1997) and the National Library of the Netherlands' list of recognised publishers, the 'A list' (general figures are available from 1975 and figures on specific genres from 1985). The figures provided by the two sources do not correspond exactly for the overlapping period, but they show similar trends.

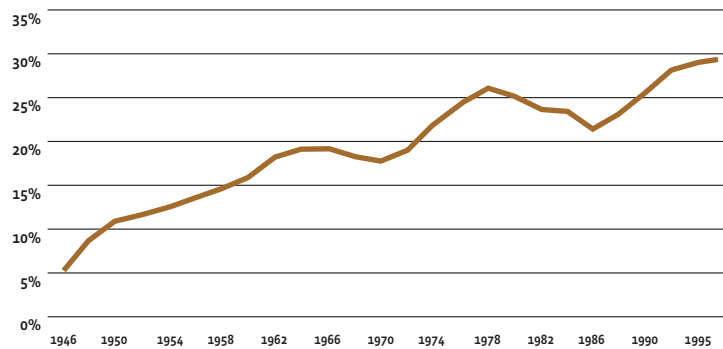
A. Book production, 1900-1997 (total figures and reprints)

figures: Stichting Speurwerk, source: Johan Heilbron



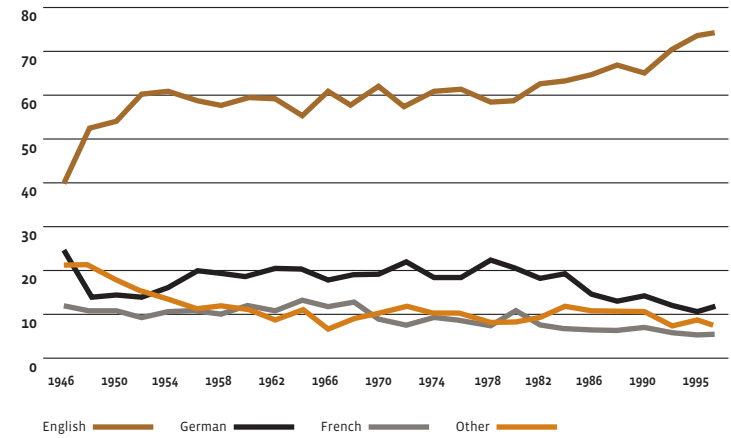
B. Share of translations in total book production, 1946-1997

Stichting Speurwerk, source: Johan Heilbron



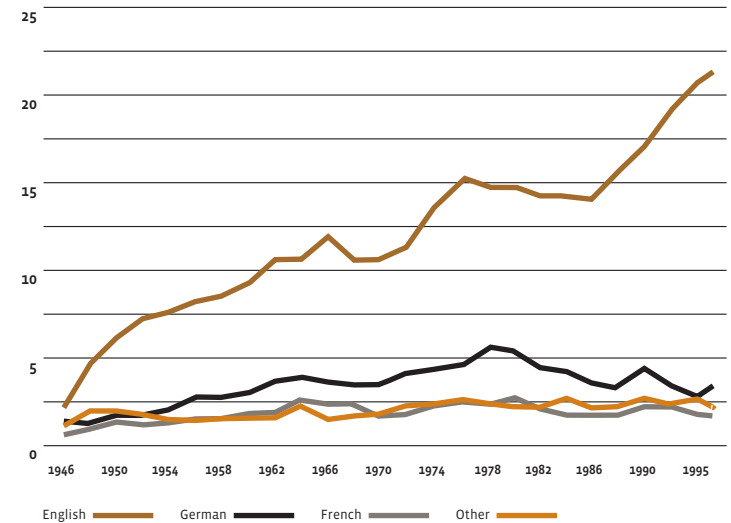
C. Share of source languages in total translation production, 1946-1997

figures: Stichting Speurwerk, source: Johan Heilbron

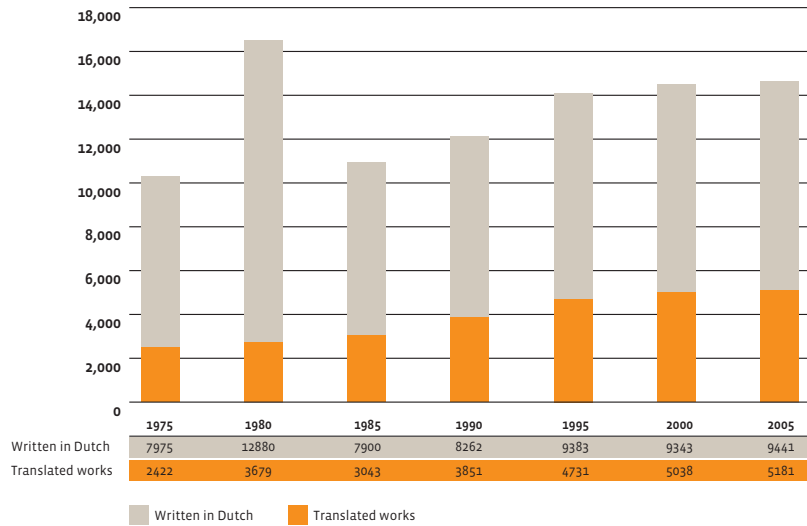


D. Share of translations in total book production, per language, 1946-1997

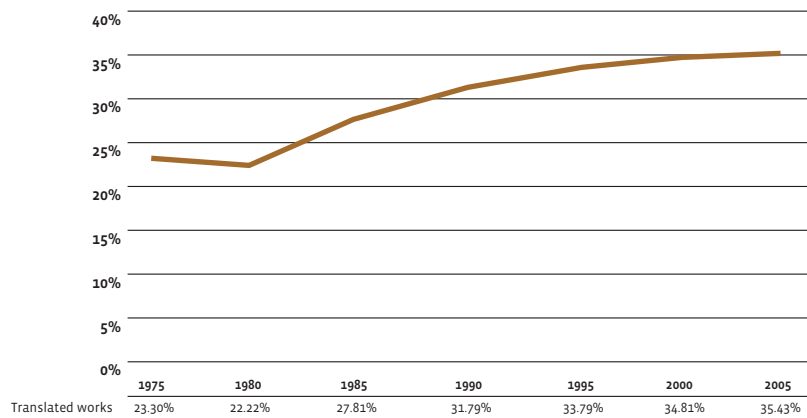
figures: Stichting Speurwerk, source: Johan Heilbron



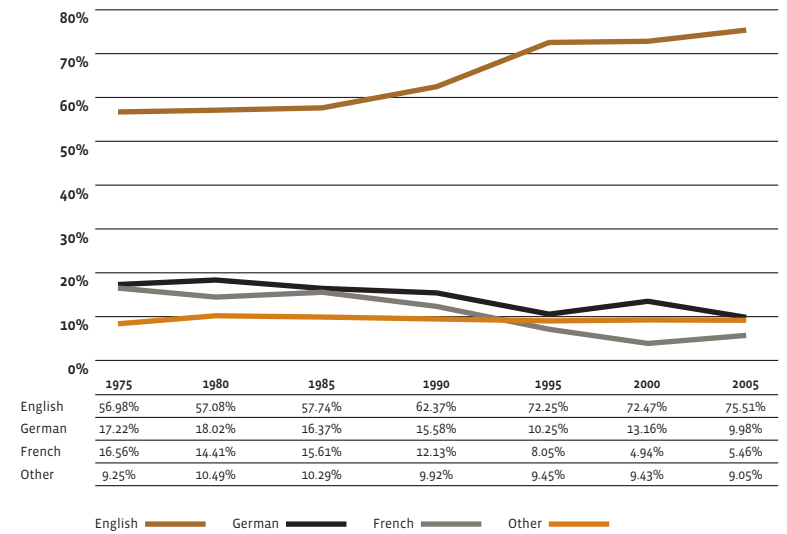
E. Book production (including reprints) and share of translations, 1975-2005
 source: 'A List', National Library of the Netherlands



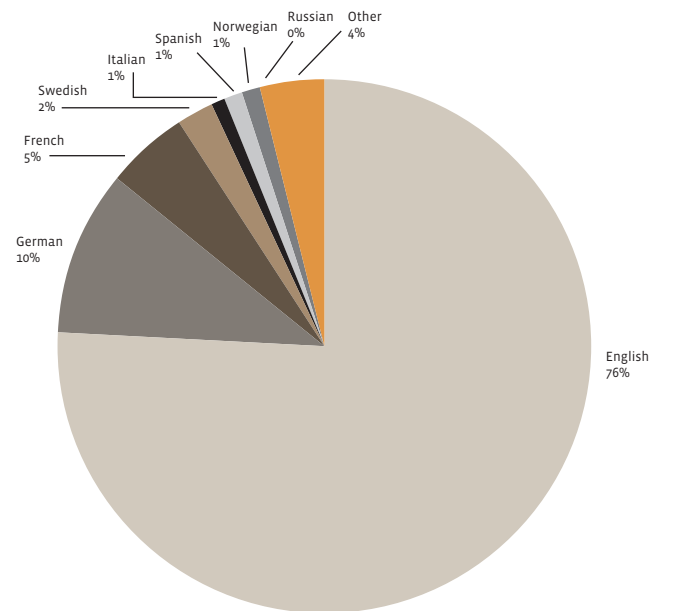
F. Share of translations in total book production, 1975-2005
 source: 'A List', National Library of the Netherlands



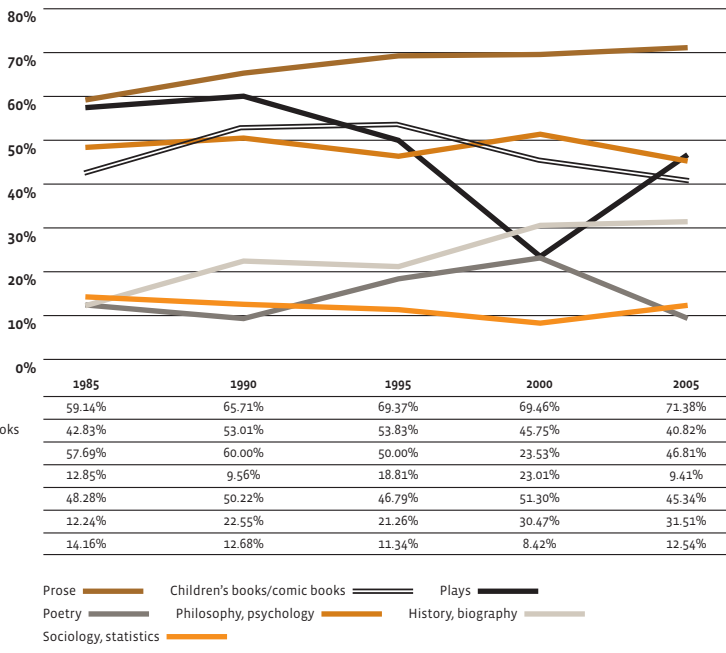
G. Share of source languages in total translation production, 1975-2005
 source: 'A List', National Library of the Netherlands



H. Share of source languages in total translation production, 2005
 source: 'A List', National Library of the Netherlands



I. Share of translations in total book translation production per genre, 1985-2005
 source: 'A List', National Library of the Netherlands



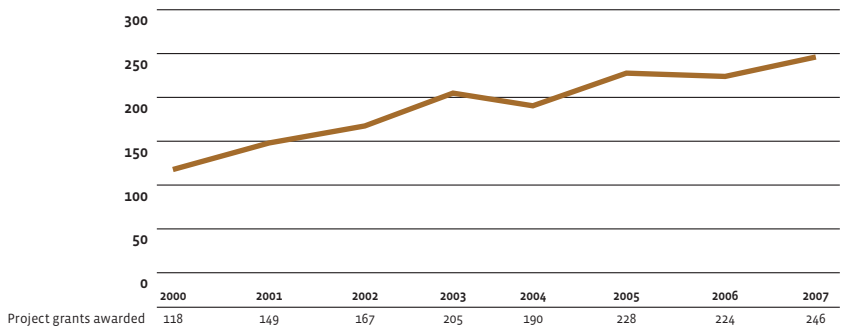
Appendix 3

Number of grants awarded by the VFL Source: VFL



Appendix 4

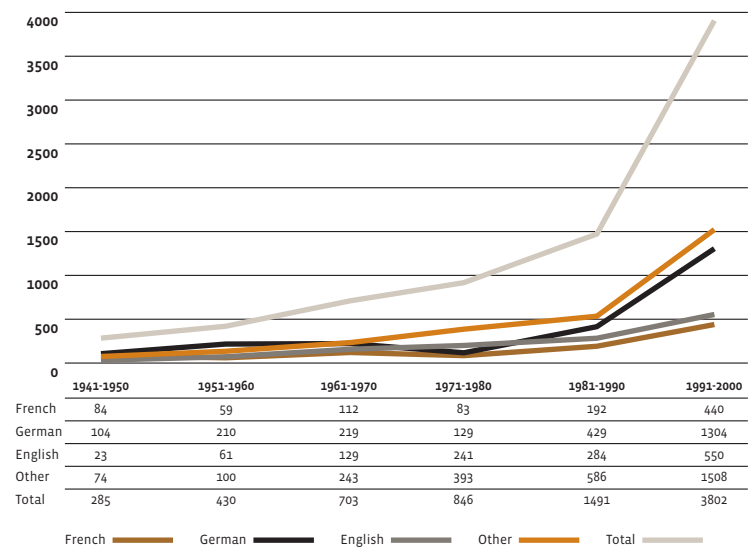
Number of grants awarded by the FvdL; project grants for translators, 2000-2007 Source: FvdL



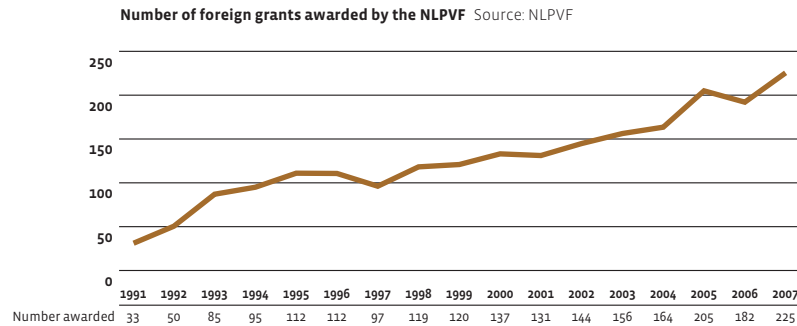
Appendix 5

The translations database predominantly lists works of literary fiction (rather than a wider cross-section of genres), though it gives a good indication of trends.

Translations from Dutch, 1941-2000 Source: NLPVF translations database



Appendix 6



Appendix 7

Blueprint for a Master's Programme in Literary Translation

LANGUAGES

Choice of four Western languages (German, English, French and Spanish) as source languages, with Dutch as source and target language.

INTAKE

25 students a year (around five per language)

ENTRY REQUIREMENTS

Students will be selected on the basis of talent and proven ability to translate and must have:

1. earned a Bachelor's Degree in one of the target languages offered, including Dutch as a foreign language, or achieved an equivalent level of linguistic competence in one of the five languages, or
2. completed a Bachelor's module in Translation and a Bachelor's module in Translation Studies, or
3. completed at least one year of a Master's Programme in Translation or an equivalent (one-year) Master's in the field of translation and translation studies.

PROGRAMME

The one-year Master's Programme in Translation offered by the University of Utrecht has been used as a model for the type of entry qualifications that would be required. The Utrecht programme comprises two translation studies courses (15 ECTS credits), two specialised translation courses (15 ECTS credits) and a graduation track (30 ECTS credits) consisting of a project, translation or Master's thesis (20 ECTS credits) and the option of either a work experience placement or an in-depth course (10 ECTS credits). Students who are subsequently admitted to the Master's Programme in Literary Translation will follow a one-year course (60 ECTS credits) centring on Dutch, which is offered as a source and target language. The programme will comprise the following components:

1. two top-level literary translation courses, offering a variety of genres and styles (2 x 7.5 ECTS credits);
2. a translation workshop taught by a prominent literary translator (guest lecturer, 10 ECTS credits);
3. a Dutch writing course (style and composition, 10 ECTS credits);
4. six annual guest lectures, to be given by a translator, an expert in the field of translation studies or a translator-in-residence (includes a writing assignment; 5 ECTS credits);
5. a graduation project in the form of a publishable literary translation, produced under the supervision of a mentor, combined with a theoretical component relating to translation studies (20 ECTS credits).

EXCHANGES AND FELLOWSHIPS

Components 1, 4 and 5 will make use of exchange options between universities, institutes of higher professional education and cultural institutions. A bi-national (Flemish-Dutch) or international structure would increase these options. Five annual fellowships will be awarded to talented trainee translators, mostly foreign students of Dutch.

COSTS

Costs have been projected on the basis of costs currently incurred by Dutch universities (which in 2008 charge a tuition fee of €1,565). Annual revenue would thus be €39,125 (25 x €1,565). Annual expenditure would be:

1. teaching staff (5 languages x 0.3 FTE + 0.3 FTE overhead = 1.8 FTE)	€ 180,000
2. coordinator (0.3 FTE)	€ 24,000
3. secretariat (0.36 FTE)	€ 12,000
4. PR and run-up costs	€ 15,000
5. external lecturers (master class, 6 lectures, travel and accommodation)	€ 42,000
6. 5 fellowships for foreign students (5 x €7,500)	€ 37,500
7. minus tuition fee revenue	- € 39,125
Total costs of the Master's Programme	€ 271,375

Ultimately, part of the above costs will have to be defrayed by the institutions involved in the programme. Both the costs of the external lecturers and fellowships (5 and 6) and of preparation and development (2, 3 and 4) would have to be included in the budget and guaranteed for a number of years.

We recommend that a team of experts be charged with devising and setting up this new Master's Programme, which should be bi-national and of an inter-university nature.

Appendix 8

To the Committee of Ministers,

To the Ministers of Education and Culture of the Netherlands and Flanders,

Amsterdam/Brussels, May 2008

In 2006 the Dutch literary manifesto *De uitkijkpost van de literatuur* (The observatory of literature) stressed the importance of a flourishing culture of literary translation. The 2007 Ten-Point Programme of the Flemish Boekenoverleg called for a greater focus on the cultural and socioeconomic aspects of literary translation. As cultural ambassadors, literary translators are exceptionally well qualified to make cultural traditions accessible. Both the Netherlands and Flanders have a long established, highly-developed translation culture, thanks in part to the subsidies provided by our literary funds, which serve as an example to other European countries. The number of translations from and into Dutch continues to rise, but the profession finds itself under increasing pressure, in terms of both quality and quantity. Although the funds, the Dutch Language Union and the Expertise Centre for Literary Translation (ELV) have been working hard to preserve the knowledge and experience that have been amassed over the years, these efforts alone cannot ensure that connections with other cultures and literatures will be maintained. The pool of translators is ageing, and it is therefore necessary to create a system of lifelong learning, of which a degree programme in literary translation is a crucial component. In the section on literature in its 2007 policy memorandum *Innoveren, participeren!* (Innovate, participate!), the Dutch Council for Culture endorses the importance of a translation programme at university level and stresses the need for the support of the respective ministries of education and culture in developing such a programme. The Dutch Foundation for Literature (FvdL), the Foundation for the Production and Translation of Dutch Literature (NLPVF), the Flemish Literature Fund (VFL), the Dutch Language Union and the ELV recommend that the ministers:

Master's Programme in Literary Translation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Undertake, sometime in the near future, to establish a flexible Master's Programme in Literary Translation for translators from and into Dutch, preferably in the framework of a bi-national or multinational partnership. Start-up costs = €50,000. Over the course of the next four years, enable the funds and the ELV to further expand their system of lifelong learning for translators working from and into Dutch, in close collaboration with the new Master's Programme and the literary publishers by: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> instituting a system of scholarships for aspiring literary translators from Dutch, especially those from economically weaker countries, to optimise their education and training inside and outside the Dutch language area (five scholarships a year at €9,000 each, including enrolment costs and tuition) = €45,000 a year; enlarging the system of mentorships by doubling the current funding = €20,000 a year; intensifying the translation workshop programme, especially for translators from Turkey, the Arab world and the BRIC countries = €25,000 a year; increasing funding for the 'travelling programme', in which translation experts from the Netherlands and Flanders visit the Dutch departments of foreign colleges and universities = €25,000 a year; providing additional educational opportunities for Flemish translators (five special mentorships and five dual translations) = €30,000 a year. 	Travel grants for translation centres	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> institute a number of travel grants that will enable translators into Dutch to stay at European translation centres (25 x €250) = €6,250.
Scholarships for aspiring translators from Dutch	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> instituting a system of scholarships for aspiring literary translators from Dutch, especially those from economically weaker countries, to optimise their education and training inside and outside the Dutch language area (five scholarships a year at €9,000 each, including enrolment costs and tuition) = €45,000 a year; 	Increase the public visibility of translators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase the public visibility of literary translators, which can also contribute significantly to the image of the profession overall. To this end, financial scope will have to be created for co-financing of projects through the Schrijvers School Samenleving and the Flemish Reading Association = €30,000 a year.
Expand system of mentorships	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> enlarging the system of mentorships by doubling the current funding = €20,000 a year; 	Protect diversity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enable the literary funds to protect and, wherever possible, increase literary diversity: 'difficult' books or genres pose a direct risk for the publisher and demand a great deal of expertise and time on the part of the translator. Through a combination of translation and production subsidies these 'difficult' books (often classics of world literature) can reach a new audience without placing an undue burden on the translator. €100,000 a year would enable about ten such translations to be made.
Intensify translation workshops	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> intensifying the translation workshop programme, especially for translators from Turkey, the Arab world and the BRIC countries = €25,000 a year; 	Translating culturally significant non-fiction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enable the funds to do more to provide scholarships for the translation of culturally important works of non-fiction into Dutch. All over the world these translations play an essential part at the interface of art and knowledge. Because a great deal of non-literary non-fiction (e.g. cultural-historical texts) falls outside the mandate of the literary funds and is thus ineligible for subsidies, professional translators generally prefer to work on literary projects. Increasing scope for funding translations of non-literary fiction would greatly benefit the quality of such translations.
Intensify 'travelling programme'	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> increasing funding for the 'travelling programme', in which translation experts from the Netherlands and Flanders visit the Dutch departments of foreign colleges and universities = €25,000 a year; 	Separate status for literary translation in the European Culture Programme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Do more to highlight the importance of literary translation in a European context and insist that the written tradition and the European translation centres be given a special status in the next European Culture Programme for 2014-2021.
Extra support for Flemish translators	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> providing additional educational opportunities for Flemish translators (five special mentorships and five dual translations) = €30,000 a year. <p>The amounts given above are calculated on the basis of the current distribution formula 2/3 (Netherlands), 1/3 (Flanders).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase travel and research opportunities for translators from and into Dutch. Translators fulfil an important role as cultural mediators. Cultural mediation is always a two-way street, and when abroad, literary translators are excellently placed to act as ambassadors of their own cultures. We propose to: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> initiate a number of fellowships that will enable professional literary translators to conduct workshops at foreign universities and other educational institutions (3 x €10,000) = €30,000; 	Legal price agreements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Amend the Copyright Act so as to permit or even require price agreements between authors and publishers. This is crucial if self-employed translators are to have a viable future. <p>The amounts given above are calculated on the basis of the current distribution formula 2/3 (Netherlands), 1/3 (Flanders).</p>
Fellowships	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> initiate a number of fellowships that will enable professional literary translators to conduct workshops at foreign universities and other educational institutions (3 x €10,000) = €30,000; 		

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Colophon

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