

Around the World in English: The Production and Consumption  
of Translated Fiction in the UK between Cosmopolitanism and Orientalism

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## **Abstract**

This thesis analyzes discourses of identity construction in the production and consumption of translated fiction in the contemporary British book culture. Drawing from ethnographic methods, it investigates what middle class, engaged readers make out of the translated novels they read, particularly in the ways that these books have been produced and marketed to them. The study concludes that translated fiction illustrates the multilayered meaning structures regarding taste and identity in reading communities and in the publishing industry in contemporary Britain.

The theoretical framework of the thesis is based on sociological and anthropological studies on identity, intercultural communication and the consumption of art, alongside theories of reading and literary exchange from literary studies and translation studies. Data for the analysis on reading has been collected through participant observation/focus groups at over 30 book group meetings. Research methods also include interviews with individual readers and publishing industry professionals. Analysis of reading communities concentrates on responses to translated novels as texts that have undergone linguistic transference and as stories that portray other cultures. These responses are contextualized with the value orientations that arise from current trends of cultural consumption in the UK, such as monolingualism, cosmopolitanism and omnivorousness. The thesis also includes a case study on Turkish literature, exploring recent trends in literary production and the cultural role of literary translators.

The study reveals the complex inflections of taste and identity in the practices of the agents of print culture. The textual-linguistic dimensions of translated texts are often the subject of negative evaluations when readers do not recognize the agency of the literary translator as an artist. Moreover, the opportunity of cultural encounter enabled by the reading experience activates varying discourses of intercultural communication, depending on readers' cultural capital, their level of commitment to cosmopolitanism and the orientation of the book group's discussion. In the production and consumption of translated fiction, the tension that arises between the pleasure and distinction dimensions of literary products translates into dilemmas between exoticism and cosmopolitan egalitarianism.

Keywords: translated fiction, cultural consumption, intercultural communication, print culture

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## Foreword

According to Stuart Hall (1991, 1992) identity is intimately linked to translation, since it can only be conceived of in a relational context, which makes translation a key phenomenon of intercultural interaction as well as cultural self-reflexivity. For the philosopher Paul Ricoeur (2006), translation is an ethical paradigm representing understanding. Therefore, translation is relevant to many discussions on identity today. Moreover, translated literature sits at the intersections of cultural consumption and intercultural communication.

The starting point of this research is the fact that translated fiction accounts for only a sliver of annual book production today in Britain – estimates are between 2 and 3% (Wischenbart *et al* 2008: 13). The book market plays a central role in the cultural climate of any society, so books translated from other languages – doubly mediated narratives – are vested with layers of symbolic representations. The aim of this thesis is to investigate the meaning structures within which the production and consumption of translated fiction in contemporary Britain takes place.

I found the inspiration for this research project at a symposium at Boğaziçi University, Istanbul, on the translators and publishers of Turkish literature worldwide. As someone who grew up reading French, English and Russian classics in the Literature curriculum, and finding almost as many shelves of translated fiction as Turkish literature in bookshops, the fact that only 3% of books published in the USA and Britain are translations was intriguing for me. During the various panels at the symposium, I heard about European and North American publishers' approach to modern Turkish literature and their marketing strategies. Later, as I looked at the covers designed for translations from Turkish at the exhibition, they struck me as a case of what Stuart Hall describes as the "fascination with difference and 'Otherness'" (1992: 304), which is a result of the asymmetries of power concomitant with globalization.

Since I found the idea at a symposium on Turkish literature, my initial plan was to focus on the introduction and reception of Turkish fiction in contemporary Britain. This project would look at the perceptions of Turkish identity in British media and investigate the implications on the cultural activity of publishing translations. As I started to attend reading group meetings for my fieldwork, I realized that various foreign literatures and cultures were read and discussed in similar ways. In other words, it appeared that for many British

readers, Turkish literature was not much different from other Middle Eastern, or, for that matter European, South American and Asian literatures, in its potential to invoke exotic images and initiate imaginary literary journeys. What was at stake was the perceived “foreignness” of the fiction, both in its literary and cultural aspects, which led me to the conclusion that translated literature was almost produced, marketed and consumed as a “subgenre” in the British book market. Eventually I decided to analyze the production and consumption of translated literature in general and to discuss Turkish literature separately as a case study to illustrate the implications of perceived foreignness on production and consumption strategies.

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## 1 Introduction

This thesis looks at the ways in which translated fiction is being produced and consumed in Britain today. At the heart of the analysis is the web of meanings connecting the stages of a book's cycle – project management, marketing, sale and consumption. In discussing consumption patterns, my aim has been to locate readers' complex and sometimes contradictory views and use of translations within the book consumption culture of contemporary Britain. The research is interdisciplinary, feeding from sociology, literary studies, cultural studies and translation studies, the latter two being interdisciplinary fields themselves.<sup>1</sup> In terms of its subject and methodology, it could be located within cultural sociology, literary criticism and sociological translation studies alike. To my knowledge, there have not been comprehensive studies on translations in the UK from the point of cultural sociology or media/cultural studies. There have been numerous empirical studies on the position of translated literature in English-speaking countries in translation studies (e.g. Venuti 1998, 2008) but my aim here is to approach the topic from the production and consumption side and with ethnographic methods.

Michaela Wolf, the leading scholar in the sociology of translation, explains that research in this area has thus far focused on a) the cultural product that is the outcome of the translation process b) the agents involved in the translation process c) the translation process itself (Wolf 2006: 11, 2007a:13). Since the central agent in any translatorial action would be the translator; current research in Descriptive Translation Studies (including translation sociology) often focuses on translator behaviour (e.g. Simeoni 2007, Meylaerts 2008, Merlke 2008); however, the demands on the translator from the readers have been neglected. Consumers of translated fiction have not received primary attention; they have not been considered as one of the agents of translatorial action (Holz-Mänttari 1984) either. This piece of research could be considered more as an analysis of the cultural product than the agents or the process. The primary research here concentrates on the reader and the publisher among the agents.<sup>2</sup> The discussions on the processes regarding the

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<sup>1</sup> For a discussion on the links between translation studies and cultural studies, see Susan Bassnett's (1998: 123-140) article titled "The Translation Turn in Cultural Studies."

<sup>2</sup> The only section focusing on the professional practice of the translator is the discussion on Maureen Freely, who works between Turkish and English. See chapter 9 on Turkish literature in English translation in the UK.

consumption and production<sup>3</sup> of literature in translation in contemporary Britain serve to contextualize the product and its cultural significations.

After laying out the theoretical and empirical ground in the initial chapters, the organization of the thesis follows the life cycle of a book; from production to marketing and consumption. I tried to present the information and ideas here in a way that highlights the interwoven nature of these phenomena. Thus, in the chapter titled *Theorizing Books and Reading* (2), I outlined theories from various disciplines that concern the publishing and reading of translated novels and commented on their relevance in conceptualizing my subject of study. The empirical chapter on *Books and Reading in Contemporary Britain* (4) places reading in the cultural life of middle class Britons, discussing reading as a socially-situated activity closely associated with status, and cultural and political affiliations that manifest through the consumption of cultural products, such as cosmopolitanism and omnivorousness. The chapter titled *The Three Per Cent* (5) explains how translations do not fit with the value-orientations of publishers, who are keen observers of their target audience's dispositions. The position of translated literature in the education system and in book reviewing newspapers and magazines is also marginal, which reinforces the "rarity" and perceived inaccessibility of these books. These arguments then illustrate how production and reception feed into a loop and inform the way translation fiction is consumed – this is the topic of chapters 7 and 8. But before that, we turn our attention to the link between producers and consumers, that is, marketing, in chapter 6. Display arrangements and packaging – covers and blurbs – form the focus of this chapter, whereas brief analyses of book advertisements are scattered in other chapters. Marketing here is discussed as a meaning-making process, and a legitimizing strategy for translated novels, which are situated at the margins of the market for cultural products in the UK.

We then proceed to the consumption side, first looking at translation under the aspect of linguistic transference (chapter 7) and then under the aspect of broader intercultural communication (chapter 8). The former chapter, dedicated to readers' value judgements on the literary aspects of translated fiction, problematizes the aesthetic value of these books for readers. Fluency of

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<sup>3</sup> In literary studies and translation studies, the term "production" is used to refer to an author's or translator's textual production, in this thesis however, I've used it to refer to the publisher's activity of going through the stages of publishing a book.



the text and agency of the translator as an artist are key concepts here. The other, perhaps more apparent dimension of cultural encounter is elaborated in the latter chapter, which concentrates on readers' responses to cultural Otherness: the previous chapter on linguistic transference explored readers' construction of the Self through affiliations related to the consumption of cultural products, whereas the next one is concerned with the construction of the Other.

Finally, the case study on Turkish literature provides an extended example within a specific context of how literary and cultural perceptions intersect in the reception of translated literature. This chapter starts with a historical overview that contextualizes the trajectories of individual books translated from this language. Turkey, in a liminal position between the West and the East, produces fertile configurations of perceptions between "Us" and "Them" in Europe. In other words, a literature that is on the Eastern boundary of European literatures, with a fiction tradition that has borrowed heavily from European literatures, and a cultural neighbour that has represented Islam for Europe for centuries, is subject to value judgements that draw from the various cultural repertoires. The situation of Turkish literature certainly involves synchronic overlaps with many other literatures, not only Middle Eastern but all over the world really. A case study was necessary in this thesis, in order to make sure that I do not construct a generic account but consider general as well as particular conditions of production.



## **2 Theorizing Books and Reading: An Interdisciplinary Approach**

### **2.1 Introduction**

Books and reading are at the crossroads of several disciplines in social sciences and humanities. Yet, although reading occupies a central place in modern society, there are not many systematic analyses concentrating on this activity, as Tzvetan Todorov remarked in 1980: “Nothing is more commonplace than the reading experience, and yet nothing is more unknown. Reading is such a matter of course that, at first glance, it seems there is nothing to say about it” (1980: 67).

Actually, narratives are crucial for social life as all socialized humans are storytellers and all are listeners of stories (Gergen and Gergen 1988, Maines 1993). Drawing from literature in anthropology and sociology, Steinmetz (1992) explains how narrative has been a fundamental category of human consciousness, instrumental in the construction of reality and the formation of social groups. Given the key importance of narratives in social life, it is surprising that the stories society tells (or listens to) are not a major object of research in the social sciences. Several researchers have pointed out the role of narratives in social formation, from small groups, like people affiliated with an institution (Gabriel 1991) to social classes (Steinmetz 1992) and ultimately to nations (Bell 2003). Calling for a sociology of narratives, David Maines (1993) maintains that narratives exist at various levels of scale and that narrative occasions are potential sites of conflict (*ibid*, 21-22). Points of convergence and divergence at individual and collective levels reveal key insights on identity and “collective consciousness” (Durkheim 1997 [1933]: 31-68). On the other hand, self-narratives are not independent from collective ones (Maines 1993: 24) as they feed from each other, and collective reading is one way of reinforcing collective memory (Bell 2003). Reading groups, where individual memories and narratives are externalized (*ibid*, 65) rely on the collective processing of these narratives to maintain a group identity – even if individual interpretations clash, because the disagreements will still be based on shared knowledge. Therefore how socially situated individuals within a society processes home-grown narratives, and how they (re)narrate the collective narrative of other societies are crucial access points for understanding social formation. Duncan Bell uses the term “mythscape” to refer to a “temporally and spatially extended discursive realm” (2003:63), where collective memory is negotiated. On a national scale,

[t]he notion of shared ideas, values and interpretations concerning either real events (slavery, the First World War, the Holocaust) or narratives of ancient origins or prelapsarian “golden ages” (the epic Finnish Kalevala, or King Arthur and the Round Table) locates the collectivity inside a shared history, a history constantly reaffirmed and reproduced through resonant rituals and symbols. This memory acts as a powerful cohesive force, binding the disparate members of a nation together: it demarcates the boundary between Them and Us, delineating the national self from the foreign, alien Other (Bell 2003: 69-70).

Besides consolidating collective identities, books have also contributed to wide-reaching social movements in the past centuries. As we will discuss in detail later, the novel as a literary form has been associated with the emergence of the Western bourgeois subject and has reached its current form with Modernity (Lukács 1962, 1971, Goldmann 1975, Griswold 1981: 753, Habermas 1989). Fiction reading has been linked to middle class lifestyles, and recent research identifies reading as a social practice (Griswold *et al* 2005, Wright 2006, Fuller and Procter 2009). In light of these, the production and consumption of contemporary translated novels can provide useful pointers to the identity constructions of the bourgeois subject in a post-Fordist literary marketplace. Moreover, an investigation into fiction crossing linguistic and cultural borders can inform the co-construction of subjectivities by the publishing industry and its consumers as well. Such considerations require an engagement with multiple areas of research, in order to attend to the complexities. In this chapter, I will briefly discuss contributions from cultural sociology, literary studies, media studies and translation studies and see where this research stands in relation to these.

Sociology of literature is an underrepresented area within the sociology of art/culture; theories of the uses of art in everyday life focus on painting and music, with only a few exceptions. Bourdieu’s *The Field of Cultural Production* (2009 [1993]) and *Rules of Art* (1996 [1992]) mainly deal with literary production, and his treatise *Distinction* (1984 [1983]) includes data on book reading, and most of his ideas can effectively be applied to the consumption of books. Although other theoretical models can be also applied to literature as a form of art, relatively few researchers in sociology have addressed the particular implications of reading on images of the Self and Other. There might be two reasons behind this. Books, as objects of study, have occupied a grey area

between media and art. Histories of modern print culture and reading often initially address periodical consumption (e.g. Altick 1957, Habermas 1989, Briggs and Burke 2005, Lyons 2010), and the uses of books today are still conceptualized in the way that newspapers and magazines are – the field of publishing studies is an off-shoot from media studies. The second reason results from the fact that the study of reading fictional books has been taken up by literary studies, especially reception aesthetics and reader-response theory (e.g. Jauss 1970, Fish 1970, Iser 1980, Radway 1984), and sociology of literature seems to have been mostly assigned the remit of this discipline. Theorists who have preoccupied themselves with the “sociology of literature” mostly deal with the conditions of literary production. However, as we will see below, a new strand of reader-response criticism has crossed disciplinary borders and analyzed book reading behaviour from a cultural studies perspective.

Finally, translated books are practically non-existent in the discussions on the sociological aspects of literature. Contributions on the conditions of production, marketing and consumption of literature from the disciplines of sociology, literary studies, media studies and others only mention translations in passing, if at all<sup>4</sup>. There has not been an in-depth study to contextualize the phenomenon of translation from these disciplines, neither do studies in this area cite or borrow ideas from theorists working within translation studies. Translation studies certainly provides key insights into the circulation of texts, but as a discipline, it places the translator as the agent and their translated work as the product at the centre of academic attention. Researchers in this area started to focus on intercultural communication through analyses of extra-textual phenomena relatively recently<sup>5</sup>.

A few clarifications are in order before we proceed to assess theories of literary production and consumption. The terms “culture,” “cultural” and “intercultural” will crop up frequently throughout the thesis. Unpacking the complexity of meanings of the term culture is perhaps a necessary starting point. Those who have written on the term (see Eagleton 1978, Williams 1978) agree that the referents of the term are interrelated. Ulf Hannerz (1992), in his book *Cultural Complexity*, provides a framework that encompasses the range.

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<sup>4</sup> See section on Intercultural Literary Exchange for a discussion of Pierre Bourdieu’s (1999) study on translation and Pascale Casanova’s (2004) work.

<sup>5</sup> See, for example, Sturge (2006), Cronin (2006) and St-Pierre and Kar (2007).

For Hannerz, culture, in its simplest sense, is meaning that is located in minds and in varying public forms:

On the one hand, culture resides in a set of public meaningful norms, which can most often be seen or heard, or are somewhat less frequently known through touch, smell, or taste, if not through some combination of senses. On the other hand, these overt forms are only rendered meaningful because human minds contain the instruments for their interpretation. The cultural flow thus consists of the externalizations of meaning which individuals produce through arrangements of overt forms, and the interpretations which individuals make of such displays – those of others as well as their own (1992: 3-4).

What Hannerz (*ibid*, 17) refers to as culture is therefore the production and interpretation of these meanings. Consuming translated literature as intercultural communication, refers to the encounters between the systems of meaning pertaining to two (or more) societies; meanings that are commonly produced and interpreted by the members. Or in an argument on publishers engaging in cultural translation in their selection, packaging and promotion of translated titles, it is this sense of the word that is intended. There is, furthermore, a restricted use of the term culture, which extends from what Hannerz calls the externalization of meaning through aesthetic forms. Dubbed capital-C culture, this use of the term stands for “the production of works of special intellectual or aesthetic merit, usually by identifiable individuals, as well as what goes by such names as popular or mass culture” (1992: 83-84).

A range of terms then apply to both the narrower and the wider uses of the concept. The idea of “cultural flow,” which is at the heart of Hannerz’s study, refers to the dissemination of meanings in society, but also the dissemination of aesthetic externalizations, which has more relevance for our study. And then there are the “cultural intermediaries” that both Bourdieu (1984) and Hannerz (1992) allude to. Bourdieu sums up the occupation of these people as “involving presentation and representation” (1984: 359), whereas Hannerz (1992: 84) identifies artists, teachers, broadcasters etc. both referring to the act of mediating between producers and consumers of culture. When we conceptualize products of popular culture – such as novels – as externalizations of culture in the narrower sense, this cultural brokering between producers in one society and consumers in another – such as publishing and marketing

translated novels – also comes across as mediating between cultures in the first, broader sense.

This piece of research follows a constructivist ontology, which is based on the idea that reality is constructed by people who address it (Sarantakos 2004: 37). According to Sarantakos, constructing reality means “making accounts of the world around us and gaining impressions on culturally defined and historically situated interpretations and personal experiences” (*ibid*). In the context of print culture, publishing industry professionals and consumers construct and reconstruct reality through the process of interpretation. They reflectively assess the impressions they get from the world around them, and integrate these in a context (*ibid*, 39) to construct their own identities – Self – and the identities of those they represent, or read about – Others. As you will see, the words Self and Other are consistently capitalized in the thesis. I use these terms as sociological identifications. As Stuart Hall’s (1991, 1992) and Homi Bhabha’s (2004 [1994]) discussions on identity suggest, these are two dichotomous ideas which often presuppose each other. Therefore, the use of the capitalized Self and Other should be understood in the context of intercultural communication.

## **2.2 Literary Production**

A discussion on literary production will let us make nuanced assessments on the conditions of production of translated novels. This section and the following will deal with literary production and the novel as a literary form. Looking at the production of literature from different perspectives, theorists of literary studies and cultural sociology seem to agree that different values are attributed to works of literature, in view of their producers and consumers.

British literary critics Matthew Arnold (1971 [1869]), F.R. Leavis (1930) and T. S. Eliot (1973 [1948]) marked a clear distinction between high literature and popular literature, idealizing the former. They saw literature as part of a capital-C culture that needed to be preserved. In their conception, “Culture” stood for both the high quality products of intellectual activities, and for the state of having the qualities and tastes to judge and appreciate them. F. R. Leavis (1930) held that Culture belonged to the élite, whereas T.S. Eliot (1973 [1948]):

21-50) maintained a pluralist view of class and believed in Culture to be shared by the élite and the less educated alike.

Q.D. Leavis's *Fiction and the Reading Public* (1990 [1932]) was one of the early studies with a holistic perspective to literary production, incorporating producers, "middlemen" and consumers. Her research has an empirical emphasis as she examines excerpts from books, periodicals, authors' correspondence, and answers to the questionnaire she circulated among 60 authors of popular fiction. The focus of her study is popular fiction, and her aim is to explain the factors contributing to the rise of bestsellers. Here Leavis does not hide her value judgements on certain examples of this type of literary production; however, she contextualizes production and consumption-related issues with changing social forces. She touches upon the utilitarian functions of fiction reading, the implications of taste, and discusses the different types of value attached to books from across the highbrow-lowbrow scale:

A suggestion that some novels are intrinsically more worth reading than the rest calls forth the reaction against an implied "highbrow" attitude, yet a similar assertion about poetry will not be questioned, for though poetry is no longer read it has a traditional sanction. The feeling that fiction is only meant to entertain (in the sense in which the popular novelist above uses "entertainment") explains such a common complaint as: "Virginia Woolf? Why, you can't read her unless your mind is absolutely fresh!" (1990: 51).

This quote indicates that Leavis is critical of "highbrow" constructions; nevertheless, she does retain clear-cut symbolic distinctions. On questions of value, unlike those theorists who envisage binaristic value-based categories, Raymond Williams offers a more progressive outlook. For him, "common Culture" means not only what is shared in consumption, but one that is also made together (Eagleton 1978: 15-25). Williams (1961) critically assesses the conception of value regarding literature as reading became widespread in 1950s Britain:

On the one hand there is the fear that, as the circle of readers extends, standards will decline and literature will be threatened by "blotterature". Related to this, but involving other prejudices, has been an essentially political fear that, if the common man reads, both quality and order (sometimes the one standing for the other) will be threatened (1961: 179).



Williams here problematizes the symbolic boundaries of high and low literature, highlighting the anxieties of cultural conservatives. Coming from the literary paradigm, F. R. Leavis, Q. D. Leavis, Matthew Arnold and Raymond Williams have focused more on the literary product – and to a certain extent, the consumer – than the producer. The implication of the cultural conservative view on publishing has been a focus on the publisher’s responsibility to select products of “high literature,” to assess and review them critically, with the aim of making them available to the public as authentically as possible (Abel 1996). In the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, books have been the primary medium for the circulation of literature and the book trade has been seen as “the gatekeeper of ideas” and “the guardian and the constant creator of written culture” (Coser *et al.* 1982). The publication of the classics is invested with great value according to this line of research. Richard Abel emphasizes that the publishers which translated the world canon “performed a noteworthy cultural service in maintaining and refurbishing the vessels containing the concepts and principles of the Western cultural traditions” by producing and distributing them to the public in low prices (Abel 1996: 285). He believes that what publishers do is actually to add “intellectual and cultural value” to texts. Therefore, producers of high literature gain symbolic power through their professional activities. Bourdieu (2009 [1993]) explains how the cultural dimension of the publishing business relates to the financial aspect, as we will see in a moment.

Arnold, F. R. Leavis, Q. D. Leavis, Williams and Eliot then, concentrate on aesthetic hierarchy in literary production, maintaining more or less well-defined distinctions between high and low literature. What they contribute to the present study is the notion that literary production is value-driven. In chapter 5, we will see how the conception of value moved away from an exclusivist perspective to incorporate cosmopolitanism and eclecticism in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Therefore, their binaristic outlook comes across as the weak point of their framework, a feature shared by the sociological studies of Peter Mann (1982) and Ken Worpole (1984) on book production and consumption, which will be reviewed below.

Parallel to the work of literary theorists, Pierre Bourdieu’s framework on literary production addresses symbolic distinctions. In *The Field of Cultural Production* (2009 [1993]) he defines the literary field as a field of force and struggles:

The space of *literary or artistic position-takings*, i.e. the structured set of the manifestations of the social agents involved in the field – literary or artistic works, of course, but also political acts or pronouncements, manifestos or polemics, etc. – is inseparable from the *space of literary or artistic positions* defined by possession of a determinate quantity of specific capital (recognition) and, at the same time, by occupation of a determinate position in the structure of the distribution of this specific capital. This literary or artistic field is a *field of forces* but it is also a *field of struggles* tending to transform or conserve this field of forces (2009: 30, emphasis in the original).

As Bourdieu emphasizes here, the cultural field is a dynamic one involving tensions and anxieties. It is also marked by polarization: restricted production, whereby producers seek to gain symbolic power through works of art that are perceived to be highbrow, is distinctly different from large-scale production. This artistic world operates in a fashion similar to the logic of the pre-capitalist economy in that the aim is not to earn money, as producers “have an interest in disinterestedness” (*ibid*, 40). In large-scale production, however; the production revolves around “popular” forms and the gains might be economic (cf. Featherstone 1991). For highbrow producers, the way to earn symbolic power is to render the products legitimate for the audience, through what Bourdieu calls “charismatic legitimation.” Agents in the field of literature thus have active interests, for which they make economic and psychological investments. This produces the *illusio*, or the feel for the game (2009: 159). Bourdieu (1996 [1992]: 333-334) discusses the *illusio* possessed by literary texts, a concept subsequently taken up by translation researcher Jean-Marc Gouanvic (2005) in the context of translated literature.

Bourdieu conceives of the field of literary production as largely independent from the demands of politics and economics, therefore autonomous. On the other hand, he recognizes that a work of literature only operates in a social and institutional framework (cf. Frow 1995:145). As to the reviewing of works of literature, Bourdieu links the position-takings of reviewers to the position of the publication they’re writing for and the target readership of the publication, as there is a relationship of homology between the reviewer’s and the consumers’ position (1993: 87-97). His notion of position-takings will be relevant in discussing how book cover designs and reviews reflect the preferences of the institutions that produce them. Bourdieu’s idea of the disavowal of interest is not dissimilar to the symbolic value orientation of T.S.

Eliot and F.R. Leavis in their discussion on the production of high culture. What emerges from his model on literary production is that publishing is a distinguishing cultural activity which allows practitioners to demonstrate their taste and thus gain status. Along with the framework of the British theorists reviewed above, Bourdieu's<sup>6</sup> theory on the field of literary production, including the concepts of symbolic power and disinterestedness, will be used to analyze the discourse of small and/or independent publishers and imprints which publish translations in the UK.

Also in line with the work of literary critics reviewed above, Bourdieu's model is based on binarisms in its conceptualization of value. In order to overcome the binaristic determinism, John Frow (1995) applies Arjun Appadurai's (1986: 4) concept of "regime of value" to the whole reading culture. He defines a regime of value as "a semiotic institution generating evaluative regularities under certain conditions of use, and in which particular empirical audiences or communities may be more or less fully imbricated" (Frow 1995: 144). This idea is comparable to Tony Bennett's concept of "reading formation" which sees texts and readers not as separable elements with fixed properties but as "variable functions within a discursively ordered set of relations" (1985: 7). This perspective is parallel to what I analyze with the term "value orientations" of the British book market in chapter 5 and is also relevant in my analysis of British readers' evaluative judgements on the literary aspects of translated fiction in chapter 7. Bourdieu's argument regarding (restricted) producers of literature seeking symbolic profit through exclusive taste is challenged by the current trends of cosmopolitanism and eclecticism in British publishers' list building preferences, especially in the independent sector. We will address such issues in chapter 5.

Other than a brief essay on translation (Bourdieu 1999), focusing on social sciences texts, Bourdieu's framework scarcely takes account of what happens when cultural products produced in one social context are reproduced in order to be consumed in another. In this essay, Bourdieu concludes that it is the loss of context that leads to misunderstandings in translation across languages and national traditions (*ibid*) but the link between the selection process and de-contextualization remain unexplored (see Meylaerts 2005: 279-

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<sup>6</sup> The potentials and limitations of Bourdieu's analysis have been laid out by scholars in the area of translation studies, see section on Intercultural Literary Exchange.

281). On the other hand, several translation theorists have applied Bourdieu's field theory to translation phenomena (Simeoni 1998, Gouanvic 2001, 2005, Meylaerts 2005, Wolf 2007b); some of their arguments will be outlined below.

Literary production, then, involves the production of symbolic value. The symbolic value attached to the products of the literary industry also has implications for their consumption. The functions and target audiences of books are often prescribed by the practices of producers. As symbolic distinctions are of paramount importance for literary production, publishers seek products that are conducive to symbolic differentiations, especially in a book market driven by sales and market oriented production. This has a bearing for the publishing – and consumption – of translated literature, as we will see in chapter 5.

### **2.3 The Novel as a Literary Form**

This study on the consumption of literature focuses on the novel, which is not only the most widely read and the most translated literary form but also the most highly associated with the modern condition, as already mentioned. Many scholars in literary studies have written on the relationship between society and the novel; the consensus among the most influential seems to be that this literary form is an organic product and a reflection of modern individualist society.

In his 1957 study *The Rise of The Novel: Studies in Defoe, Richardson and Fielding*, Ian Watt links the emergence of the novel in the 18<sup>th</sup> century to the growth of the reading public. Realism, attempting to portray all the varieties of human experience, emerges as the defining characteristic of the novel, setting it apart from previous forms of fiction, specifically the romance (1963 [1957]: 9-35). Watt refers to the philosophy of Descartes to argue that the pursuit of truth is part and parcel of a totally individual experience, which has replaced collective tradition from the Renaissance onwards. The novel best accommodates this individual experience.

The novel has also been discussed in conjunction with realism and individualism by Georg Lukács and Lucien Goldmann, the two leading figures of the Marxist approach. According to Lukács (1962), the aim of representational literature is “totality;” the novel provides loose and extensive totality (whereas drama offers intensive totality):

Society is the principal subject of the novel, that is, man's social life in its ceaseless interaction with surrounding nature, which forms the basis of social activity, and with the different social institutions or customs which mediate the relations between individuals in social life (1962: 162-163).

In his foundational work *Theory of the Novel* (1971), Lukács argues that fictional reality feeds from the reality of the outside world: the novel deals with the “problematic” individual’s journey towards himself, “his adventure of interiority;” and it mirrors the natural beginning and end of life (*ibid*, 70-93). Similarly, Goldmann defines the novel as “the transposition on the literary plane of everyday life in the individualistic society created by market production” (1975: 7). For him, the representation of authentic society values in the world of fiction is comparable to the translation of use values into market values in a market society. He holds that liberal individualism in Western Europe contributed to the development of an individualistic form of literary expression.

Therefore, one way in which the novel mirrors social reality is that it represents the individualist search for truth (Watt 1957), and this individualism has been linked to bourgeois identity in the literary criticism of Lukács and Goldmann (cf. Griswold 1981). The contribution of Marxist theorists to the conceptualization of the novel as a literary form has thus been the class thesis. Goldmann has been criticized for envisioning a direct link between a producer’s – i.e. an author’s – class and their production – i.e. their novels. Lukács on the other hand, argued against simple determination by derivation from class position, but for a dialectical relationship between class and the individual (see Gartman 1991: 441).

Literary sociologist Wendy Griswold takes the representational relationship between the novel and social reality one step further. In her 1981 article “American Character and the American Novel,” she assesses the possibility of literary characteristics arising from the historical-social conditions of the USA rendering the nation’s fiction production intrinsically “American.” She employs the method of classifying a sample of 130 novels according to 26 criteria, ranging from “protagonist’s marital status at the beginning” to “protagonist ending up in middle class” (see table on 1981: 757). My reservation with this quantitative method is that it might not take into account the multi-dimensional nature of the novel as a cultural product and that it mostly ignores textual-linguistic features like style, word choice, variations of register, sentence

length, syntax etc. On the other hand, one perspective to be gained from this article of Griswold is her methodological approach, which calls for an integrated model in literary sociology:

Some scholars have been so adept at exploring the influence of cultural markets or literary elites that they have paid relatively little attention to the actual content of the literary or cultural works [...]. Others have taken content extremely seriously but have wanted to attribute it to a single cause in the social world, be it characteristics of literary elites, structures of class consciousness, or changes in popular ideology [...]. These imbalances have produced excellent iconoclastic studies necessary to counter the emphasis on the text and nothing but the text that used to prevail in traditional literary analysis. Now the time has come for sociologists to consolidate their gains by doing literary research that both takes content into account and considers a variety of causal influences from the social world (1981: 740-41).

Her orientation provides an ideal balance between those theoretical frameworks that focus on the literary product at the expense of the producers and the consumers on the one hand – e.g. that of Watt (1963 [1957]), Lukács (1962, 1971) and Goldmann (1975) – and Bourdieu's (1984, 1993, 1996) model on the other hand, which seems to neglect the internal dimensions of books.

The above discussions demonstrate that the novel is the literary form that is the most closely related with society and middle class identity. The novel's engagement with social reality gives rise to its function of establishing a connection between the reader and the social world. Reading novels therefore extends the individual's experience, helps externalize the internal world, as we will explore later. The novel's ability to reflect social reality faithfully also facilitates the functions of diversion and escapism, attributed to the activity of reading novels. These constitute the pragmatic uses of novels, which will be elaborated on later.

As we saw in the previous section, novels are invested with symbolic value during their production, which confers the producers with distinctive status. Bourdieu (1984) confirms that the novel is amenable for the symbolic consumption of the middle class. The novel then, as a literary form and a cultural product, is an ideal tool to study how modern middle class consumers think about their Selves and imagine Others in their cultural consumption. Furthermore, as mentioned before, it is the most widely consumed and circulated literary form; often the basis of films, which are perhaps the most

influential cultural products. The novel's widespread consumption gives readers an opportunity to relate their own externalizations of the inner world to those of Others, increasing its utilitarian benefits and consolidating the social aspect of reading, as we will discuss in a section below.

## 2.4 The Practical Uses of Books

Once presented to the consumption of readers, books fulfil a variety of competing or overlapping pragmatic purposes, which have been addressed by theorists from several areas of study. In this section, we will review theories from sociology, literary studies and media studies that investigate the practical uses of books. This will set the scene for the consumption of translated fiction by middle class, engaged British readers, as explored in chapters 7 and 8.

As indicated earlier, the function of reading material is partly determined by its conditions of production. Early empirical analyses on the book trade have related the uses of books in everyday life to their intended purposes at production. In his 1982 study, sociologist Peter Mann marks a distinction between the informative and recreational purposes of books (1982: 8-9). He believes, for example, that “‘popular fiction’ is much more ‘time-filling’ in its function and is rarely considered as having any creative or intellectual element” (*ibid*, 17). Moreover, he explains that literary fiction is more likely to leave a “residue” on the reader, whereas popular fiction will be ephemeral (*ibid*, 158). In a similar vein, he holds that different books are consumed by different sectors of society. He recognizes that books are markers of status in Britain and that book purchases and library borrowing are prescribed by social class and gender.<sup>7</sup>

Ken Worpole distinguishes between “high” and “low” literature, describing popular genres as convention-bound and formulaic (1984: 1-14). He argues that

One of the major structural divides between “serious” and “popular” literature is often between the hardback and the paperback. It is still the case that many newspapers, journals and magazines will only review hardback books. This is true both in Britain and America. The only “serious” books are those which appear in hard covers first, whether they are fiction or non-fiction, and are destined for a “serious” readership via the

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<sup>7</sup> While Mann's (1982) and Worpole's (1984) studies have been preoccupied more with the quantity of reading in the UK, there have also been analyses on the history of reading that have elaborated on the quality (see Gilmont 1999, Wittmann 1999, Lyons 2010). Moreover, other empirical studies are concerned with quantitative aspects of reading in the US (see Robinson 1980, Damon-Moore and Kaestle 1991).

universities, the libraries or fairly rich buyers in the West End of London; all other publishing is, by inference, populist or simply trivial (1984: 8, cf. Clark 2001).

Useful as they might be in laying out the differentiated nature of reading material, these studies are deterministic. They assume that books fit nicely into categories and thus have predictable and well-defined target audiences. We have seen a blurring of these distinctions as more books occupy spaces in between genres and target audiences. As Worpole himself points out, genre fiction is often produced by otherwise “serious” writers for extra income and under pseudonyms (1984: 20). Not only the producers but also the consumers of these books on either side of the spectrum overlap; it is quite common for people to indulge in light reading on holiday to match their mood, or reversely save the demanding reads for when they have more time and fewer things to worry about in the summer. Moreover, there are crossover titles, such as *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night Time* (2003)<sup>8</sup> and of course, the *Harry Potter* series and allegorical books that can be read on two levels, such as the *Animal Farm* (1945). Claire Squires explains how the crossover category was effectively created by the publishing industry in Britain (2007: 147-75).

Literary theorist Janice Radway’s (1991 [1984]) study on romance reading offers a framework that allows more agency for the consumer while still taking genre conventions into account. In her seminal work *Reading the Romance: Women, Patriarchy and Popular Literature*, Radway focuses on the effect and function of romance reading for the wives and mothers who have been confined to domestic roles: romantic escape and instruction. She describes their romance books as “compensatory fiction” because the reading activity fulfils certain psychological needs; “provides vicarious emotional nurturance by prompting identification between the reader and a fictional heroine whose identity as a woman is always confirmed by the romantic and sexual attentions of an ideal male” (1991: 113). These books also “fill a woman’s mental world with the varied details of stimulated travel and permits her to converse imaginatively with adults from a broad spectrum of social space” (*ibid*, 113).<sup>9</sup> Radway contextualizes the genre of romance within the

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<sup>8</sup> First editions of primary sources have been given unless later editions (or translations) are specifically referred to. Primary sources are listed in the Bibliography.

<sup>9</sup> The work of sociologist Elizabeth Long (2003) on women’s book clubs in the US is similar to Radway’s work in its methodology. Long contextualizes her analysis within the history of



institutional matrix of the book industry in the USA and discusses female reading strategies within the backdrop of patriarchy and middle class aspirations. She is really the first literary studies scholar to answer the question of what people do with the books they read, as she took into account the emotional and intellectual aspects of reading while recognizing the implications of narrative consumption on identity. However, like the work of other literary studies theorists, her study does not pay attention to questions of intercultural communication or linguistic transference. So we will turn later to theories of translation to conceptualize these elements of print culture.

The emotional aspect of reading has been emphasized in the uses and gratifications model of media consumption, which also foregrounds the information function of books. This model is principally concerned with the effect of newspapers, magazines, TV, radio and books on consumers (see McQuail 1969: 36-57). Douglas Waples, Bernard Berelson and Franklyn Bradshaw (1940) discuss readers' "predispositions" – background and needs, similar to Bourdieu's (1984) concept of the *habitus* – as a determining factor in their reading experience. According to Dennis McQuail, the mass media have four functions: diversion (including escape from the constraints of routine), personal relationships (including substitute companionship), personal identity (including personal reference, reality exploration and value reinforcement) and surveillance (International Publishing Corporation 1975: 3).<sup>10</sup> Among these, the diversion and personal identity functions are the most relevant for the consumption of translated literature. Diversion involves stimulating the imagination, providing emotional release and encouraging the viewers (or listeners) to distort reality in a way that "favours the assumed aspirations, wishes and dreams of the audience by over-representing higher-status occupations and life-styles and more excitingly glamorous surroundings than are normally found" (*ibid*, 4). As such, this model displays parallelisms with Radway's (1984) conceptualization of romance reading. The function that has been identified as "personal identity" is about interaction with media content, "to reflect upon or give added salience to something important in the viewer's or

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women's reading in the West and focuses on the social aspects of the reading activity along with its functions of identity formation.

<sup>10</sup> Similarly, psychologists Oatley and Gholamain (1997) identified five emotional impacts of reading; identification, sympathy, autobiographical memory, reaction to the aesthetic object and response to the discourse level.

reader's own life or situation (*ibid*, 6). An example would be an individual reading about social issues in a novel and forming or consolidating a personal position towards these. Considering the fact that most novels written in the realist tradition offer a fictional microcosm of society, this could be seen as a useful tool to think about novel reading as construction of imagined worlds.

Janice Radway's (1984) way of looking at romance consumption and the uses and gratifications model for books sound like the application of sociologist Colin Campbell's (2005 [1987]) idea of autonomous imaginative hedonist consumption to reading. Campbell attributes the rise of the novel in 18<sup>th</sup> century England, among other things, to the modern habit of day-dreaming (*ibid*, 89ff). Since then, novels have been an aid to the construction of fantasies, "as-if" worlds for the readers to inhabit, which might persist after the first reading of the book. Novels are amenable to such constructions at two levels. The first would be entering the plot to imagine oneself in place of the characters; however, the second, and the more relevant for Campbell, would be fantasizing about the Self when the act of selection and consumption takes place with awareness about taste. These will be discussed in a later section in this chapter and then elaborated on in chapters 7 and 8 on the consumption of translated fiction.

The uses and gratifications model has been helpful in understanding the many dimensions of book consumption, however, it cannot account for the implications of the fictional nature of novels and therefore the relationship between fictional and social reality remains unexplored. The idea that middle class subjectivities in Britain construct the world in their imagination through reading, therefore, has to draw from theories of sociology and literary studies.

Even if the utilitarian benefits of an individualizing practice like reading are prominent, both the sociological studies by Mann (1982) and Worpole (1984); Radway's (1984) study on romance reading, and the uses and gratifications model imply that reading has a social dimension, which means that it can be effectively used as a tool to reinforce one's identity, negotiate it vis-à-vis other collective identifications and determine one's position towards social issues. On a basic level, reading serves as a bridge between the individual and the society, helps bring the inner Self out into the public sphere, because as we talk about what we've read, we draw from the various and objectified expressions of subjectivity. Reading material could facilitate an externalization of the inner both by providing a topic of conversation and a

template for reflecting on the Self. This externalization then leads to other contextual identifications such as status, which will be elaborated on later.

Further to the idea of relating the inner Self to social reality, philosopher Gregory Currie (1998) explores the possibility of utilizing literature for life-planning and moral change. Realism of character in fiction enables an emphatic understanding of the plot and characters, an experience that parallels our responses to life. This supports the arguments of literary historians on the transformative effect of reading when books were made widely available in the 19<sup>th</sup> century (see Gilmont 1999, Wittmann 1999, Lyons 2010). Currie's research looks at the consumption of fiction from a pragmatic perspective: "Drugs aid the body's natural defences against disease, clothes keep us warmer than skin alone could, and fictions aid our natural capacity to plan our lives" (1998: 171).

The view that reading is a social activity has been emphasized more in recent studies of reading in literary sociology and literary studies. These two strands of empirical research seem to converge in their methodology and their findings, providing crucial ideas for this thesis. In their article "Reading and the Reading Class in the Twenty-First Century," Griswold, McDonell and Wright (2005) explain that there have been two approaches in societal literacy research to analyze the way people read today. The first one is the practice approach, which holds that we read all the time in our daily life, not only in the formal instances of sitting down with a book. The second approach, called the collective thesis, argues that reading is a group activity, and even individual reading is the result of collective memberships (Griswold *et al* 2005: 132). This second thesis is at the heart of many of my arguments on contemporary reading in Britain. Chapter 4 on the culture of books and reading and chapter 8 on constructions of the Other in particular are based on the idea of reading as a "class" – both social and cultural – activity.

A group of literary studies scholars from Britain, contributing to the journal *Language and Literature* have conducted empirical studies on reading as socially situated activity. This line of research draws both from reader-response and reception theory, and on sociological models on cultural consumption, most notably, that of Pierre Bourdieu. It emerges from their findings that readers use their agency to construct their own identity as well as the characters they read about through their discussions of books (see Hall 2009, Allington and Swan 2009).

Danielle Fuller (2008) investigates the social aspects of mass reading events: nationwide reading groups inspired by TV programmes like Oprah's Book Club in the USA and Richard & Judy's Book Club in the UK. Fuller concludes that these events produce – or reproduce – ideological discourses. Fuller and Procter (2009) have looked at one mass reading event, the *Small Island* Read, which took place in Liverpool, Bristol, and Glasgow and Hull in 2007. The two researchers found that book discussions “can generate a meeting place for intergenerational understanding, or construct an ideological common ground by articulating and reflecting upon previously internalised values and attitudes about ‘race,’ class and gender” (2009: 29). Participation in such an event in multicultural Britain is associated with progressive political action and an avoidance of exclusionary practices.

Reading as a socially situated activity anticipates a view of audiences as collective identities, as indicated in the study by Griswold and others (2005). Prime examples of the power of reading on collective identifications from the social sciences are Benedict Anderson's *Imagined Communities* (1983) and Jürgen Habermas's *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* (1989). In his book, Anderson (1983) demonstrates how printed material in the vernacular languages of Europe helped shape the idea of nationhood, whereas Habermas (1989) traces the formation and decline of the critical public space in Europe. Books and other media also have the power to unite transnational audiences, as recent work by Ayşe Çağlar (2002) illustrates. Çağlar looks at social identification in the Turkish community in Germany as influenced by media consumption. She concludes that Turkish Germans are attached to multiple identities, which are fuelled by exposure to Turkish programmes on radio and TV – produced both in Germany and in Turkey. Similarly, through a discussion on the global viewers of Indian movies, Adrian Athique (2008) offers a “cultural field” model for locating media communities as sites of social practice.

To sum up, reading has pragmatic benefits, including the provision of information and entertainment. It also performs psychological functions, such as diversion and self-affirmation. These aspects render reading an individualizing practice, whereby readers build inner worlds. Although the act of reading itself is silent and secluded, it has a strong social dimension. Moreover, reading is an act of cultural consumption that allows consumers to demonstrate agency in

exploiting the various potentials that this activity offers. Readers' perceptions of the intellectual and aesthetic dimensions of reading, and the complex relationship between the two, will be explored in chapter 4. The entertainment function is germane for an analysis on the consumption of translated literature. As we will see in chapters 7 and 8, readers derive pleasure from the exotic experience provided by translated novels, while making use of their informative content about other societies. Moreover, readers who give primacy to the diversion and escapism function of reading prefer language to remain on a referential level and find the visibility of translation intrusive.

## **2.5 Taste, Social Positioning and Distinction**

Pleasure is a prominent aspect of reading, as we saw in the discussions above, and deriving pleasure from certain cultural products and avoiding others is associated with personal preferences and social positioning. These concepts have been explored extensively by sociologists; we will now review major theories of cultural consumption.

According to Bourdieu, taste is an acquired disposition to “differentiate and appreciate,” which functions below the level of consciousness (1984:466). It is at once “the faculty of perceiving flavours” and “the capacity to discern aesthetic values” (*ibid*, 474). Bourdieu argues that individuals' tastes in cultural consumption are determined by their *habitus*, which is a system of durable, transposable dispositions, which act as cognitive and motivating structures; generating thoughts, perceptions, expressions and actions (1990: 53-55). These dispositions are learned, or acquired, through socialization:

The *habitus*, a product of history, produces individual and collective practices, – more history – in accordance with the schemes generated by history. It ensures the active presence of past experiences, which, deposited in each organism in the form of schemes of perception, thought and action, tend to guarantee the “correctness” of practices and their constancy over time, more reliably than all formal rules and explicit norms (*ibid*, 54).

Bourdieu attributes *habitus* both to individuals and more or less homogeneous groups, most notably class segments. A group *habitus* forms out of collective history and homologous individual *habitudes*, and harmonizes the practice of individuals (*ibid*, 58-59). Social positioning plays an important role in

the formation of the *habitus*. According to Bourdieu (1984), symbolic distinctions between class segments legitimate class structure. Bourdieu's often-quoted statement describes the relationship between taste and class as:

Taste classifies, and it classifies the classifier. Social subjects, classified by their classifications, distinguish themselves by the distinctions they make; between the beautiful and the ugly, the distinguished and the vulgar, in which their position in the objective classification is expressed or betrayed (1984, 6).

In Bourdieu's framework, consumption of symbolic goods characterizes the middle class; not only in terms of the frequency of consumption, but also in terms of the meanings attached to it: the bourgeoisie expects from art and literature a reinforcement of self-assurance (1984: 293). The idea of *habitus* as the manifestation of social structure has been challenged from various points of view. David Gartman (1991) asks, are differences in practices the reproduction of the social system or are there opportunities for revolutionary patterns of consumption?

Bourdieu explains variation in culture and life-style by class position, yet he defines class in part by the distribution of cultural capital. Since the latter is acquired through socialization in the family or school, the explanation degenerates into simplistic cultural transmission – classes have different life-styles because they learn different life-styles at home or in school (Gartman 1991: 436, see also 438-445).

Frow (1995) also argues that Bourdieu sets class in a fixed relation to cultural forms; according to Frow, in Bourdieu's model, culture appears both as a negotiation process on class position and as expression thereof. Bernard Lahire (2003, 2004), trying to move away from a deterministic view of collective *habitus*, stresses that individuals may draw on a wide variety of dispositions, which might be of different stability and strength (2003: 339), and which would be activated under specific conditions (*ibid*, 342). Moreover, because dispositions are acquired through experience, they would be subject to variations according to the place and time in which individuals socialize. If class distinctions manifest themselves in the classifying of cultural products, Bourdieu's conceptualization of class culture may enable a view of culture as

practice (see Bourdieu 1984: 106, 480).<sup>11</sup> <sup>12</sup> Moreover, it emerges from Bourdieu's work that cultural class is produced and reproduced by social class.

The criticism concerning the deterministic nature of *habitus* might be offset if we think of the *habitus* as similar to what anthropologist Ulf Hannerz (1992) refers to with the term perspective, which incorporates the dimension of variability:

The perspective is the device which organizes the attention and interpretation which an individual gives to externally carried meaning, as well as his production of such meaning, whether deliberate or spontaneous. As I understand it, the perspective exists in a tension zone between culture and social structure, insofar as there is no assured congruency between situational experiences and demands on the one hand and available, ready-made meanings on the other (1992: 65).

What Hannerz calls "ready-made meanings" form the basis of the structuring force of class ethos that Bourdieu ascribes to members of a social class, whereas "situational experiences" would represent individual variability. Perspectives influence personal meaning systems and might involve a build-up of sensibilities (Hannerz: 1992, 67). In the consumption of books, this idea of the perspective comes across as a useful tool to account for readers' individual images of the Self and the Other and their other voluntary affiliations as well as their tastes.

Another line of criticism to Bourdieu's work concerns the nature of cultural products, which are seen as intrinsically aesthetic and only analyzed in terms of their symbolic benefits in his model. Bourdieu is primarily interested in literature as a status-distinction tool, ignoring the reading experience, the contents of the books and the other dimensions of book consumption, for example enjoyment or self-improvement (see Griswold 1981, Frow 1995: 5-6). For the purposes of this research, such theoretical tools have been supplied by media studies and literary studies, as discussed in the section on the pragmatic uses of books. Bourdieu's account does not take into consideration the factors

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<sup>11</sup> The concept of *habitus* has been the topic of a debate on reflexivity in sociology, but the possibility of using it as a concept that incorporates self-reflexivity has been explored (see Adams 2006).

<sup>12</sup> Another line of criticism to Bourdieu is that his model on cultural consumption comes across as a "national" framework; actually, several critics (Giddens 1986, Lamont 1992, Frow 1995, Erickson 1996, Lane 2000) argue that Bourdieu's theory is essentially tied to the social, political and economic context of 1960s and 70s France – a criticism that Bourdieu himself recognizes and partly responds to in the preface to the English translation of *Distinction* (1984).

of ethnic background, age and gender either, the latter two of which are a strong determinant in reading habits (see Griswold *et al* 2005).

The implications of Bourdieu's idea of *habitus* on book culture is that the reading experience of an individual will be shaped by their *habitus*. This is not a totally new idea in research on reading. What is probably the first comprehensive study of literary phenomenon, examining consumption in relation to production, came from the French critic and sociologist Robert Escarpit (1971 [1958])<sup>13</sup>. In his book *The Sociology of Literature*, he covers several of the ideas that Bourdieu (2009 [1993]) would later analyze – convergence of intention between producer and consumer, the *Weltanschauung*, or position-takings of authors; the identities, or *habitudes* of readers, literary taste and distinction etc. As well as recognizing the social aspect of reading, Escarpit identifies what Bourdieu would call the symbolic value attached to books: “We can cite the ‘ostentatious’ acquisition of a book that one ‘just must have’ as a sign of wealth, culture or good taste” (1971 [1958]: 89). Later, literary theorist Robert Alter also argued that readers’ interpretation of texts are determined “by more than a conscious intellectual project, owing something in varying degrees to his or her personal history, psychology, sensibility, education, belief system, and even mood” (1989: 217). Here it is evident that Alter contextualizes the interpretation process within what Bourdieu calls an individual’s system of dispositions.

Recent empirical studies on literary sociology associate taste in book consumption to a multitude of personal and social factors, often signalling overlaps with Bourdieu’s (1984) model. Gerbert Kraaykamp and Katinka Dijkstra’s (1999) research on reading in the Netherlands highlights the importance of cultural competence. According to Florencia Torche’s (2007) study on book reading in Chile, book consumption is related to income and social class as well as educational attainment. Book consumption, guided by tastes, is often a source of distinction. Bennett, Savage, Silva, Warde, Gayo-Cal and Wright (2008) argue that compared to music, visual art, TV and cinema, book reading is a relatively rare form of cultural engagement in Britain. Jane Zavisca’s (2005) study on reading in post-Soviet Russia shows that whereas highbrow literature was promoted at the expense of popular genres in Soviet

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<sup>13</sup> Actually, as early as 1923 the German literary scholar Levin Ludwig Schücking outlined a *Sociology of Literary Taste* (published in English in 1945) but his methodology leaves certain aspects of reading underexplored.



literary culture, contemporary middle class Russians display a taste for a broad range of reading material. Although her research foregrounds symbolic distinctions in book consumption, it departs from Bourdieu's (1984) model in highlighting a recent trend of wider aesthetic engagement. Consequently, an update of Bourdieu's theory of distinction in the light of current value orientations is in order.

Traditionally, products of high culture have conferred distinctive status upon middle class consumers, in line with Bourdieu's (1984) framework; however, in the past several decades, omnivorousness and cosmopolitanism have emerged as distinctive practices in the West. Omnivorousness is defined as cultural engagement from a wider aesthetic spectrum, reflecting tolerance as a value. It is the antithesis of snobbery, which is marked by symbolic exclusivity in taste. Omnivorous dispositions embrace what is different, eclectic, "trendy" and therefore desirable. It was Peterson (1992) who coined the term, when he conceptualized the integration of popular forms into the cultural repertoire of upper middle class consumers. Peterson and Kern (1996) identify several factors that have contributed to this shift in cultural orientation. First of all, cultural élitism is no longer exclusive, as it was in late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries; highbrow cultural forms are now accessible to wider segments of the society. In addition, through globalization forces like migration and the mass media, consumers have been more exposed to a variety of aesthetic expressions and positions. A change in value systems, exemplified by the contempt for everything to do with racism after the Second World War, also promoted openness as a positive attribute. Meanwhile, a fragmentation of discourses in the aesthetic and moral atmosphere of art institutions led to the breaking up of the élitist mode. According to John Frow, this change in the regime of value has dissipated feelings of illegitimacy or cultural inferiority among consumers of popular culture (1995: 25). Although reading played a lesser role in the development of the omnivore trend (Wright 2006: 125), there are clear signs that cultural consumers in Britain embrace such tendencies in their reading habits, as we will see in chapter 4. In their study on cultural consumption in Britain, Warde, Wright and Gayo-Cal (2007) identify three dimensions in omnivorousness: taste, knowledge and participation. They found that this pattern of consumption is highest among the educated, white, middle-aged individuals in Britain. Omnivorousness represents openness to

alternatives, but it does not imply indifference to distinctions; since it is embraced by higher status individuals, it does have status implications. This trend in cultural consumption comes across as a new means of establishing cultural distinction, rather than the dissolution thereof. Therefore, achievement of breadth seems to have replaced a narrowly defined notion of high culture that stands out in Bourdieu's (1984) theory of cultural consumption.

Omnivorousness is closely linked to cosmopolitanism. Fridman and Ollivier (2004) see these as common features of postmodern societies, where eclecticism and an "ostentatious" openness to diversity are valorized. Bryson's (1996) study on consumption in the USA indicates that taste in art is associated to positions on racism and democratic liberalism. Consumers exhibit correlating dispositions on political tolerance and art tolerance. Cosmopolitanism is characterized by an openness to international cultural experiences. Ulf Hannerz defines cosmopolitanism as

an orientation, a willingness to engage with the Other. It entails an intellectual and aesthetic openness toward divergent cultural experiences, a search for contrasts rather than uniformity. To become more acquainted with more cultures is to turn into an *aficiando*, to view them as artworks. At the same time, however, cosmopolitanism can be a matter of competence, and competence of both a generalized and a more specialized kind. There is the aspect of a state of readiness, a personal ability to make one's way into other cultures, through listening, looking, intuiting, and reflecting (1996: 103).

As Hannerz points out, cosmopolitanism is expressed in cultural capital. The analysis in chapter 4 will show how engaged readers in Britain combine cosmopolitanism and omnivorousness in their practice. The implications of these two aesthetic attitudes for the consumption of translated fiction are significant. They emerge as cultural affinities of engaged, middle class British readers who may find pleasure and distinction in reading translated fiction. Chapter 7 will expand on how readers make translated literature part of their cultural consumption. Nevertheless, as we will see, the commitment to egalitarianism and a preference for eclecticism are often compromised by reader's textual-linguistic intolerance. Furthermore, the cosmopolitan eagerness to engage with the Other might reveal stereotyping discourses, which clash with the idea of egalitarianism, as will be analyzed in chapter 8.

Book consumption, in conclusion, is inextricably linked to taste and distinction, which eventually contribute to constructions of the Self. Matters of taste are related to a consumer's social and cultural positioning, which prescribes the functions of reading that a reader would prioritize. Cultural capital does play a role, but as noted earlier, agency is an important aspect of a readers' engagement with reading material, therefore, it is ultimately the reader who activates their relevant type of cultural capital in the interpretation process. We will see an illustration of this in chapter 8.

Taste and distinction determine the quality and the quantity of the practice of consumption, as the former is the source of pleasure whereas the latter creates status. The omnivorous and cosmopolitan patterns of consumption facilitate the pleasure and status factors of reading, as well as being instrumental in identity constructions. Chapter 4 will reveal how the pragmatic uses of books and their taste implications are related to each other in complex ways. Taste and distinction in the context of consuming translated novels will be explored in chapter 7.

## **2.6 The Meaning-Making Process**

Alongside the aesthetic dimension, reading also involves an intellectual effort. The relationship between these two is often thought to be negative (see Mann 1982) but more often than not, they complement each other. The intellectual effort in book reading is directed at making meaning out of the reading material, which relies on an interaction between the text and the reader. This section will introduce theories of reading from the reader-response theory branch of literary studies, and review the work of other scholars from the social sciences on interpretation.

Hans Robert Jauss and Wolfgang Iser are the leading figures of reader-response theory. Jauss (1970) argues that a literary text does not exist in an informational vacuum, but elicits in its historically and socially determined audience a specific type of reception, signalled by textual strategies. Concentrating on literary reception, he holds that the accepted standards of a text's genre determine most of its reception. A familiarity with literary conventions creates expectations about how examples of a particular literary form will start, proceed and end, and these expectations cover both the aesthetic properties of literary works and their content. "Horizon of expectation"

is the term he uses to refer to these. This idea of readers' expectations has been taken up by other literary theorists (Iser 1980: 89) and sociologists (Griswold 1987, Kraaykamp and Dijkstra 1999) alike. Wendy Griswold holds that what brings about the creation of meaning is the interaction of a book's potential resources with readers' presuppositions. She states that "Cultural power is itself a product of interaction, for a text has strength as well as meaning only when it is read. Therefore [...] cultural power is recognized, or sensed, by those recipients familiar with the genre or form a work represents" (1987:1106). A familiarity with genres is also an indicator of cultural competence, therefore, literary reception combines the intellectual dimension of reading with its status implications. Discussions on readers' expectations resonate with the way that readers in book club meetings refer to other texts, establish links between fiction and their own lives and what they perceive of as social reality.

Iser (1980) describes interpretation as a "dynamic happening," which takes place in a third space between the text and the reader, at the meeting point of the author's intended meaning and the reader's understanding of it. He has a schematic model for reading and interpretation: "The reader's role is prestructured by three basic components: the different perspectives represented in the text, the vantage point from which he joins them together, and the meeting place where they converge" (1980: 36). The text reflects social and literary norms and conventions in its "repertoire," which is a source for selections among the components of the text (cf. Griswold 1981). Like Jauss, Iser discusses the reader's expectations, which arise either from the social norms and literary references in the text, or the norms of the reading culture (1980: 89). According to Iser, a literary text has "indeterminacies," or "blanks," which stimulate the reader. These encourage "imaging" on the part of the reader; as we will see in chapter 8, such imaging facilitates the reconstruction of the historical or social reality of a work of fiction. The interaction between the text and the reader has a psychological dimension as well as the artistic and intellectual ones. For Norman Holland (1975 [1969]), literature has the effect of relief through a process of disturbance and solution (cf. Campbell 2005 [1987]: 88-95).

The text is an important source for meaning-making, nevertheless, as mentioned before, interpretation often takes place in a social context. Stanley

Fish (1980) has coined the term interpretive communities, and although he has in mind strategies of production rather than consumption, this is a useful way of thinking about reading groups. According to Fish, due to the flexible nature of interpretive strategies, it is possible for two different readers to interpret the same text in similar ways, as it is possible for the same reader to interpret two different texts differently (cf. Alter 1989: 206-38). Also addressing the social dimension of meaning-making, sociologist Marjorie DeVault is interested in the interpretation of fictional accounts as “learned, socially organized activity” (1990: 891). Her discussion of the reception *The Late Bourgeois World* (1966) by the South African novelist Nadine Gordimer by several literary critics incorporates her own take of the novel from a self-reflexive point of view. The contribution of reader-response theory to this thesis has been the interaction between the text and the reader, which is supplemented by readers’ expectations regarding narration and content. Chapters 5 and 6 will deal with the formation of readers’ expectations through exposure to paratexts. The social aspect of the meaning-making process has also been a significant source of inspiration in my study.

The social and cultural implications of reading are emphasized in a recent study by the anthropologist Adam Reed (2011). Drawing from Alfred Gell (1998), who claims that appreciation of a work of art relies on recognition of technical skills required to produce such art, Reed discusses many aspects of readers’ engagement with the identity and the novels of the author from the perspective of agency. He describes readers’ experience with the book as being “enraptured,” or “possessed,” by the author. According to Reed’s study, reading may also be an act of remembrance, taking readers to past periods of English history. In chapter 7, I will make use of Gell’s (1998) ideas on the consumption of art to examine readers’ perception of texts translated from other languages, often those that they cannot understand. Reed’s conceptualization of the author’s agency is germane to my discussion of readers’ understanding of the art of the literary translator.

To sum up, during reading, part of the meaning is supplied by the text, whereas the reader creates part of it through an accumulation of literary and cultural knowledge. The theorists of literary studies and social sciences referred to above also agree that meaning-making process feeds from the social context. Chapter 8 will illustrate how, in the encounter with real and imagined

Others, the interpretation is the outcome of the interaction between the text and the readers and also among the readers. In book group meetings, the discussion is always a source of information and ideas, and the position-takings of the individual readers, which culminate in a group *habitus*, determine the orientation of the discussion.

## 2.7 Intercultural Literary Exchange

Contributions from cultural sociology, literary studies and media studies offer valuable tools to theorize books and reading; yet, as mentioned before, they fall short of accounting for intercultural literary exchange. We will, in this section, review a major study within literary studies – that of Pascale Casanova (2004) and then turn to theories of translation studies, from the cultural turn in this discipline.<sup>14</sup> The circulation of texts among literary spaces takes place in a complex and multi-dimensional process that involves many agents, including authors, publishers, translators, other literary institutions and readers. This is a central aspect of this research as literary exchange has implications for both producers and consumers. A disciple of Pierre Bourdieu, Pascale Casanova addresses literary exchange in a holistic outlook, bringing together Bourdieu's ideas and systems approach from translation studies. In her 2004 study on international literature, taking inspiration from Bourdieu's concept of cultural capital, she uses the term literary capital, which may be roughly defined as the accumulation of literary texts that a language or culture has produced (Casanova 2004: 9-21):

[T]hese material objects include texts – collected, catalogued, and declared national history and property. Age is one of the chief aspects of literary capital: the older the literature, the more substantial a country's patrimony, the more numerous the canonical texts that constitute its literary pantheon in the form of "national classics" (*ibid*, 14).

In what appears as a formalistic outlook, Casanova argues that national literatures have relative amounts of literary capital and the ones with more capital tend to dominate those with less (2004: 17-20).<sup>15</sup> For this reason, the world literary space is hierarchical; moreover, language and literature are

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<sup>14</sup> See Snell-Hornby (2006) for an overview of the turns of translation studies.

<sup>15</sup> The work of Heilbron and Sapiro (Heilbron and Sapiro 2007, Heilbron 2008) displays parallels with that of Casanova. The former approach literary exchange with a quantitative methodology though.

subject to the relations of political power (*ibid*, 39, cf. Even-Zohar 1978, 1979). The relationships between languages depend on their relative degree of literariness while the direction and amount of the flow of translated texts are determined by the difference between the amounts of literary capitals that the respective languages have (*ibid*, 134). Casanova's sources of inspiration in sociology (i.e. Bourdieu) and translation studies (i.e. Even-Zohar) enable her to move away from theorizations of "the author" and "the text" to analyses on "literary space" from a cultural studies perspective. The holistic framework of Casanova has been helpful in thinking about how title selection, marketing and promotion in the British book trade are often influenced by perceptions of source cultures and literatures.

Casanova (2004) is one of the few researchers in literary studies to address literary exchange, whereas many others concentrate on texts written in readers' first language.<sup>16</sup> Even Casanova's model concentrates on the conditions of circulation, not touching upon linguistic transference or its effects on readers. Therefore, I've drawn from translation studies and returned to sociology to analyze textual-linguistic features as a source of aesthetic value judgements.

Translation studies, without doubt, is the field that has devoted the most attention to questions of cultural and linguistic transfer, which are often inseparable from each other and are thus best examined in a holistic framework. The first step towards a holistic sociology of translation was taken by researchers within the Descriptive Translation Studies programme: Itamar Even-Zohar and Gideon Toury. Even-Zohar's (1990 [1978], 1979) centre-periphery model has been used extensively by translation researchers. Even-Zohar conceives of culture as a polysystem, which he describes as "a multiple system, a system of various systems which intersect with each other and partly overlap, using concurrently different options, yet functioning as one structured whole, whose members are interdependent" (1990 [1978]: 11). Polysystems are therefore hierarchical and dynamic spaces; composed of literary, political, economic, religious and other (poly)systems, which are divided into further

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<sup>16</sup> There are, of course, many empirical studies of literary reception, see for example, Musawi 1981, Caracciolo 1988, O'Neill 2005 and Chan 2010. These often take into account the aspect of cultural difference, but do not problematize linguistic transference. The work of Absillis (2009) is also worth noting, as it explores aesthetic responses to linguistic difference, discussing the exotic appeal of Flemish linguistic features in the context of modern Dutch publishing.

systems, and which are in constant interaction. According to Even-Zohar, the dynamics of the polysystem are manifest through the various stages of translation:

The very principles of selecting the works to be translated are determined by the situation governing the (home) polysystem” (“the texts are chosen according to their compatibility with the new approaches and the supposedly innovatory role they may assume within the target literature”) (Even-Zohar 1990 [1978]: 200).

The literary system tends to be isomorphic with the social system, as its hierarchies intersect with the hierarchies of the social world, which means that how a work of literature will be received in a socio-cultural context will depend on how its source culture is viewed. The “normal” position assumed by translated literature in a national polysystem is the peripheral one and, the more established and rigid the home polysystem is – for example Anglophone polysystems – the stronger centrifugal powers it will impose on translated literature (1978: 203, cf. Casanova 2004: 14). Even-Zohar’s framework for intercultural communication has resonances with those of anthropologists Arjun Appadurai (1990) and Ulf Hannerz (1992:26-36), who also attend to the asymmetries in the international exchange of culture. However, both Appadurai and Hannerz highlight the fragmented and unpredictable nature of intercultural relationships. Appadurai (1990) holds that in a globalized cultural economy, centre-periphery relationships are not as uni-directional as they used to be<sup>17</sup>. Polysystem theory has been criticized for being formulaic, operating with binary oppositions and not allowing for agency.<sup>18</sup> Although due emphasis is made on the interactions between various groups and institutions involved in the translation process at large, Polysystem theory offers little insight into the nature of these social relationships (Wolf 2006: 19). A determinist model like that of Even-Zohar would only be partly useful in conceptualizing this sort of research, since it does not account for multiplicities in matters of reception, treats texts as closed boxes, and largely ignores the readers. Along with Casanova’s (2004) study, I have made use of the systems approach in thinking about questions of representation, including priorities in title selection, reviews, event-based

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<sup>17</sup> In this article, Appadurai is remarkably quiet about the exchange of literary texts, although he mentions “narratives” within what he defines as *mediascapes* (1990: 299).

<sup>18</sup> See Theo Hermans’s (1999) book *Translation in Systems* for an overview of Polysystem theory and its criticisms.



promotion, retailer displays and book covers. This model has been particularly useful in helping me shape the line of thought in my case study on Turkish literature (see chapter 9). In translation studies, Even-Zohar's ideas have been complemented with Gideon Toury's (1995) work, which are aimed at explaining decision making at the various stages of translational activity: title selection, translation, marketing etc.

Gideon Toury's (1978, 1995) model of norms assumes that translation is a matter of transactions between social agents that have an interest in those transactions. The textual norms that he put forward are intended to explain the translator's decision making; however, extratextual norms are about the strategies of other agents such as publishers, reviewers and readers, bringing this model close to Bruno Latour's Action Network Theory. Among the types of norms Toury (1978: 53-57, 1995: 56-61) proposed, preliminary norms concern the context in which the translation process takes place in the target culture. In this research project, preliminary norms would concern the various dimensions of production and consumption, like marketing literature and literary appreciation in the UK. Theo Hermans (1996, 1997) further developed the notion of norms, taking into consideration the broader, social function and putting power and ideology in the picture.

Informed by the developments in Descriptive Translation Studies, André Lefevere's approach (1998) incorporates Bourdieu's cultural capital into the production of translated texts. He states that the circulation of cultural capital through translation is conditioned by the need of the target audience, the patron or the initiator of the translation and the relative prestige of the source and target cultures (1998:44). Lefevere (*ibid*, 76-89) also discusses the "textual" and "conceptual" grids in which translated texts are produced in a target literary system. Like the theoretical tools offered by Even-Zohar and Toury, Lefevere's ideas have informed my analysis on the conditions of production (and promotion) of translated fiction in the UK.

What these models have in common is the idea that the way literary texts circulate in target literary spaces is determined by the interaction between the agents in this literary space. In effect, sociology of translation is principally concerned with the agents in the translation process, who these act in tune with the structures in the cultural level (Wolf 2007a:4). This field of translation studies comes close to providing a holistic framework for an empirical study on

translation; nevertheless, it does not pay enough attention to the reader. Status, pleasure, consumption and imagination are essential notions for discussing reception at the level of the individual lay reader, because the translated novels under study here are not merely texts, but also cultural products produced under the specific circumstances of British culture industry. As a result, these books help readers imagine their Selves not only in conjunction with an imagined Other, but also through the consumption of art.

If intercultural literary exchange involves many agents, the literary translator is the key player who influences the nature of interaction between other agents and is in turn motivated by these. In conceptualizing translator decision-making behaviour, the past decade saw the influence of Pierre Bourdieu's theory. One of the earliest attempts to integrate Bourdieu's work into translation theory is Daniel Simeoni's article "The Pivotal Status of the Translator's *Habitus*" (1998), where he considers translators as social agents acting in line with their *habitus* in the target literary culture and brings together Even-Zohar's Polysystem theory with field theory, pointing out parallelisms between norms and *habitus*. Gouanvic (2001) and Wolf (2007b) highlight the limitations of Bourdieu's model on the literary field as applied to translation. Gouanvic points out that Bourdieu's model submits translations to the same objective logic as the indigenous texts of the target culture (Gouanvic 2001: 160). According to Michaela Wolf (2007b), Bourdieu's concept of the literary field is not entirely applicable to literary translation. She discusses structural differences between the two areas and defines the latter as a space of mediation, which is understood to have both linguistic and cultural dimensions. She highlights the temporary nature of professional relationships and the constant flux of hierarchies within the mediation space (*ibid*, 109-112). Another difference between the fields of literature and literary translation is that the latter is less organized and more heteronomous (Simeoni 1998:19). Moreover, agents codified as "authors" in the literary field enjoy far more prestige than literary translators (Wolf 2007b). Wolf enhances the theorization of the field of literary translation by borrowing Homi Bhabha's (1994) notion of third space, as it suggests the state of being in-between and cultural interaction. My fieldwork in the UK book industry has demonstrated that far from displaying a homology with the field of indigenous production, the field of translated fiction in the UK is characterized by distinctive practices – both in respect to production and

consumption. In effect, one of the findings of this research is that translated fiction is governed by different norms in the stages of production and consumption.

In a later paper, Gouanvic (2005) refines the Bourdieusian approach by critically evaluating the concepts of *habitus* and *illusio* in the context of translated literature:

On a global level, the object of research in translation studies ultimately becomes the analysis of the differential relationship between the *habitus* of translation agents (including publishers, critics, etc.) who have taken a position in a given target field in a given epoch, and the determinant factors of the target field as the site of reception of the translation. Additionally, of course, the object of translation research is a differential analysis of source and target texts as exhibitors of pertinent traits studied in the *habitus* of agents and in the fields in question (2005: 148).

Here he holds that translation strategies are defined by the *habitus* of the specific literary field (target culture), and the literary translator's ultimate aim is *illusio*. Gouanvic's ideas on the *habitus* of the translator will be brought up in the case study on Turkish-English translator Maureen Freely's professional profile in chapter 9.

Theories of translation, then, have contributed to the present study by addressing mediation, which is at the heart of the cosmopolitan thesis, as applied to the production and consumption of translated fiction in the UK – discussed in chapters 4, 5 and 8. Translation studies has also brought the intermediary agent of translator to the fore, who is a central figure in the process of literary production and whose practice has bearings on the consumption of translated fiction.

## **2.8 Towards a Holistic Model for the Study of Books and Reading**

Several theories reviewed thus far have emphasized the role of interaction between the various agents of the book trade. One aspect that has not received enough emphasis is the role of other intermediate agents, between production and consumption, such as retailers, who not only contribute to the process from the producer to the consumer but also relay the dispositions of the consumer back to the producer – all the way to the author, in fact – to structure

demand. In order to place these agents in the broader picture, we will make use of holistic models of print culture from history and literary theory.

Book historian Robert Darnton (1982) outlined the stages of a book's life cycle in his model called "the communications circuit." He put forward this conceptual scheme as a methodological tool principally for the study of antique books as physical objects. However, his case study on Voltaire's *Questions sur l'Encyclopédie* illustrates the social, economic, political and intellectual conditions that influence each stage.

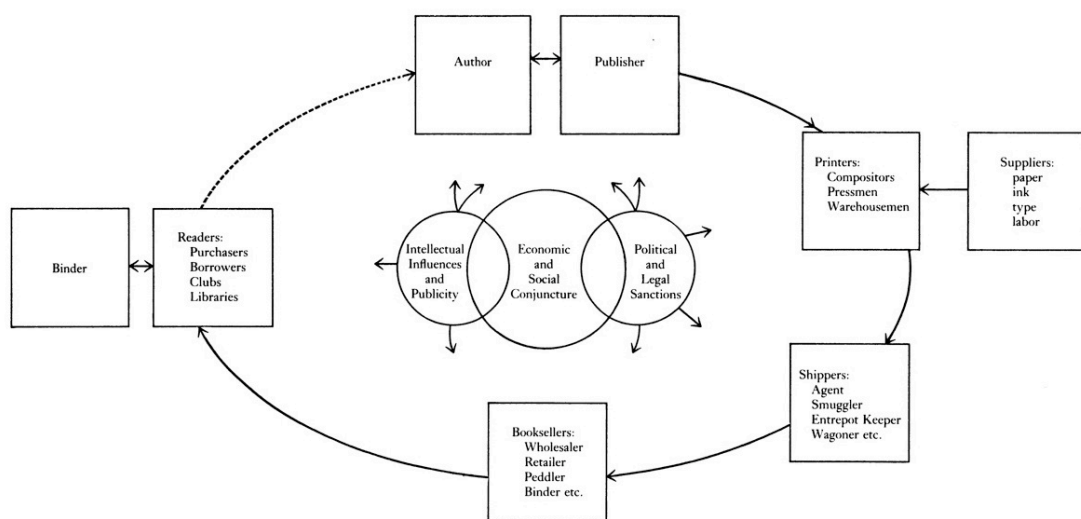


Fig. 2.1. Darnton's communications circuit (1982: 68)

The main actors in this cycle are author, publisher, printer, shipper, bookseller and reader. This framework shares the holistic perspective of the conceptual scheme Don McKenzie (1999 [1986]) envisioned for the research area he calls "bibliography and the sociology of texts: the composition, formal design, and transmission of texts by writers, printers, and publishers, their distribution through different communities by wholesalers, retailers, and teachers; their collection and classification by librarians; their meaning for, and – I must add – their creative regeneration by, readers" (1999 [1986]: 12). McKenzie here emphasizes the importance of human and institutional interactions in the model. Adams and Barker (1993) updated Darnton's original model by focusing on the book itself in individual stages instead of the agents involved. Their model includes publishing, manufacturing, distribution, reception

and survival. Perhaps because these models were conceptualized by researchers within an Anglophone tradition, translation is missing from both.

These models, together with Bourdieu's (1984, 1993) framework on the production and consumption of literature and to a certain extent, that of Gideon Toury (1995), display parallelisms with Actor Network Theory (ANT), put forward by Bruno Latour (Latour and Woolgar 1986 [1979], Latour 1987, 2005), Michel Callon and John Law (Callon *et al* 1986). According to this framework, the social life at large operates through the collective intentionality of human and non-human agents involved. In their book *Laboratory Life*, Bruno Latour and Steven Woolgar (1997 [1986]) examine the relationships between the agents involved in the production of scientific facts. Focusing on the day-to-day professional activities of scientists, the authors analyze how the various actors collaborate, going through tensions and rivalries at times, to carry out research projects. Therefore, if we apply this idea to the study of books, the agents in McKenzie's, Darnton's and Adams and Barker's model can be seen as mediators in ANT. These models are actually social networks rather than actor-networks since they do not include any non-human actors whereas Latour (1997) is careful to make a distinction between a social network and an actor-network. They could be considered actor-networks if they included the texts (source texts and target texts) with their contents and other inner dimensions like narration, style etc. ANT can be especially useful in conceptualizing agency in the production and consumption of books. Furthermore, it places more emphasis on processes than products; in that respect; an approach inspired by ANT might attend to the indeterminacies of a Bourdieusian model that concentrates on the symbolic nature of cultural products and the predetermined relationships between the agents in the field of production at the expense of the process of production. On the other hand, ANT has limitations when applied to the literary translation industry since it is overtly materialistic. It might be argued to emphasize agency while failing to account for structural factors, such as the implications of – social and cultural – class (Buzelin 2005:201), the constraints faced by underprivileged agents – translators – operating in a field of power struggles (*ibid*), and what Bourdieu describes as the position-takings of institutions (*ibid*, 214). The shortcoming of ANT and the other holistic models is that they appear to be formalistic and do not offer much in theorizing the specific relationships between the agents in historically and socially determined

contexts. Therefore, theories of cultural sociology, literary studies, media studies and translation studies have been more productive for studying the multiple dimensions of print culture in contemporary Britain.

## **2.9 Conclusion**

The fact that book culture can be approached from so many areas of study shows the true interdisciplinary nature of this subject. In effect, much of the recent analytical literature on books in sociology, media studies, literary studies and translation studies has been the outcome of cross-fertilization between disciplines. Throughout the thesis, relevant theories from various disciplines will be reintroduced to analyze empirical observations. To conclude, sociological studies contributed with discussions on distinction through cultural consumption, which will help us in thinking about reading for identity and reality construction. In literary studies, the emphasis shifts from outer, or contextual aspects of the novel, such as position in the aesthetic spectrum, symbolic power invested in the author and their work to inner, or textual dimensions which will enable us to consider plot, setting, atmosphere and style. Translation studies, as we will see in chapter 7 on aesthetic judgements on the textual-linguistic aspects of novels, will add to this picture the visibility of the translator. As we saw in theoretical evaluations in the media studies and literary studies sections, these two areas of research provide valuable conceptual tools to account for private dimensions of reading – the uses and gratifications model and reader-response theory. On the other hand, models on omnivorousness and cosmopolitanism – to be discussed in length in chapter 4 – encapsulate bourgeois consumers' public anxieties over identity and elective affinities – both in the wider public space and in microspheres like reading groups, online communities and friend circles.

### **3 Methodology**

Having laid the theoretical foundations of this study, I will, in this chapter present the specific research questions and discuss the approach used to address these questions. I will later outline the individual data collection methods and touch upon methodological considerations.

#### **3.1 Research Questions**

The methodological aim of this study is to understand some of the discourses surrounding the production and consumption of translated novels in Britain. It seeks to answer the following research questions:

- How do readers in Britain construct their Selves as cultured subjects through the translated novels that they read, interpret and re-interpret through discussions with fellow readers?
- How do they construct their social world through imagining the Other in such readings and interpretations?
- How do publishing industry professionals – authors, translators, editors, booksellers etc. – feed into these constructions of the Self and the Other through their practices?
- How are these agents in the life cycle of a translated novel guided by the realities constructed by other agents?

In line with a constructivist ontology, the research draws from ethnographic methods, like participant observation with readers and interviews with industry professionals, aimed at capturing the complexities of cultural phenomenon. The discussion is therefore based on qualitative data, the quantitative information presented and discussed only serving the purposes of setting the background. Statistical data will be sourced from academic studies such as Jenny Hartley's (2001) study on book groups as well as surveys conducted by professional research bodies – such as The Book Marketing Limited, Creative Research, The Global Translation Initiative and *The Bookseller*. While I did use a questionnaire with open-ended questions to investigate readers' responses to selected book designs, this has been used solely as a source of qualitative data. The ideas of Pierre Bourdieu are used to conceptualize cultural consumption here. Both Bourdieu and those British researchers inspired by his model (Bennett *et al* 2008, Savage *et al* 2010, Wright 2006) base their analyses on quantitative data. My research, on the

other hand, relies more on qualitative patterns of consumption than the frequency of reading translations. Constructing identities through the activities of publishing, reading and taking part in book clubs would best be investigated in qualitative research, as attitudes, perspectives and class positions cannot be anticipated effectively in quantitative research design.<sup>19</sup>

### **3.2 Methods**

Following from the methodological approach outlined above, the primary research conducted for this thesis has been a combination of participant observation with readers, focus groups with readers who belong to reading groups, interviews with individual readers and publishing industry professionals – editors, booksellers, literary agents, translators – attendance to events such as Frankfurt Book Fair 2009 and BBC Radio Four programme with Orhan Pamuk, and document analysis on book covers and blurbs and other promotional material. In addition, I used an open-ended questionnaire with questions attached to visual elements. All these methods are geared towards gathering data for discourse analysis.

#### **3.2.1 Participant Observation/Focus Group**

The process of reading in itself is difficult to observe as it is normally performed in silence and often in private. Beyond posture and attire, such observation would not yield much sociologically relevant information. However, reading has always been and is increasingly seen as a social activity (Griswold *et al* 2005, Wright 2006, Fuller and Procter 2009) – research on reading culture has focused on contexts where books and reading experiences are discussed. As reviewed in the previous chapter, many theories of literature, including that of Georg Lukács (1962, 1971) associates the novel with modernity and middle class identity. Moreover, from the Middle Ages onwards, reading publics have also been debating publics. Observing people talking about the books they've read is more conducive to understanding how the narrative is reconstructed; and as we will see in the following chapters, book group discussions are rarely restricted, in their scope, to the book in question. Therefore, they provide ample

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<sup>19</sup> Intercultural literary exchange, which forms an important aspect of this study, has also been researched through quantitative methods, see Heilbron and Sapiro 2007 and Heilbron 2008. However, a quantitative framework for translation would not set an example for my thesis either, for the same reasons.



information as to how readers justify their likes and dislikes, their positions on social issues etc.

Primary research for this project was based on statements made by readers about their reading experiences; in other words, on what they are prepared, or maybe encouraged to say in public on their individual experience<sup>20</sup>. Therefore, issues such as cultural consumption, cosmopolitanism and omnivorousness have been analyzed through declared practices and attitudes. Qualitative data thus includes discourses at the point of the actual use of literary texts in the construction of micro public spheres (Habermas 1989), and of the construction of Selves in conversation with others.

In order to avoid any bias, I did not let my respondents know that I was doing research specifically on translated literature. This way, I hoped to avoid any positive remarks that would be made simply to please me, and I wanted to minimize any self-censorship readers might employ if they'd like to express negative views on the art of literary translation. That said, I understand that it was not too difficult for readers to understand that I had an active interest in international literature. Coupled by the fact I was evidently not from Britain, this might have led some respondents to foreground more cosmopolitanism. Additionally, my presence as a researcher might have encouraged respondents to make statements signalling their literary capital. Benjamin Earl (2008), who carried out fieldwork with a group of literary-minded visitors to sites related to the legend of King Arthur – Tintagel and Cadbury castles – has voiced similar concerns:

[T]here was the risk that [visitors'] being interviewed would result in their discourse attempting to cater for my status as an academic. This might have the consequence that my interviews would mask opinions that might be voiced to people with less perceived Arthurian capital than myself (2008: 402).

Actually, in my fieldwork settings, there were more than a few readers who indicated that they had read novels of Orhan Pamuk, asked my opinion of individual Pamuk titles or sought my advice on translations from Turkish. Discussing his case, Earl states that this process can tell much about the cultural value of the Arthurian myth (*ibid*) – in my case, the Nobel winning Pamuk. Furthermore, Earl believes that his status as an academic legitimated

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<sup>20</sup> You may find a copy of my consent form for focus groups and interviews in Appendix 1.

the community's taste culture (*ibid*, 404). On the other hand, in many discussions, I did not receive special attention as a researcher; very often I was treated as just another member of the group. My presence might have given occasion to statements readers would not otherwise have made, but as the present Other, I was then able to observe more closely the tension between present and "absent" Others.

I joined four book clubs in the Southwest of England for my research: two at a Library – one convening in the afternoons and one in the evenings – one at a Community Centre, and one private book club.<sup>21</sup> The Library reading groups convened once a month; the books to be read were generally decided by the discussion leaders, who were employees of the library. The books read by the group obviously were chosen among the library's collection, and the selection was based on the availability of a sufficient number of copies.

The Library Afternoon Reading Group is mainly composed of retired people aged 50 and over. A group member described the group demographics as "white, middle class, professional (retired) and mostly female." The Library Evening Reading Group is more heterogeneous in its composition, with members ranging from early 30s to 70s. Although there are still fewer males than females, this group is more balanced in terms of gender. Members of the Library reading groups see the events as a social activity; the discussions take place in an amiable atmosphere, with drinks and biscuits served after the discussion. Especially the afternoon group, with many retired people, see the meetings as an opportunity to go out of the house, meet people and have a nice chat. The third reading group – at the Community Centre – convened every other month and it is more heterogeneous, with members from different walks of life, such as lower and upper middle class people, students and professionals, people from different ethnic backgrounds, younger and older readers, males and females, heavy readers and not-so-heavy readers. I attended a few book group meetings here, with 5-10 readers, again mainly female. This group has a more transient membership too, it is acceptable to join one group discussion and skip meetings when the book is not of interest. The organizer of this book group has a personal preference for non-fiction, therefore the books discussed here were not directly relevant for my research.

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<sup>21</sup> You may find a copy of my Ethics Certificate in Appendix 2.

Further, I joined a private book club of six readers. These readers were part of a bigger reading group, but when I approached the group and introduced my research to them, the general feeling was that members did not want to take part in such a project. Six members of this bigger group contacted me later to say that they would like to form a smaller group with me. This group is restricted in its function and the book selection is limited to translated novels. Although I did not determine the focus of the reading group as “translated fiction,” I presented them a variety of translated and non-translated books, and they chose three translated titles. Their selection process will be discussed in detail in chapter 4 on books and reading in contemporary Britain.

I additionally attended reading group meetings in London and elsewhere, where translated novels were discussed. I contacted libraries in London to ask about the books they would be reading in the following months. Thus I visited two libraries in London (hereafter London Library I and London Library II), London Library I twice. Book groups that read translations are not easy to find, so I supplemented my fieldwork with Waterstones reading groups. I followed the events page of the bookseller’s website,<sup>22</sup> which lists author signings and book club discussions to be held in all branches throughout Britain. Having contacted branches that chose a translation for the month, I attended meetings at two London branches (Waterstones London I and Waterstones London II), one branch in the South (Waterstones South) and two Midlands branches (Waterstones Midlands I and Waterstones Midlands II). The biggest practical challenge I faced during fieldwork was to access book groups that read translated fiction. This is why I combined reading groups of from different institutional affiliations and cities, which enriched my material with their different demographic composition and variety of discussion content.

I read and discussed these books along with other members, that is, I conducted participant observation, but at the same time, these book discussions can also be seen as focus groups in that they are group discussions exploring a specific set of issues. The main feature of the focus group method is the explicit use of group interaction to generate data (Kitzinger and Barbour 1999: 4). Actually, focus groups place the group interaction as “the source of the data” (Morgan 1996: 130), which makes this method a unique tool for studying reception. Focus groups did not only provide access to repositories

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<sup>22</sup> See <http://www.waterstones.com/waterstonesweb/events/>

of knowledge, but the interaction here was part of the explored reality itself. The reading group meetings I took part in were thus cases of active interviewing, where “meaning is not merely elicited by apt questioning, nor simply transported through respondent replies; [but] actively and communicatively assembled in the [research] encounter” (Holstein and Gubrium 1997:114). The readers in book groups were constructors of knowledge in collaboration with me the researcher (*ibid*). I joined existing social circles where possible, because group dynamics are of paramount importance in focus groups and existing reading groups enabled authentic participant observation. The way in which group interaction influenced belief formation in book group meetings will be discussed in chapter 8 on reading translations as intercultural communication. Some of the excerpts include my questions or comments – as a reader. Actually, I found many parallelisms between my own interpretations of the social world and those of the readers, the subjects of this study. After all, I am a cosmopolitan consumer of cultural products as well, socialized in the context of today’s value orientations, so perhaps it’s natural that I notice striking similarities between my memories of certain novels and reader perspectives that my researcher self criticizes for being totalizing, exoticizing or objectifying.

The first five minutes of book club meetings usually set the tone of the discussion. What readers say in between comments directly related to the book, and what they imply with their off-topic statements was an important source of information for me. In interviews, I directly asked readers how often they read books and which type of books they enjoyed; however, in book groups, I relied on these “fillers.” In addition to attending book group meetings, I drew data from observational settings: bookshops, literary festivals etc. Furthermore, I extended my observations to other spontaneous situations as well – for example the reading behaviour of various people in the public domain, like public transport. In this sense, it can be argued that the nature of this research is akin to participant observation.

I also attended industry events and literary events as part of primary research. I went to London Book Fair in 2009 and 2011, and to Frankfurt Book Fair in 2009. Moreover, I attended literary festivals: London Review Bookshop World Literature Weekend (June 2009), Ibero-American Literature Festival (November 2009), BBC 4 Book Club Programme Recording with Orhan Pamuk (January 2010), Harvill Secker International Writing Day (February 2010) and

World Translation Day (September 2010). See Appendix 3 for a list of focus groups.

Furthermore, I joined an online forum on international literature, where people post messages to threads organized according to country of origin. According to Tom Tivnan and William Higham from *The Bookseller*, social networking sites such as Lovereading.co.uk and Shelfari.com are becoming more popular for browsing books (2010: 24). Such sites constitute an additional type of public space alongside the conventional mediated public spaces – TV, newspapers and radio. The administrator of this online forum runs a reading group, so members read the same book and post their messages in a discussion format. Although the administrator is British and the language of discussion is English, the forum has members from all over the world. I approached some British readers from this online community and conducted e-mail interviews with them. We exchanged two to five e-mails and generally discussed their favourite novelists and their experiences with specific translated books.

### **3.2.2 Interviews**

From a constructionist point of view, interviews facilitate narratives (Warren and Karner 2005:21) as “a special kind of conversation in which the interviewer questions the respondent on a topic of interest to the interviewer, and of some relevance to the interviewee” (*ibid*, 115). I complemented my reading group material with semi-structured interviews, which yielded rich information on readers’ dispositions and elective affinities. There was again an aspect of active interviewing (Holstein and Gubrium 1997), since these conversations involved readers’ presentations of Self, as part their own construction of reality. In order to strengthen the reading-related performance character of the interview, most interviews were set within a reading community: in libraries or book club organizing retailer branches. After the meetings at the Library groups, when members were having small group conversations over tea and coffee, I went around and asked them questions about the book of the month, or about other books that I saw in the list of books read by the reading group. These were unstructured interviews and they not always proceeded as a one-to-one dialogue. The books we talked about were usually the ones they read within the past year. I also interviewed a reader before the Waterstones

London II meeting and did occasional *ad hoc* interviews with readers before and after discussions at Waterstones book club meetings.

The book-related settings made it easier for me to elicit relevant data because the desirable norm of book consumption is probably felt more strongly in bookshops and libraries, which encourages readers to discuss their literary capital in detail and comment on the various dimensions of their reading activities. In other words, the contexts helped focus our conversations. Moreover, being surrounded by actual books meant that I was able to come up with specific follow-up questions to get respondents to elaborate on their answers. Because I did not tell my respondents that I was particularly interested in their opinions on translated literature, I could not ask them direct questions about translation. I tried to obtain such information through indirect questions on aspects of books they liked and disliked.

Apart from interviewing reading group members, I contacted the Literature Society of a University in the Southwest and lent some of my novels to the members, usually students at the English Department. I met two of them to discuss the books after they read them. I also put up a few posters around a town in the Southwest – at the library, at a cinema, an arts centre and a café – with details about myself and my research. Three people responded, and I interviewed them in casual settings for about 45 minutes. Finally, I met some of my interviewees through personal connections. People that I met in contexts that do not involve books or reading – not necessarily engaged readers – provided me with valuable information about the less literary oriented attitudes to books and translation. This includes the reader I interviewed on a London-bound train. I approached her as she was reading a copy of Naguib Mahfouz's (1994a) *Palace Walk*. I was not planning to initiate spontaneous interviews as part of my fieldwork but I did not want to miss the opportunity to talk to a British reader enjoying a translation from canonical Egyptian literature. This instance also indicates that books – especially novels – have interactive value in that one of the few legitimate excuses to start a conversation on a British train is an interest in someone's reading.

In interviews with readers whom I did not know from book groups, I started with general questions on how often they read books and what sort of books they liked, proceeding to more specific questions about the books they named. Again, as I did not explicitly say that my research was on translation, I

tried to steer the conversation into translated books with indirect cues. If they mentioned any translated novels in their responses to my initial questions, I asked them to comment on the plot and narration. If no reference was made to any translated book, I asked questions about recently popular international authors, e.g. “Have you read *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo*?” “Have you read anything by Haruki Murakami / Roberto Bolaño?” Capitalizing on the market penetration of these titles, I hoped my respondents would think I was simply trying to see if they followed reading fashions. If readers answered these questions negatively, I asked why they were not interested in these authors, and if they said they had read a book by these authors, I asked follow-up questions about the various aspects of the text. This way, I was able to get a sense of readers’ judgements on translated literature while avoiding courtesy remarks as much as possible.

I conducted interviews with book industry professionals to learn about the various dimensions of publishing and selling a book. I contacted editors and met literary agents at industry events. The editors working for British publishers to be contacted for interviews were selected with a view to how much weight they give to translated titles in their list. I was interested in finding out how they decide to publish particular books, how they find translators for their translated titles and how they go about marketing them. Experts from the Turkish publishing industry contributed to the interviews with their experiences with British publishers. Questions in these interviews revolved around Western European, specifically British publishers’ attitude towards Turkish literature and their changing conceptions of it. See Appendix 3 for a list of interviews.

### **3.2.3 Questionnaires**

I designed two questionnaires to analyze readers’ responses to book covers. Here the names of the authors and any other national indicators were deleted from the covers, and the questions were formulated as sentences to be completed by the respondents, including: “I think this book is from ... because the cover features...”, “This book cover makes me think of ...”, “This book could be about ...” and a yes/no question: “Would you pick up this book in a bookshop?” What this questionnaire aimed to test was whether readers recognize the cultural signifiers that publishers insert in their covers to signal foreignness. Some of the twelve book covers were the ones I examined in detail

in chapter 6 on marketing and promotion, where I am also discussing the answers. The two versions of the questionnaire are available in Appendix 4. I asked some of my interviewees and readers at the Library reading groups to fill the questionnaires. Some of the questionnaires were filled by university students studying a subject other than Literature.

### 3.2.4 Document Analysis

Document analysis is used across the social sciences and humanities with the purpose of identifying and analyzing the manifest and latent content of texts, including words and pictures; focusing on meanings and interpretations (Sarantakos 2004: 299-300). The material examined for this research includes novels translated from other languages into English, reviews written for these books and documents from the publishing industry. When examining translated novels, I looked at their covers, blurbs and end papers – the very first and very last pages, partially attached to the covers of paperbacks, usually reserved for biographies and quotes from reviews. The best-sellers chart in Amazon's Literature in Translation store<sup>23</sup> guided me in choosing my case studies. This chart cannot provide sales figures representative of the whole market, but because Amazon claims a considerable market share, it still gives a good idea of sales trends. Since the research focuses on contemporary Britain, I mainly studied novels published within the last 15 years and limited my scope to books published by British publishers. Co-editions by international conglomerates have been included so long as there is a British edition.

I made use of reviews both written by lay readers and by reviewers that contribute to literary magazines, which bring out interesting configurations of taste and identity explicit or implicit in the discourse of reviews. The online literature forum has been a rich source of reviews, although not all the contributors are British people. I followed a few British "Reading Blogs" and occasionally looked at reviews on Amazon. I mainly used real-world face-to-face interaction, but online sources proved a valuable guide in many respects. For example, I picked up the points raised by these reviews to draft interview and focus group questions. As for reviews in the print media, I tried to keep my scope as broad as possible, from Waterstones's *Books Quarterly* to tabloids and broadsheets and literary magazines like *the Literary Review* and *London*

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<sup>23</sup> See <http://www.amazon.co.uk/Translation-Books-Language/b?ie=UTF8&node=599880>



*Review of Books*. I occasionally consulted *The Bookseller*, the publishing industry magazine in Britain. As already mentioned, reading and thinking about one's reading are solitary activities, but they intersect with public discussions on books and literature. From customer reviews on Amazon and staff recommendations in bookshops to critical reviews on *London Review of Books* to author interviews on radio and TV, overlaps and clashes between opinions at personal and editorial levels between lay reviews and "highbrow" evaluations provide complex and multidimensional material for analysis.

Any supporting material from publishing houses came as a valuable contribution to this aspect of the primary research. Where possible, I obtained company material and business-to-business promotion material from publishers, like AI sheets, marketing reports, uncorrected reading copies and communication with funding bodies, which were mainly used for discursive analysis.

### **3.3 The Field**

"British readers" is an elusive category in multicultural Britain where the population is mobile thanks to globalization. I have not excluded British residents from different national, cultural or linguistic backgrounds from my fieldwork. I have acknowledged individual backgrounds where possible, since I see this as an opportunity to enrich my comparative contextualization.

For the duration of three years, I was based in Southwest England, which forms the geographical focus of my research. The city I lived in is served by two Waterstones branches, one WHS branch, several second hand bookshops and two libraries.<sup>24</sup> I tried to extend my research to other geographical locations as well, both by travelling to other cities to conduct research, and by interviewing readers living in other parts of Britain. Fieldwork was thus extended to London and the Midlands, and I have contacted a few readers living in the North through e-mail. I could not claim my sample to be representative, but it covers a variety in terms of geographical location. The Southwest of England is a predominantly white area with little ethnic diversity (see Office for National Statistics 2010: EE1). Cultural engagement here is not known to be heavy;

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<sup>24</sup> There used to be Blackwell's campus store at the University, but it was closed down during the course of the research. A third bookshop operated for a few months at the end of 2010 and the beginning of 2011. Moreover, there is also a The Works branch selling remaindered books alongside stationery.

actually, one bookseller I interviewed called the area a “graveyard for books,” referring to the amount of reading and the nature of material chosen by consumers – booksellers consequently only stock titles that they deem to be “safe.”<sup>25</sup> London, to the contrary, is the multicultural exemplar. Both in production – large-scale and restricted (Bourdieu: 2009: 29-73) – and in consumption, it is the cultural capital in Britain. Although the Southwest and London can be thus contrasted, I have not found any significant differences between the dispositions of readers in the Southwest and in London. People are mobile, so not all people I talked to did represent the social characteristics of the city they inhabited.

Most of my respondents have been white, middle class and professional. Although my empirical generalizations are not aimed at typifying this group, my results are indicative of the norms and dispositions of this social cluster. As statistical data on reading will illustrate in chapter 4, the “reading public” as a cultural class overlaps to a considerable degree with the social group that is known as the middle class in Britain.<sup>26</sup> This does not come as a surprise since the novel has conventionally been viewed as the genre produced for, and consumed by the middle class, as discussed earlier. In their study on cultural consumption, Richard Peterson and Paul DiMaggio find it useful to concentrate on cultural affinities rather than social classes: “it may prove more fruitful to categorize persons in terms of cultural classes, that is shared patterns of consumption” (1975: 504). This seems like a strategy attuned to the complexities of the Self; on the other hand, it might also be possible to see social class “as cultural practice.” According to Bourdieu, social classification is also a cultural activity (1984: 106, 480, cf. Hannerz 1992:94). In his book *Class in Britain*, David Cannadine discusses three conceptions of social class that have prevailed throughout the 18<sup>th</sup>, 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries: the hierarchical model, which sees class as a finely layered system of gradations; the triadic model of upper, middle and lower classes; and the dyadic model, which is composed of the non-working patricians and the working plebs (2000: 163-89). Although the hierarchical version has been the most resonant, Cannadine

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<sup>25</sup> See Chris Anderson’s (2006) *The Long Tail* for a discussion of brick-and-mortar retailers having to target local audiences whereas online sellers can stock a much wider variety, which brings them success in the long run.

<sup>26</sup> Bennett and others’ (2008) study, in contrast, was conducted on a sample that comprises a wider variety of engagement levels, however, they also support the idea that book reading is much more prevalent among the educated middle class.

demonstrates that these models have been at least partly rhetorical constructs. According to Cannadine, therefore, self-classifying has been an enduring tool in British social stratification. Reading habits and preferences are part of that self-classifying activity.

By virtue of the way I contacted readers, I mainly obtained data from engaged readers, which I would like to define as people who read at least one book per month on average. In my arguments I differentiate between readers with more literary capital – those who read more frequently and heavier material – and less literary capital – those who might be reading mostly for utilitarian reasons, or those who read newspapers and magazines regularly, but not books.

As the possession of legitimate literary capital was prized by the readers I observed and interviewed, the positive attention of a visiting researcher was often enjoyed by the group members. Many asked questions about my research, one reader in the Southwest Library Evening Reading Group jokingly asked when they could read about themselves in my “book” although I gave them no clear indication as to whether my thesis would be published in book form.<sup>27</sup>

The research has not been particularly attentive to gender differences in book reading behaviour. It is made clear from the beginning that most respondents – book club members and interviewees – have been female, but the study does not look into the reasons or the implications of this imbalance. Gender is a theme picked up by Radway (1984), Long (2003) and Bennett and others (2008) in their studies on reception, but it is not directly relevant for the purposes of this thesis.

As mentioned before, this study focuses on the novel as a genre; I occasionally made use of other narrative genres, like biography/memoir and travel writing, which may be read with a similar effect. I do not define my sample as those who read translated fiction regularly – as there is no such real product category and this would be a disabling method for research purposes. Many people are exposed to translated texts today, from product information on imported consumer goods to film subtitles and literature. Amanda Hopkinson,

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<sup>27</sup> Benjamin Earl was also asked questions on his PhD during his fieldwork with visitors to Tintagel. He shares an anecdote involving a visitor imagining that Earl would one day be famous and they would say they’d heard a talk by him (2008: 407).

the former president of the British Centre for Literary Translation reminds that the Bible, the most widely read and the most influential book of all time, a rich source of allusions to a wide range of narratives, is a translated book (Hopkinson 2009). Even those who do not profess openness to translation find themselves every once in a while reading a translated text – as the case of Stieg Larsson’s *Millennium Trilogy* shows.

### **3.4 Methodological Considerations**

Ethnographic methods form the backbone of social sciences, especially social/cultural anthropology and sociology, yet it is a late 20<sup>th</sup> century phenomenon to use them in literary research. Studies based on focus groups and fieldwork are rare in translation studies, and they only form part of holistic research projects focusing on the work of one author, one translator etc. The analysis of qualitative data collected through such fieldwork will contribute to these disciplines in important ways.

Because I ensured the nature of my participation to the research setting caused as little disruption as possible, I do not feel that readers significantly engineered their contributions to discussions simply because of my presence. However, book group meetings are highly social events, and the fact that I came from another country, another culture and even another religious background never went unnoticed. Due to the self-disciplining nature of the cosmopolitan norm, I suspected that readers might have imposed some sort of control on what they discussed about Middle Eastern societies, or Turkish novels, or about anything non-English, for that matter. In several instances, for example in the *Yacoubian Building* (2007) and *All Our Worldly Goods* (2008) discussions, my presence as a Turkish person added another dimension to the imagining of the Other and the Self. I discuss these in chapter 8. In reading group discussions, readers were also aware that I might come from a literature background, but I made sure that my comments were that of a lay reader, and not an academic.

Although in a qualitative research like this a representative sample is not a primary objective, I tried to involve readers from as diverse backgrounds as possible. This presented me with a wide range of data that includes conflicting perspectives. Where possible, I tied readers’ responses to various demographic factors, their background and voluntary affiliations. Moreover, even individuals

may have contradicting opinions and invest contested meanings to their behaviour. Covering this diversity in my analysis was both a challenge and an advantage.

Finally, a few words on terminology use. The topic of what a reading group will be discussed in the following chapter but throughout the thesis, I used the terms “book club,” “reading group” and “reading club” interchangeably to refer to these groups. I joined discussions at 13 different groups during my fieldwork; for purposes of privacy, I anonymized them. Here is a list of the names I used (including two groups that I have not visited but obtained information about):

- Southwest Library Afternoon Reading Group
- Southwest Library Evening Reading Group
- Smaller Southwest Library Reading Group
- London Library I
- London Library II
- Waterstones London I
- Waterstones London II
- Waterstones Midlands I
- Waterstones Midlands II
- Waterstones South
- Community Centre Book Club
- Private Southwest Book Club
- Private Southwest Village Book Club
- Private South Book Club
- Southwest University Literature Society

Chapter 5 on the conditions of production of translated literature and chapters 7 and 8 on reader’s patterns of interpretation and reception make heavy use of data from interviews and talks given at publishing industry events and from book group discussions. The verbal material has been reproduced with minimum editorial intervention; more or less the way informants uttered

them.<sup>28</sup> Most voice recordings took place in group meetings, therefore it was not uncommon for more than one people to speak at the same time. In a few cases where utterances were inaudible, I either inserted the word [inaudible] or filled the gap with words I deemed appropriate according to the line of argument.

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<sup>28</sup> That said, I did not go as far as transcribing text complete with intonation markers, because I do not see this as a necessary aspect of this research.

## **4 Books and Reading in Contemporary Britain**

### **4.1 Introduction**

Since the invention of the printing press, readers have built up a repertoire of uses of printed material, which is available to contemporary consumers of texts as well. This chapter will discuss the possible uses of books and reading in Britain, bringing together empirical data from various contexts. A historical overview will thus set the scene for a discussion on the reading practice of Britons today. The discussion will cover the different dimensions of reading for readers, together with the implications of book consumption as a cultural activity. Then it will move on to the phenomenon of book groups in contemporary Britain, which forms the backdrop of the arguments made in the following chapters. Finally, we will consider the publishing industry in Britain before focusing on the production of translated fiction specifically in the next chapter.

### **4.2 The History of Reading in Western Europe**

Books have changed the lives of many men and women, started or fuelled social movements. The creation of book markets has transformed societies, and different motives for and modes of reading have emerged as the intellectual and recreational needs of individuals changed.

Books have played a role in the shaping of modern Western Europe. In her *Printing Press as an Agent of Change*, Elizabeth Eisenstein (1979) argues that large movements, such as the Renaissance and the Reformation were the products of print culture. In 15<sup>th</sup> century, pamphlets were effectively used to influence public opinion, which set the scene for the Reformation. For example, Martin Luther's address "To the Christian Nobility of the German Nation" was printed in 4000 copies, which sold out within days of publication. And of course, the translation of the Bible into German is a prime example of how book culture can bring about revolutionary consequences. The use of vernacular languages in print meant that the reading material was more accessible for the public (Gilmont 1999: 215-219). Later, in the year 1523, 418 out of 498 books published in Germany were about the Reformation. Although oral and visual propaganda were also keys instruments, book culture certainly was a catalyst (Briggs and Burke 2005, 61-87). Print culture is also believed to have played a role in the ensuing ideological clash between Catholics and Protestants. In the

17<sup>th</sup> century England, royalists and parliamentarians engaged in public debate through newspapers and pamphlets.

Jürgen Habermas (1989) dates the formation of a public sphere to the 18<sup>th</sup> century, when the bourgeoisie questioned the monopoly of information and interpretation by the Church and State, culminating in the formation of new structures of communication through print culture. Coffee houses and literary salons were then venues for open public discussion. Although women and people of lesser means were mostly excluded, at least in principle the discussion was open to all voluntary participation. Books and reading acquired a new status while the bourgeoisie discovered a liberated subjectivity. The consumption of print material in the 18<sup>th</sup> century then enabled the emergence of bourgeoisie democracy.

In France, Diderot's *Encyclopédie, ou dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers* (1751-72) embodied the ideals of the Enlightenment (see Darnton 1979), which came about as a result of the cross-fertilization of ideas in Europe through translations. The French Revolution initiated a change in reading habits, first among the urban dwellers. Wittmann describes previous reading as "unruly," meaning undisciplined and distracted. Scholarly reading had been carried out by the intellectual élite in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, but the Enlightenment propagated "useful" reading:

This "useful" form of reading not only considered the text as a moralizing allegory; as a guide to achieving the perfection of the individual, it later developed within the rising bourgeois public, thanks in particular to the institution of the reading society [...] into a form of reading oriented toward communication and reflection, with the aim of shaping the social identity of the bourgeoisie through reading (Wittmann 1999: 293).

Newspapers and magazines provided secular information in a decisively modernist reading culture, which eventually gave way to a "sentimental" or "empathetic" form of reading. Reading slowly turned into a solitary activity, and relaxation through the consumption of print material came to characterize bourgeoisie lifestyle (*ibid*, 298). The growth of the reading public contributed to the maturation of the novel, which, as we discussed earlier, is considered to be the literary form that best represents social reality (Watt 1963: 9-35).

Towards the end of 18<sup>th</sup> century, Europe was struck by a "reading mania" as more and more sectors of society engaged in what Wittmann calls



“hermeneutic” reading, entering the fictional world of books through their imagination, as an autonomous artistic experience (1999: 300). In the following decades, the reading public became multilayered, and the book became “desacralized” as an everyday consumption object. The first signs of market-oriented literary production manifested themselves, and together with urbanization, this brought about a segmentation of the reading public into distinct taste patterns, altering the relationships between author, publisher and reader (Leavis 1990 [1932]: 151-202). Literary production was industrialized between 1830s and the First World War, when book production increased dramatically with the introduction of new technologies. In Britain, the annual publishing output was 5000 titles in the 1850s, it rose to 10.000 in 1909. Print runs increased while prices went down, and these developments facilitated the democratization of reading culture (Lyons 2010: 137-152).

In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, reading had transformative effects on women and the working class, who were previously relegated to marginal roles in the social and cultural life (Lyons 2010: 153-63). Women were generally confined to domestic roles, and reading was viewed as a dangerous habit that could lead them astray. However, female readers found freedom and a new sense of identity, as with fictional accounts, they were able to experiment with situations they could not experience first hand in real life (cf. Radway 1984). The gradual reduction of the working day throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century allowed workers more time to spend reading. They borrowed books from libraries, despite the fact that these institutions were intimidating for them in how they were designed, organized and supervised: those who dressed humbly were made aware that they were not welcome. Although working class people were envisaged to read the material designed to convince them of the dominant social values, they were more interested in fiction. The Penny Dreadfuls, short and cheap booklets of horror or adventure stories, were popular in Britain. The novels of Daniel Defoe and Charles Dickens also attracted readers from the working class at lending libraries (*ibid*, 166-167). Thus, reading had an empowering and emancipatory function as it expanded readers’ restricted sphere of experience, which confirms the idea that reading complements real life experience, as discussed in chapter 2. In the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, although reading material became widely available, Jürgen Habermas points to a change in the nature of interpretation afforded by newspapers, magazines and books. Along with mass circulation

came conglomerization, which led to the manipulation of content by private interests. Bestseller novels as well as products of print and broadcast media became “consumption-ready” commodities (1989:166). Therefore, the public sphere evolved from being a democratic forum of discussion into a one where opinion is guided by the meaning structures that producers generate in line with their commercial interests.

We may conclude that print culture has been an integral part of the cultural life of Western Europe since the 15<sup>th</sup> century. Reading has since provided a connection between inner worlds and public life, with status implications and functions that go beyond education or leisure and entertainment, giving people competing reasons to consume books.

### **4.3 Books and Readers Today**

Practically everyone in the Western world reads today, after they have reached the age of literacy. Books, newspapers, magazines and other materials are consumed in nearly all households in Britain, with fiction and non-fiction books read in 90% of these. 70% of people who are old enough to read do so at least once a week. In most age groups, 60% of adults read fiction, while non-fiction is read by 40%. Adults read five and a half hours a week on average, 33% of them reading more than five and a half hours, with 15% reading at least 11 hours (Book Marketing Limited 2005: 9-16).<sup>29</sup>

People who have taken up reading at an early age tend to keep reading into their adult years, although circumstances might constrain the amount of time they can spare for reading, they tend to revert to the heavy reading pattern whenever they can, for example when they retire (BML 2005). An understanding of the various benefits of reading seems to reinforce a deeply ingrained, durable disposition for book consumption. 25% of all adults consider reading a special experience, giving them something that other media consumption does not. Women read more than men, and the gap between the rates is significant in fiction reading: 77% of women compared to 45% of men. 90% of households obtain their reading material through purchasing books and borrowing from libraries. In this respect, bookshop and library usage are

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<sup>29</sup> When the research cited was carried out seven years ago, not many people thought that they read less when compared to five years ago, despite competition from new media, including the Internet (MBL 2001). Therefore, the rates of reading presented in the survey are not likely to decrease significantly over the seven years in between.

complementary of each other, but 75% mainly buy books as opposed to the 60% that mainly borrow. In addition to fiction and non-fiction books, 63% of adults also read magazines, 63% again newspapers, 24% poetry and nursery rhymes while 15% enjoy graphic novels and comics (*ibid*).

		<b>Non-reader</b>	<b>Light 1-10 mins</b>	<b>Medium 11-30 mins</b>	<b>Heavy 31+ mins</b>	<b>Ave number</b>
All	%	34	8	14	40	26
Male	%	38	9	15	36	24
Female	%	31	7	14	45	29
16-19	%	33	12	17	36	24
20-24	%	36	8	15	40	25
25-34	%	36	11	16	33	23
35-44	%	36	8	15	37	25
45-54	%	32	10	14	40	26
55-64	%	30	6	17	45	29
65+	%	33	5	10	49	31
AB	%	18	6	21	53	24
C1	%	29	10	18	44	28
C2	%	43	10	11	34	22
DE	%	43	7	10	35	23
Child in household	%	40	9	15	34	22
No child in household	%	31	6	14	43	29
<i>Terminal education age</i>						
Still studying	%	15	11	16	55	35
16 or under	%	42	7	13	35	23
17-18	%	30	10	17	41	27
19+	%	21	9	17	52	33
<i>Working status</i>						
Full time	%	36	11	16	35	24
Part time	%	37	9	12	40	25
Not working	%	33	7	16	41	27
Retired	%	32	5	12	47	31

Fig. 4.1. Book consumption statistics for the UK (BML 2005: 11)

The most evident conclusions from this set of data include age, gender and social standing implications on reading. Reading and age are closely

related: more over 65s are heavy readers than any other age bracket. This is also reflected in the fact that retired people read more than those working full time or part time or those not in employment. As expected, pensioners read more, since they have got more time; on the other hand, the unemployed read less than the retired, which hints at the class implications of reading. There is a positive association between financial capital and reading, as more AB consumers are heavy readers than any other consumer group. People in households without children find more time to reading than those with children. The people who read the most according to the chart, are either still studying, or have had higher education; indicating, as one would expect, a correlation between educational capital and book consumption as well.

Reading occupies a central role in the daily lives of many people in Britain, but what associations do books have? Chapter 2 introduced the many pragmatic uses of books. Concomitant to the symbolic value invested in them, these cultural products have traditionally been linked with information and education. In religious contexts, reading has been equated with enlightenment. In the medieval monasteries of England, for example, the reading of religious texts was a core activity (see Howe 1993). In the UK, reading is not only perceived as a requisite for being an educated person, but also is promoted as a “good thing” in itself, illustrated by the fact that there is no VAT applied to books today. Reading has a consecrated place in established hierarchies, and is also associated with institutions representing education, which are involved in the consecration process (Wright 2006: 124). Research reveals that in other social contexts reading is seen as part of being a good citizen, in Soviet Russia for example, where this it was actively promoted by the state (see Zavisca 2005).

However, since books were made available to large audiences in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, their content has also been made more accessible, these cultural products have gradually entered the sphere of leisure and entertainment, and are firmly positioned there now, with images of readers enjoying their holiday books on e-readers on the beach. In studies of reading, engaged readers are defined as those attracted to reading because they see it as a highly pleasurable activity (see Radway 1984, Creative Research 2009). For people who read more than a book per week, reading is almost a guilty pleasure. The quality of reading cannot be the same for the entire duration of declared reading

in these surveys of course. An important amount of reading takes place in mundane contexts – reading as a means rather than an end – one reader observed that people resort to their books in order to avoid eye contact when there is limited personal space in public transport. For this reason, people standing in the tube, customers waiting for their orders in restaurant, or gym users with no one to talk to read in order to occupy themselves. The material chosen for this sort of reading tends to be light material, which could be put down and picked up easily.

Many engaged readers in Britain feel that the most prominent benefit of reading is relaxation and escapism. In research carried out by Creative Research (CR) for the Arts Council, many participants, especially the highly engaged readers, stressed the idea that reading takes you away from your everyday life. This experience is associated with the experience of being totally absorbed in the book. The type of book that most lends itself to this kind of reading is fiction.

A member of the book club that convened for the CR study was quoted as saying: “We choose fiction for pleasure. It’s very much associated with pleasure and the indulgence of getting lost” (quoted in Creative Research 2009: 24). Other descriptions by readers include “it takes you to new places” and “novels also allow the reader to experience new situations without leaving the sofa” (*ibid*, 40). “A good read” is described as engaging and absorbing and sometimes enhancing the reader’s mood. According to those who took part in the study, other benefits of reading are stimulating the mind, broadening horizons, empathy and emotional connection, appreciating one’s own good fortune, finding inspiration, raising self-esteem, gaining knowledge and other utilitarian benefits (*ibid*, 27-32). Finally, holidays give many people a reason and an opportunity to read. Alongside fiction and other forms, travel books are read either in preparation to a trip abroad or while deciding where to go.

#### **4.4 The Dimensions of Reading: Status, Pleasure and Selfhood**

Chapter 2 emphasized the importance of reading as narrative consumption on identity formation and laid out the various dimensions and the pragmatic uses of books. Readers from all levels of engagement feel that reading is a creative experience, and they recognize the intellectual and

aesthetic dimensions, which bring about a dynamic combination of pleasure and utilitarian benefits.

Michel de Certeau (1984) points out that reading involves the mobilization of cultural memory, which is essential for deciphering the meaning in the book (cf. DeVault 1999). He calls books systems, or reservoirs of signs: “to read is to wander through an imposed system (that of the text, analogous to the constructed order of a city or of a supermarket)” (de Certeau 1984: 169, cf. Iser 1980: 107-118). Other works of art, or communicative media also need deciphering, but this is supported through visuality, or sometimes audio input. The varying levels of intellectual effort required lead readers to mark “comfort zones,” which could mean resistance to reading new types of material. Participants to the Creative Research study explained how they needed to feel early on in the book that it was “for them” – otherwise they would not venture to read it. Some preferred specific types of reading material that they previously tried and enjoyed, rejecting new types of texts (2009: 38). While engaged readers are eager to browse new books to see if they’d like them, and use information provided by librarians, booksellers, reviewers, bloggers and fellow Amazon customers, less enthusiastic readers exercise more caution, trusting recommendations from friends and relatives. Less engaged readers are less keen to join book clubs and attend literary events, which they find “hierarchical and intimidating” (*ibid*, 48). The intellectual effort invested in “understanding” a novel, which is a prerequisite for demonstrating that one has enjoyed it, is often the basis of status associations. The ability to enjoy is thus status relevant – people enjoy reading material that is regarded to be “heavy,” which gives them cultural legitimacy. Normally, however, these two principles are opposed to each other, when for example, aspiring consumers of culture read a book they feel they need to know about, without enjoying it much, or as in the case of lowbrow genres, such as romance, chick-lit, crime and science-fiction, which do give pleasure without conferring status.<sup>30</sup> This tension between pleasure and status finds its reflection in the context of production and promotion as well – mass market fiction often promises accessibility and enjoyable reading experience but publishers are bound by claims on literary quality and cosmopolitanism as well, as we will see in chapter 5.

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<sup>30</sup> In Janice Radway’s (1984: 46-85) study on romance reading for example, some readers admit that they’re aware of the mediocre literary quality of the books but they enjoy them.

The status implications of book consumption also facilitate social – or cultural positioning. During the 2011 riots in London, it was reported that the only shop untouched by the looters in Clapham Junction was the local branch of Waterstones (Williams 2011). This prompted commentators on the *Guardian* website to argue that novels in today's publishing industry are produced with middle class readers in mind, which adds contemporary relevance to this long-held view (see Shukla 2011).

Readers relate plots to their own lives, they are encouraged to take up subject positions in relation to the characters, the setting and the plot; they engage in a sort of role play, what Gregory Currie (1998) calls “emphatic enactment.” Such emphatic enactment is instrumental for both enjoyment and identity construction. The permeability between fictional and social realities gives readers satisfaction through the activation of their creative agency; it also facilitates the imagination of the world around them as well as the consolidation of their middle class subjectivity. One reader in the Southwest captured this sentiment during the discussion on Irène Némirovsky's (2008) *All Our Worldly Goods*. This novel is about a family in France who witnesses both world wars. The reader implied that the reading experience prompted her to imagine what it must be like living in those times: “You know things happen, but when you haven't experienced them, you only... you can kind of brush them off, can't you? But you felt much more that you were in that kind of... what it must have been like in that village [Saint-Elme], through those two world wars.” One reader mentioned that he read the author's biography at the end of the book, and learnt that she died at Auschwitz. That brought a heavy tone to the discussion and the other readers reflected on what it must be like to be a Jew before the Second World War.

A reader I interviewed in Waterstones London II branch said that she “struggles” with films based on books she's read, because she gets disappointed with the adaptations. For causes of her disappointment, she referred to digressions from the book – in plot, or in the scenes. She is also let down when the characters in the film do not match the ones she constructed in her mind while reading the book. Apparently, she conjures up an imaginary world in such detail that she does not want any interference in it. According to Wolfgang Iser, this frustration results from the removal of the reader's agency from the process of reality reconstruction (1980: 139).

In an interview, Christopher MacLehose, the editor-in-chief of Quercus, remembered what a bookseller once told him about the Swedish crime novelist, Henning Mankell:

A bookseller said to me once “When Henning Mankell next comes to London, I want you to bring him to me, and I’ll take him home and I’ll feed him; I’ll give him breakfast, I’ll give him a hot bath, I’ll sew on all his buttons, brush his hands, send him back into the world recovered. And I said “You’re not talking about Henning Mankell, you’re talking about Wallander.” “Ahh” he said “You’re right; I completely confused them in my mind.”

This bookseller has obviously has given in to what Alter (1989:50) calls the “metaphysics of presence,” collapsing the distinction between the author of the novels and the novels’ protagonist, which indicates that as readers more and more engage in fiction, the boundaries between the constructed world and lived experience become blurred. Being “absorbed” in a book is a desirable reading experience, especially with popular genres. With translated novels, the idea of absorption has two further implications. Firstly, these books are enjoyed for the role-play that takes place in an exotic setting, thus promoting a hedonistic reading experience. Secondly, readers do not want any distraction on the surface level – the narration – that could hinder their full engagement with content.

Since the ability to discern aesthetic qualities is a status relevant skill, it is worth investigating how readers form and express judgements. Research in cultural consumption has revolved around consumers’ evaluations through semantic contrasts, like easy vs. difficult, beautiful vs. ugly etc. (Osgood 1957, Berlyne 1976). Concerning the aesthetic and intellectual dimensions of book reading, respondents make distinctions between various types of books, and also between various passages in books. For example, they clearly differentiate between heavy reading and light reading, and they may find certain passages of a book more difficult than others (see Iser 1980: 46ff). One reader, on William Dalrymple’s (2002) *White Mughals*, said that she had to “plod through” the first half of the book, which contained factual – historical and political – information to set the scene. Similarly, a few readers expressed that they found Steig Larsson’s *The Girl With the Dragon Tattoo*’s (2008) first 100 pages difficult to get through. Many report that once they reach the middle half of the book, where the climax builds up, they usually pick up speed.



Readers topicalize the language of literary texts in evaluative statements, and they enjoy comparing and contrasting their views with that of fellow group members; my findings in that respect confirm those of Swann and Allington (2009). In terms of language, the most widely used aesthetic descriptions are well-written vs. badly-written, and fluent vs. jarring. On the other hand, the intellectual challenges involved might be due to either elements of the plot or the language,<sup>31</sup> or a lack of cultural memory to mobilize. Readers find certain types of reading more pleasurable than others, and again, parts of a book enjoyable and parts of it dull. Elements found beautiful or enjoying include the language, or scenes described in the plot. Of course, all readers have different concepts of “good” or “challenging” or “serious reading” or “lightweight reading” and readers who view the same type of books similarly are united in their aesthetic and intellectual stance.

Readers are aware of the different qualities of their reading, either due to the intrinsic properties of the reading material, or their mindset at the time of reading. One reader in the Waterstones South branch implied that *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo* could be read at two levels:

I read it with probably the wrong attitude, because when it started it gripped me as a whodunit and I've been into crime and I was also busy and so I wanted to find out the solution. So I didn't read it with any sort of “stop and think about it.” I read it to finish it, which I did, very quickly. And I enjoyed it as a page-turner, potboiler. [...] I didn't think it was particularly foreign and translated, I didn't feel it was foreign [...] possibly because of the computer bit and the murder; just that. And I didn't really look into it deeply.

This reader thinks that she did a “superficial” reading, without taking in enough of the information presented in the book because she was not able to invest enough time and energy into book reading at the time. Since the book in question is set in a different society, she could have read more slowly and carefully, appreciating the cultural difference. However, elements of technology and crime located the novel culturally as “Western” for her. She then contrasted the author Steig Larsson to other crime writers she'd read: Henning Mankell, Jo Nesbø and Arnaldur Indriðason. She described these authors as “slower paced”: “they plod till they get their resolve: plod, plod, plod; whereas this seemed to go dash, dash, dash.” Her comment reflects an understanding of

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<sup>31</sup> See Ganzeboom 1982 and Graesser *et al* 1996 for a discussion on information processing theory in cultural consumption.

pace in narration. This example indicates that the various aesthetic qualities of books appear to readers in perspective. Another example comes from a reader in the Southwest Village. When I asked her about the aspects of a book that are the most important to her, she replied “The writing, the writing is number one for me.”

Reading, then, has several dimensions, including pleasure and status. The perceived intellectual and aesthetic properties of book consumption arise from the interaction between the text – with its contextual and inner dimensions – and the reader – with their *habitus*, confirming the theories of reading discussed in chapter 2. *Habitus* is a facilitator of pleasure, as readers’ preferences are guided by their reading histories and their adopted aesthetic stances.

#### **4.5 Book Reading as Cultural Consumption: Omnivorousness and Cosmopolitanism**

Chapter 2 introduced omnivorousness and cosmopolitanism as influential patterns of cultural consumption in the West. This section will focus on book reading in relation to these trends. In book clubs in Britain, reading is a desirable norm and readers feel encouraged to talk about the various works of literature they’ve read. According to Bourdieu, literary and artistic culture remains the form *par excellence* of disinterested culture, and therefore the most legitimate mark of distinction (1984: 315). Concomitantly, owning many books is also a positive attribute. A reader I interviewed at the Southwest Library, a retired teacher, for example, seemed to equate having a lot of books with being a heavily engaged reader:

Interviewer: Do you like reading books? Or how often do you read books?

Reader: Oh yeah, I’ve got a lot of books at home. I’m more of a non-fiction reader than fiction. But... I just finished *Wolf Hall*. [...]

Interviewer: So, would you say you read a book per month? More frequently, or less frequently?

Reader: I’ve always got books on the go. I must have at least three hundred books in my house. I think I’ve got books in nearly every room. Too many books... My grandson said “Have you read all these books?” I said “No, I haven’t read all these books.”  
[laughs]

Owning books is not the same as reading books of course, but book ownership does signal high literary capital, and having an object at one's disposal has an added value in relation to just having used it once. For example, one benefit would be to potentially be able to lend the book to someone, but ironically, many bibliophiles are anxious about giving their books out for fear that their cherished possessions might not return to them – the use personalized bookplates illustrates this anxiety. It is a common finding in the study of consumerism that people demonstrate their taste and social standing in the objects they own and make social meanings through their use of possessions (Lury 1996: 32-79, Slater 1997: 148-173). The above reader's reluctance to answer the question regarding the frequency of his reading might have to do with the fact that he enjoys collecting books more than he enjoys reading them – a possession ritual, according to Grant McCracken (1988). Personal objects such as books may also have special “emotional” value because according to Tim Dant (2000), the meaning of each possession is shaped by the interaction between the object and the user. This might partly explain why readers will purchase a copy of a favourite library book for themselves. Ownership of books is linked to social standing. Wright suggests that there are strong relationships between occupational categories and book ownership in Britain today: people employed in higher professional jobs are most likely to own books (2006: 127). The pattern for readership is slightly different, although the figure in Wright's chart representing higher professional occupations is also considerably high; the occupational group who seems to read the highest number of books is semi-routine operations (*ibid*).

During fieldwork, I came across many readers embracing omnivorousness. Although most of them like to sample a wide variety of reading material, some mark their preferences in taste through exclusivity. I met two readers from the Southwest Village Book Club, one of them explained that she does not enjoy crime fiction and autobiographies:

A: I read books all the time. They're always open on the table [...]. I like reading, practically everything – it's more what I don't like reading and I don't like, normally, like crime or detective stories but I've left that.

[...]

B: Don't you like P.D. James?

A: No.

B: Aaah...

A: I got some, from a charity shop, a big compendium of P.D. James and I read it all the way to the end and couldn't care what happened to any of them.

B: Oh, right...

[...]

A: [...] I read autobiographies but not very often actually.

[...]

Interviewer: So, characterization is one of the aspects that you're interested in a novel.

A: Yes, and lots of descriptions I like, really thick, Dickensian novels. [laughs]

Reader A marks the boundaries of her omnivorous reading through what Warde and others (2007) define as taste and participation: she has read novels that she has an aversion to, but allegedly without enjoying them. These two readers then named their favourite literature programmes on Radio 4 and strongly recommended that I – as a non-British – listen to them. In reader A's opinion, Radio 4 is "really key, because you also get dramatizations of *really* good books." With a reference to Dickens, reader A signalled her preference for highbrow material in reading. Listening to Radio 4, another high status cultural activity also appeared alongside the "everything" that she enjoys. This reader, then, comes across as someone who has an eclectic pattern of aesthetic engagement.

The reader I interviewed at Waterstones London II explained that she goes through phases with reading; reads heavily for a few years, and less in the next couple of years. At the time, she was reading one, or sometimes two books a week, so definitely an engaged reader, presumably with considerable cultural capital. I met her right before a book group discussion on Herman Hesse's *The Glass Bead Game* (1970), and she implied that she endorsed omnivorousness by declaring that she reads a variety of books, her favourite genres including fantasy and historical fiction, often enjoyed for reasons of pleasure. In terms of authors and plots, she said she's open to anything, and when she was discussing books she read by international authors, she mentioned that she liked to learn a bit about other cultures, signalling cosmopolitan dispositions. She clearly stated that she does not read autobiographies, and the way she put it suggested that she actually meant celebrity autobiographies, which means

that this genre marked the symbolic boundaries of her omnivorousness. Readers' dispositions determine cultural incompatibilities as well as preferences: remember that the Southwest Village reader also mentioned she is not a regular reader of autobiographies, contrasted with what is perceived as "literary fiction" or "serious fiction" by readers: "really thick, Dickensian novels."

The Waterstones London II reader said she usually reads on the train to and from work, and if it's a really good book, also during the lunch break at work. "I'll read at home, I'll read anywhere that I can, if it's a good book, I'll get it out even for five seconds – just to read a little bit more." When I asked her if she read Steig Larsson's *Millennium Trilogy*, she said she read the first two books and has the last volume at home. She also stated that she sometimes "speedreads" a book initially and then goes back to it later to reread it at a normal pace. In this second reading she picks up things she may have overlooked before. This reader's description of her reading behaviour indicates that she reads both for utilitarian reasons and for pleasure. With regard to her earlier comments suggesting omnivorousness and cosmopolitanism, we may conclude that the status and entertainment dimensions explored in the preceding section cut across these two patterns of cultural consumption.

Bennett and others (2008) explore the relations between demographic factors and taste. Their study reveals that tastes in literature are related to class and educational capital in contemporary Britain. For example, people with degrees are more likely to appreciate modern literature, the category that's often called literary fiction in industrial contexts, as opposed to genre literature (2008: 105). Therefore, distinction and taste converge for Britons with cultural capital.

Cosmopolitanism is a positive attribute among contemporary middle class Britons, manifested in their lifestyle preferences, from eating and holidays to cultural consumption. This norm, especially the consumerist type, is endorsed by media and advertising as well: as Craig Calhoun writes, today "it seems hard not to want to be a citizen of the world" (2002: 89). The great marker of cosmopolitanism in Britain has been travel. John Urry sees tourism as a "modern" lifestyle element, associated with education and distinction in the UK, as it is believed to contribute to the conceptual and perceptual education of individuals (1990: 1-15):

If people do not travel, they lose status: travel is the marker of status. It is a crucial element of modern life to feel that travel and holidays are necessary. "I need a holiday" is the surest reflection of a modern discourse based on the idea that people's physical and mental health will be restored if only they can "get away" from time to time (*ibid*, 5).

The experience of being a tourist is defined by the hunt for symbolisms, which leads Urry to conclude that "tourists are in a way semioticians, reading the landscape for signifiers of certain pre-established notions or signs derived from various discourses of travel and tourism" (*ibid*, 12). Cosmopolitanism is a highly relevant orientation in the consumption of art, it involves the mobilization of cultural capital, as Hannerz (1996: 102-3) points out. As we will see in chapter 8, readers like to see reading translated fiction as a form of virtual travel; so we could expect consumers adopting a cosmopolitan stance to have a preference for international fiction. However, cosmopolitanism has ambiguous ramifications in the consumption of transnational cultural products. Mike Savage, David Wright and Modesto Gayo-Cal (2010) argue that in Britain, cosmopolitan consumption is moving towards a paradoxically Anglophone direction. Drawing from 25 focus groups, 1564 questionnaires and 44 interviews, they argue that British identities are being reformed by globalization, but cultural consumption in Britain is dominated by cultural products that do not require competence of a foreign language. Considering the fact that British identities have historically been linked to the "Empire" and trade, the authors propose that global cultural flows are remaking Britain's cultural referents in a decidedly Anglophone or post-imperial way. As a result, cultural products that come from the former colonies have been "ticking" the international "boxes" both in the industries and in everyday consumption. Irish writers being invited to an international literary festival, or readers naming Australian or Canadian authors against the backdrop of a cosmopolitan norm are just a few examples. The sources of cultural fascination for British art consumers used to come from continental Europe, but they have now shifted to a non-specific "other world." When asked about composers, film directors, authors or singers around the world, only a small percentage of Savage and colleagues' respondents have displayed knowledge of international art (see *ibid*, 606) leading the authors to conclude that while the "Other" has been rendered visible in its exoticness, it has remained invisible in the mundane. In the same vein, Viviana Fridman and Michelle Ollivier identify a cosmopolitanism that borders on exoticism: "In the

cultural domain, there operates [...] a certain sacralization of the local, but a local that is far away or in the past, defined as authentic, as opposed to the near and contemporary local, often perceived as banal, 'tacky' or *kitsch*" (2004: 109, my translation). Cosmopolitanism is one way in which omnivorousness may be put into practice without appearing to lower aesthetic standards. However, achieving distinction through omnivorous and cosmopolitan consumption creates a paradox as the demonstration of status collides with the egalitarian ethos of cosmopolitanism. In this case, cosmopolitans achieve distinction without leaving their comfort zone at the same time asserting superiority over the Other that they set out to embrace.

Books about other cultures, whether fiction or non-fiction, written by British or international authors, have been popular in book clubs since the 2000s. When sharing their reading experiences, readers mention on various occasions their trips abroad, their international friends, the foreign languages they speak, and the other international books they've read; in other words, they signal their cosmopolitan cultural capital. Contemporary Britons who read translated novels on a regular basis are also people who frequently read novels originally written in English, and they see this as an extension of being a well-read, well-travelled, internationally minded person within a cosmopolitan lifestyle. Readers who are open to translated fiction have a preference for books that are part of the genre that is called "literary fiction;" furthermore, following world literature is a trait that most literature enthusiasts aspire for, especially those well versed in the classics. My fieldwork with book groups provided ample evidence for middle class engaged readers' cosmopolitan dispositions. In the case of cosmopolitanism, tackling "foreign," therefore challenging literature adds another dimension to the status that reading literary fiction brings.

In book groups, discussions reveal that the members are people who are sensitive to international issues. They often quote reviews from left-leaning broadsheet papers, like *the Guardian* and *the Observer*. In the Southwest Library Evening Reading Group we once discussed *Imagine This* by the British-Nigerian author Sade Adeniran (2007). The book is a semi-autobiographical story of a girl who was born in the UK but was sent to Nigeria to live with her relatives at the age of nine. At the meeting, either from what they learned from the novel about the village that the protagonist lived, or from what they knew from elsewhere, members discussed aspects of Nigerian society. One reader

said she'd been to a school in Gambia, and had seen other parts of Africa, so she explained how in African school systems, there were "a lot of promises" but actually there "isn't much hope," meaning that the quality of education is not high. In the midst of this conversation, one reader shared her observations by starting with the negative identification, "In no way do I want to sound racist, and this is not a racist comment, but I met a lot of African people who..." Her remark highlights the self-control imposed by the touristic type of cosmopolitanism that she embraces. In the Afternoon Reading group hosted by the same library, another reader professed to liberal commitments while discussing Alaa al Aswany's (2007) novel *The Yacoubian Building*. This book's plot involves a homosexual affair with descriptions of the couple's private moments. Before she expressed that she found these details irritating, the reader felt the need to declare her general attitude: "I'm not a prim, I'm quite open-minded." One meeting of the Private Southwest Book Club started with an exchange on latest electronics: one of the readers mentioned that she found a restaurant in London the day before, using her new iPhone's restaurant locator feature. Another member of the group said she was considering buying an iPhone but was hesitant, prompting a third to point out that the iPhone owning member of the book group was very careful about it: "But you're not doing that thing that I worry about, which is, like, you always have it, and it's always on, 'Who'll see me use it?'" This comes across as a clear indication of a symbolic avoidance of ostentation. In Waterstones South branch, group members were discussing the thematization of sexual violence in Steig Larsson's *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo* when one of them said she does not enjoy reading about strong violence in the novels. Another suggested that authors "ought to" bring up such issues in their work. She felt that she was mistaken for not being aware of the issue, and profusely explained that she was:

I'm only saying I had a problem reading it, I'm not saying it never occurs. I mean, the thing is, I know it occurs, and I'm only too aware; you know me, I'm more than aware that this happens. But I don't necessarily want to [laughs] you know what I mean? [...] It's not that I'm being ignorant, saying "Oh, you know, this doesn't happen," I'm afraid I'm only too aware this happens, to women in particular.

In these examples, readers used their cosmopolitan dispositions to reinforce the symbolic boundaries between themselves and the types of



particularist opinions they contempt. Sometimes book club venues are literally sites of staging elective affinities. At the Community Centre Book Club, there is a charity desk in the room where meetings take place. On the desk, there are sale items from Zaytoun, a Community Interest Company that aims to create and develop a UK market for Palestinian products like olive oil and olive oil soap ([www.zaytoun.org](http://www.zaytoun.org)). The products are fair trade and priced noticeably higher than supermarket prices, evidently with the idea that purchasers will be contributing to the Palestinian economy. With this reading group, we read and discussed Raja Shehadeh's (2007) *Palestinian Walks: Notes on a Vanishing Land*, the memoir of a Palestinian human rights lawyer chronicling the events that lead to the current situation. Before and after group meetings, I remember seeing members dropping the correct amount of money into the money box next to the products to buy bottles of olive oil. These individuals seize the opportunity to support a political cause that comes to them during a social gathering primarily aimed at entertainment. The Palestinian issue brought up cosmopolitan voluntary affiliations among the readers who attended a literary festival as well. In June 2010, *London Review of Books* organized the second World Literature Weekend with the theme "Language and Exile." There were a number of panels with writers from various parts of the world and around 50 listeners. The audience consisted of British listeners of white ethnic background, most of whom looked over 40.<sup>32</sup> There were more female listeners than male, and they looked mostly professional. Speakers of one event were the Lebanese author Elias Khoury, the French-Moroccan author and poet Tahar Ben Jelloun, and Iraqi-Israeli author Eli Amir. Given the topic – exile – and the cultural background of the panellists, the conversations steered from time to time to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. The audience overall seemed to be sympathizing with the Palestinian cause. When Elias Khoury was referring to the unacceptability of the Oslo Accords, for example, there were nods of agreement in the front rows, and fervent head-shaking of disapproval as Eli Amir was arguing that it was the Palestinian Arabs who started the war by resisting the Jews arriving in Israel in 1948. Dressing styles and elements of comportment also indicated a progressive, left-leaning worldview. In other words, the audience here manifested their dispositions in their bodily *hexis*

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<sup>32</sup> My Arab friends and I could not help but notice that we were the only non-Western members of the audience, and the only 20-somethings.

(Bourdieu 1984). To conclude, in contexts pertaining to literature and books, positive attributes are displayed through a variety of cultural cues, rather than simply through comments on the reading material.

Chapters 7 and 8 will examine British readers' responses to translated fiction against the backdrop of the status and pleasure aspects of reading, and the omnivorous and cosmopolitan norms. As we will see, complex meanings are attached to the reading of international literature, and the reactions to themes and events in plots are inflected by readers' *habitus* and voluntary affiliations. Moreover, the reading group orientation largely prescribes which aspects of the books will be foregrounded while others are pushed to the background.

#### **4.6 Book Groups: Reading Communities**

As explained in chapter 2, reading is not entirely a solitary activity. Readers' choices and perspectives are informed as they consult public spheres, including the Internet, literary magazines and reading groups. Most people enjoy talking about books with their friends, and according to Iser, this is something that the reader needs in order to "sort out" their "entanglement" with the fictional account (1980: 131). Book groups are structured public spheres, or reading communities, where members compare and contrast their way of disentangling the story; furthermore, through group interaction this entanglement acquires new layers. A relatively recent phenomenon, these organizations are quite widespread in Britain.

In medieval times, reading was a communal activity – one person read the book out loud, while others listened. People "listening" to the same book formed early "reading" communities which had a discernable social function and which operated through the shared cultural practice of the members (see Howe 1993). Individual and silent reading is characterized as a "modern" phenomenon, although reading has always been seen as a way of communication (see Mann 1982). Modern collective fiction reading started in the 1990s in the UK – TV and radio programmes, newspaper and magazine pages dedicated to book "clubs" were for the first time popular in this decade.

Today, book groups operating in the UK are quite varied, but certain elements are common to most. According to Jenny Hartley's (2001) research with 350 reading groups between 1999 and 2000, 6-10 people is the usual size

of a book club. 38% of these 350 book groups have been meeting for less than two years, 29% for 2-5 years, 12% 6-10 years and 21% more than 10 years. 36% of the book groups were rural, while 35% urban and 28% suburban, which shows that book groups are a far-reaching phenomenon in the UK. 80% of the groups meet in houses, whereas 6% meet in libraries and 14% in other venues. The majority of groups meet once a month while 27% of them meet less frequently. 33% of groups have members aged between 40-49, and the same percentage with members aged 50+. Perhaps unsurprisingly, 69% of the participating groups are all female with only 27% mixed. In 88% of the book groups, more than half of the members have higher education. Finally, more than half of the members of 67% of groups are in paid work (*ibid*, 151-57). The typical book group member that emerges from these statistics is therefore middle-aged, educated, professional and female, which fits in with how one of my respondents described book groups in chapter 3. Although most book clubs are short-lived, the fact that the vast majority convenes in houses suggests that they have been built on existing personal networks. The age bias indicates that many people consider joining a book club after retirement, which means that the social aspect is prioritized.

If we look at what these groups read, fiction accounts for 82%. The nationality of authors read is strongly skewed towards Anglophone authors: 53% British, 26% North American, 8% other, 7% European and 6% Irish (Hartley 2001: 158-59). If we assume that all Irish authors write in English, a staggering 85% of all books read emerge as written originally in English, with only 15% potentially translated from other languages, bearing in mind the fact that there are quite a few international authors, from the Indian sub-continent for example, who write in English. Members of book groups try to make sure they choose titles that would appeal to the majority; that is why these groups are known to be rather conservative in their taste. Book groups that are based on existing circles of friends tend to be more focused in their preferences. Public reading groups<sup>33</sup> – organized by libraries or bookshops – usually do not impose books on people. One group leader explained to me that the only rule was to start reading the book, and they did not have to finish it if they did not find it enjoyable or interesting.

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<sup>33</sup> As indicated in chapter 3, I conducted fieldwork with mainly public reading groups.

Booksellers support reading groups to varying degrees. Most of them are happy to give advice, some host their meetings by providing space and staff support. Waterstones South does not have space in their shop floor for example, so their reading group convenes at a nearby café. Some booksellers may offer a discount to members for their chosen book. Waterstones London II and Waterstones Southwest are among the ones who print out leaflets to list past and possible future titles.

Book groups organized by libraries are led by an appointed librarian, who either chooses the books or helps members select from the available reading sets. Although they try not to act as an authority, their role could be at least defined as a cultural intermediary. The act of choosing books appropriate for that specific reading group involves some sort of judgement based on literary capital, and discussion leaders often find themselves in a position of clarifying, or refreshing readers' memories on, elements of the book during the discussion. The librarian responsible for running the Evening Reading Group at the Southwest Library is working overtime to be present at the evening meetings without extra pay. He has on several occasions expressed that he is doing it because he likes it, and members have repeatedly commented that they would not have read these books if somebody had not chosen it for them and bring it to every meeting. The librarian can be said to be spending his time and effort for the service of the group in the spirit of (economic) disinterestedness and with an *illusio* for symbolic capital, alongside pleasure.

Many readers come to book club discussion having read an online review, some a few, including readers' reviews on Amazon.co.uk. These reviews certainly colour their interpretation of the book, even if they save the reviews for when they've finished reading. At a group discussion, most group members have already formed an opinion on the book. I came across a few readers who brought notes about the book or had earmarked pages of their copy, otherwise most of what members say about the books is from memory. Fellow readers may fill in missing information, but fleeting memories from the book are shaped according to the direction of the discussion, with some information moving to the foreground and some to the background. The atmosphere of the meeting does have a real effect of what the readers will take away from it, and from the book too. There will be a discussion in chapter 8 on belief formation in book group discussions.

Interaction and common lifestyle preferences are of key importance for groups that are not based on existing communities. At reading clubs that meet in libraries and bookshops, people usually sit in a circle with nibbles and drinks served on a table or coffee table. The librarian at the Southwest Library Afternoon Reading Group went for white chocolate clusters and chocolate dipped biscuits from M&S, accompanied by fruit juice, while the Evening Group leader bought a box of “Celebration” chocolate, and always had a bottle of red wine at hand. The reading group I visited at London Library I met at dinner time, and the librarian served them brie, paté and slices of baguette, again with red wine. Thus, the sense of cultural distinction was evident in complementary sources in the book group experience. Moreover, food and drink fuel conversations and widen book-centred relationships into broader socializing. In this respect, reading groups are social communities that function through norms and routines, and books give structure to their meetings.

These groups function as small-scale communities, or “public spaces” (Habermas 1989) due to the collective interaction with the text, and the social relationships involved. Hartley argues that “a reading group isn’t just about reading; it’s about reading in a context, a context which is fostered by the group, and which in turn affects the whole experience of reading” (2001: 22). The smaller the group, the better the attendance rate, and the intensity of the community feeling. Here readers relate the events of the book to their own lives, and use the opportunity as an outlet for opinions and feelings. According to Fuller and Procter, “book group discussion is typically intersectional, involving processes such as cross-cultural identification, and the sharing of perspectives and interpretations in a process that is both collaborative and dialogic” (2009: 29). Each reading community fosters its own collective *habitus*, which is shaped by the individual *habitus*es of the readers and which in turn, guides their dispositions in the group. Reading groups therefore have different motives and orientations in their reading activity: some operate as a primarily social group, with the entertainment function in the forefront, while others have a cultural or literary orientation, focusing on the social issues represented in the plot or the text’s aesthetic dimensions. We will see how the various orientations of book groups play out in their interpretations of translated fiction in chapter 8.

Functions of the reading community include organizing members’ reading activities and introducing them to new material. Members have often

said “I would have never picked up this book otherwise – but I’m glad I read it.” The reader I interviewed from a private reading group in the South said that he likes going to a book group because it keeps him “reading fiction” as he tends to lean towards non-fiction in his own time. In some groups I have visited, members seemed to know each other’s preferences, favourite authors, or pet peeves. In a smaller library in the Southwest, one member said about another who was not present at the meeting: “Every Christmas she reads *A Christmas Carol* (1843) and has done it for donkey’s years.” In most groups, some members meet outside of the reading circle as well. The group I visited in the South told me about their trip to Lyme Regis after reading Tracy Chevalier’s (2009) *Remarkable Creatures*, a 19<sup>th</sup> century story of a woman who discovers unknown dinosaur fossils in the cliffs near her home in a coastal town. When I met them for the monthly meeting, a few members were looking at the photos they took during the trip, and one brought with her the brochure of the Lyme Regis Museum for those who could not make it. Occasionally members of the afternoon reading groups in Southwest Library left the meeting in twos and threes, and in most reading groups members let other members know if they will not be able to attend the meeting, so that they can pass on their message and apologies. Readers in the evening reading group give each other lifts as the meeting finished usually after 8 in the evening. In other words, some reading groups function in a way that’s not too different from friendship circles.

As Hartley’s data confirms, most book groups are organized around existing neighbourhood communities. She defines these as micro-neighbourhoods where neighbourhood talk, or gossip, steals some of the time that has been set aside for the discussion of books (2001:14). One reading group that I heard about in a Southwest village was operating on a local basis like this. The group was composed of women only, who were meeting for 15 years, and one member said that they would like to keep it that way because they can get “quite gynaecological” sometimes. They also felt that men tend to “take over” discussions. They had practical reasons for keeping the number around 10 – that was the number of people who would comfortably be seated in their living rooms. And if the group grew too big, it would be difficult to hear what each other said.

Shared tastes and aesthetic preferences are known to consolidate group solidarity in the consumption of art (DiMaggio 1987). In book clubs, Nell (1988)

conceptualizes this as intergroup consistency in terms of literary judgements. In groups that I visited in my fieldwork, members did not display high consistency for aesthetic judgements. There were many instances where individual readers agreed with one another on aspects of the book of course. For example, in one meeting of the Southwest Library Afternoon reading group, one reader found the book not emotionally involving, and the other interrupted him mid-sentence: “I think that’s very interesting [...] ‘cause as you’re speaking, you’re also voicing [...] quite a lot of what I think I was feeling. I did realize that that was missing, the emotion, for me.” However, I often felt that what made the book group discussion stimulating for them was to point out differences of opinion (see Swann and Allington 2009). The South reader found his reading group stimulating precisely for this reason. He mentioned a [book] that “absolutely split the group down in the middle: men liked it, women hated it” referring to the disagreements of the aesthetic kind.

Members of book clubs like to compare what they thought of the main characters. One reader in London said “I didn’t particularly really like any of the characters, I think that was quite surprising. I didn’t have any strong feelings about them at all.” This feature of the book did not live up to the expectations of the reader, who did not find it engaging. In the case of collective reading in a book group, readers discuss book characters and events as if they’re discussing mutual friends or real events taking place around them (cf. Alter 1989:50). What I have also noticed is that they like to discuss the “story behind the book” – for example, when Steig Larsson’s *Millennium Trilogy* was mentioned in book groups, quite a few readers seemed to know that the author died before the books were out, that the protagonist mirrored the author in his career and political stance, his partner was involved in a legal battle for the copyright, a Hollywood film production company was planning to shoot a remake of the Swedish films, and the author’s partner was completing a fourth book that Larsson had left unfinished. These examples indicate that readers make books – together with the characters, and the author – a part of their social reality.

Community norms like tact and congeniality are in place in reading groups. Moreover, cohesion is a requisite for a pleasant reading community. A member of the Southwest Village Book Club recounted a bad experience in one of the meetings, when somebody said something “unfortunate:”

Arising from [Émile Zola's] *Bête Humaine*, about... umm... somebody said, that, they thought it showed too much of the sad, miserable, mean, violent side of life and somehow we got on to child murder and there's been a lot of that in this, in England – you must have seen cases in the paper. And somebody talked about the Bulger case, which happened some years ago: two ten-year-old boys killed a two-year-old toddler. And, I think I said that ... and they had to, they were treated as adults, these boys. They ended up in secure units, segregate sections, they [were] put through an adult court and I said "That's just wrong" and somebody said, "They should be put up against the wall and shot" and she meant it. And she's somebody's guest and suddenly, 'cause we're totally English, we didn't ... [laughs] started talking about something else! [...] We didn't know what to say, and it was just ... [...] We've never had a jarring tone like that – we argue about the books but we never had anything like that.

What this group member calls "jarring" is an attitude that she cannot associate with the dispositions of the other group members. Book group members like to share at least a minimum of common perspectives on social matters. Moreover, this incident unites others in the group in their disapproving stance and serves to reinforce the culture of the social formation (Gabriel 1991). On the other hand, group dynamics make up for any perceived distance between members, reinforcing the idea that collective reading is deeply social. In one of the book group discussions I attended in the Midlands, Georgio Bassani's (1978) *The Garden of The Finzi-Continis* was found to be culturally distant. The book is about the Jewish community in Ferrara, Italy, shortly before the Second World War. Two members said: "They are living a way of life in a time that we don't recognize," "And not just a time, a whole culture too [...]" There are two ways in which you find it slightly alienating I suppose." Other members agreed, but the distance the readers perceived between their Selves and the reality of the book was bridged after a member implied, 17 minutes in, that she was Jewish: "My grandmother phoning my dad... So I went to Israel and had a boyfriend. 'What she doing with this Sephardi Jew, why is she not with an Askena-', you know, she was completely horrified." Then she went on to discuss social segregation and prejudice in Israel upon which a member commented, "But that's just human nature, isn't it?" and the others uttered their murmurs of agreement. After that there was much discussion of history and society and everyone seemed to put in what they knew about Jews, or the Second World War, including historical facts and comments about the collective



psyche. One reader added that she needed more footnotes<sup>34</sup> of historical explanation, for example about the different synagogues that people went to in Ferrara. Later in the discussion, the reader who identified herself as Jewish told us about a powerful and moving book she read about the oppression of Palestinians by the Israeli authorities: *Mornings in Jenin*, by Susan Abulhawa (2010), and another member compared it to *Waltz with Bashir*, Ari Folman's (2008) film about the Israel-Lebanon war of 1982. The discussion concluded in a cosmopolitan atmosphere.

In previous discussions, we saw how individuals strive for moral improvement through reading – in terms of Iser's (1980) notion of "entanglement" and Currie (1998) and Wittmann's (1999:293) ideas of humanistic betterment. Readers' moral engagement seems to be extended to a contextualization of cosmopolitan aspirations. Through position-takings on issues on a global scale, members of reading communities locate themselves in the wider social world. The discussion at book group meetings then can be regarded as an enterprise of ontological translation – in the sense that Ricoeur (2006) discusses translation as an ethical paradigm. The concerted effort of interpretation serves to "translate the world" into their understanding, and then translate themselves into a position in social reality.

#### **4.7 The Publishing Industry in Contemporary Britain**

Chapter 2 discussed the role of symbolic value in book production. The economic and symbolic dimensions of publishing in Britain have often created tension, which has been influential in the dynamics of the book market in the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries. While publishing was seen as a family business before the Second World War, in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, gradually small publishers were taken over by larger firms to form conglomerates. By the 1970s, the top five publishing corporations claimed 70% of paperback sales (Murdock and Golding 1979: 25). Concentration has meant that fewer central powers own the means of production and determine the main trends in publishing. In the last few decades, these oligopolies have attracted criticism for the selection of books that are available on the market (see Barnsley 1996: 37).

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<sup>34</sup> As we will see in chapter 7 on Translation as Linguistic Transference, translators' footnotes in works of fiction are not popular among British readers.

Book retailers formed oligopolies too. Especially in the 1990s, through mergers and acquisitions, chain bookshops grew to dominate the market (Clark 2001: 69). Some of these chains operate a centralized buying system, whereby specialized buyers based at the headquarters decide (at least part of) what all the branches should stock and how much (*ibid*, 72). This situation has heightened publishers' concerns over sales, and as a result, they try to pre-sell their books to central buyers before they decide on their print runs (*ibid*, 123). In some cases, entire book projects are cancelled if the demand forecasted by central buyers is low. This system has been blamed for the lack of diversity in the book market.

Along with concentration, the profit-orientation tendency has intensified in the last decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The book market followed the 1980s shift of power from producers to consumers in the other industries. This meant that “the capacity to determine the form, nature and quality of goods and services moved from the former to the latter” (Abercrombie 1990: 172). “Although publishing has, of course, always been commercial, such a producer culture meant that the mission to produce good books would often outweigh commercial considerations [...] The producer culture has been undermined by the growing importance of commercial considerations, especially those of profit” (*ibid*, 175-76).<sup>35</sup> In line with the general transition from Fordism to post-Fordism, mass-marketing methods in the publishing industry were replaced by more market-oriented approaches (*ibid*, 183). As a result, books are marketed today in a way that is not very different from the marketing of Fast Moving Consumer Goods categories (*ibid*, 175).

One illustrative example is the work of Jane Austen, lauded today as an integral part of the English canon, considered to have passed the test of time. Several of her novels were the subject of an experiment in 2007, when David Lassman, the director of the Jane Austen Festival in Bath, sent slightly altered versions of *Northanger Abbey* (1817), *Persuasion* (1818), and *Pride and Prejudice* (1813) to 18 publishers in the UK as unsolicited manuscripts and was rejected by all of them. Bloomsbury publishers turned down Lassman's version of *Northanger Abbey* on grounds that it did not fit in with their list. J.K. Rowling's agent Christopher Little found the experimental *Persuasion* “difficult to place.”

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<sup>35</sup> See Leavis (1990) for a discussion of the origins of market-orientation in literary production in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

His *Pride and Prejudice* – under the title *First Impressions*, which Austen herself initially considered for her book – was also rejected by publishers including Penguin and Jonathan Cape (Morris 2007). Although one could find alternative explanations for publishers' rejection of Morris's manuscripts, the most plausible reasons are to do with the changing nature of literary production. The plots and styles of the altered novels presumably carry strong resemblances to the original Austen novels, so the lack of appeal indicates that British publishers, in their quest for fresh and original ideas, find the literary qualities of the Austen manuscripts outdated. This example is a clear indicator of the value orientation in the publishing environment today.

Prior to the 1980s, the main division among publishing houses was that of highbrow and midbrow, discernible in the format of their books. Giles Clark illustrates the difference between hardback and paperback publishers with reference to their architecture:

The hardback general publishers inhabited their fine but slowly decaying Georgian houses in Bloomsbury, around Bedford Square, and in other high-class London locations. The palatial former reception rooms, with Adam marble fireplaces and hung with chandeliers, were impressive settings for the managing director or the editorial director. [...] The mass-market paperback reprinters occupied concrete office blocks in cheaper London locations. Theirs was a sales-driven operation (Clark 2001: 16).

In the 80s however, this division between highbrow and lowbrow blurred. Sales is now a concern for more or less every publisher, while format is not the sole determinant of a novel's literary positioning. Another dichotomy took shape, however: that between large publishers and smaller independents and imprints. Smaller publishing houses are run by fewer people, who handle fewer books; which suggests that more time, effort, and personal attention goes to the making of each title. Serpent's Tail is an example for an imprint, which was independent until 2007, when it was taken over by Profile. The publishing house is famous for issuing paperback originals and has earned recognition with several international prizes (see King 2006). Their list reflects an eclectic taste for neglected authors and marginal themes. Pete Ayrton, the founder, shares an interesting insight in an interview:

I think, more and more, writers and agents are seeing that if you want to win a major literary prize, if anything it's an advantage to be published by an independent. It

certainly isn't a disadvantage. And more and more authors who are financially independent – they have money, or work in universities [...] – are telling their agents they're not worried about the advance, they just want a house where they will be loved, nurtured, cherished, where we can do good things. So we are now receiving submissions from people who, even three years ago, it would have been inconceivable to imagine approaching us (Noel 2006: 108).

Ayrton's words of "love," "nurturing" and "cherishing" indicate that independent publishers carry a special aura in terms of their attitude to their business: they have a stronger sense of *illusio* and they invest symbolic capital to their titles. If we were to make an analogy to the film industry, the large publishing houses would be producing blockbusters in large numbers, while independent houses meticulously work on their art house films. Therefore, even if a concern for sales has dominated the publishing business for the last decades, producing books still has symbolic implications, as Bourdieu's (1993, 1996) field theory envisages. Chapter 5 will concentrate on publishers of translated fiction and discuss the manifestations of symbolic value in the production of translations.

#### **4.8 Conclusion**

In this chapter we examined the role of reading in the life of engaged readers. Throughout history, reading has satisfied many needs and performed a multitude of functions for consumers of culture. Moreover, print culture has been an indispensable part of the social and cultural scene. Today, reading emerges as not only a form of private entertainment but also a socially situated activity as it is intimately linked to self-identity and distinction. The positive attributes of omnivorousness and cosmopolitanism are fully imbricated in a bourgeois lifestyle and a liberal political stance. The consumption of translated fiction activates the cosmopolitan and, to a certain degree, the omnivorous disposition, but as mentioned before, these two norms have incoherent applications.

## **5 The Three Per Cent: Economic and Symbolic Value**

### **5.1 Introduction**

The social and cultural aspects of the practice of reading have been laid out in chapters 2 and 4. In order to set the frame for the uses of translated novels by British readers, an investigation into the conditions of production is necessary. Therefore, this chapter will discuss the marginal position of translated fiction in the UK book market. The analysis will be extended to the creation of economic value in the field of literary production and the symbolic value invested into translated fiction by smaller, independent publishers and imprints. We will also touch upon readers' resistance to translated fiction.

### **5.2 Translations in the UK**

The UK book publishing industry is one of the largest in Europe. These figures from the Publishers Association give an idea of the size of the UK book market: publishers sold an estimated 739m books in 2010, generating an invoiced value of approximately £ 3115m. According to ISBN registrations, 3151 publishing houses were active during this year. Moreover, the total number of new and revised titles published across the country was 151,969 (The Publishers Association 2011). It is estimated that only 3% of the books published in the UK are translations, which includes all genres and text types (Wischenbart *et al* 2008: 13, Bookseller 2010:24, see also Heilbron and Sapiro 2007: 96). This figure is based on estimates, and as such, it can only provide rough guidance. However, as a widely quoted percentage, it has been a source for lamentation among translators, literary critics and translation scholars as it denotes a lack of general attention to literary translation in the UK and implies that translated titles are not visible on the market. The figure is often contrasted to corresponding statistics in continental Europe, where the percentage of translation is well into double-digit numbers. On the other side of the coin, Daniel Hahn, an active member of the Translators Association, points out that even a low percentage – like 3% – of a very large market – over 150000 titles each year – means a considerable number of titles. Moreover, international fiction coming from other Anglophone markets such as USA, Canada, Australia, New Zealand and the Indian sub-continent is excluded from this figure of translated fiction, whereas books from these literatures would normally be included in the percentage of translations in continental European markets

(Hahn 2007). Therefore, the case might be made that this figure, which is dwarfed next to those of European markets, is a misleading point of comparison.

Still, the fact that literature in translation accounts for so little of the market is an indicator of some value. Translation theorist Lawrence Venuti points to the imbalance between translation from and into English, and actually links this situation to the political hegemony of the USA:

By routinely translating large numbers of the most varied English-language books, foreign publishers have exploited the global drift towards American political and economic hegemony since World War II, actively supporting the international expansion of British and American cultures. British and American publishers, in turn, have reaped the financial benefits of successfully imposing English-language cultural values on a vast foreign readership, while producing cultures in the United Kingdom and the United States that are aggressively monolingual, unreceptive to foreign literatures, accustomed to fluent translations that invisibly inscribe foreign texts with British and American values and provide readers with the narcissistic experience of recognizing their own culture in a cultural order (2008: 12).

Commentators in the industry have denounced this imbalance as “chauvinism” and “cultural insularity” on the part of the British (see Bush 2009). However, a closer examination of the book market indicates that the unpopularity of translated books is not directly related to a lack of interest in other cultures (culture, in the broader sense of the term, meaning way of life) but results from a resistance to the literary, or textual-linguistic properties of translated novels. As such, one factor preventing more translations is the supply of Anglophone global or transnational writing, usually with a postcolonial connection, which is claiming more and more readers at the expense of local authors from around the world. International writers writing in English, or British authors writing about other societies and geographies are gaining success on the assumed literary standards invested in the English language, consolidating the belief that the British “can read the world in English” (Hopkinson 2011). Graham Huggan attributes the popularity of such accounts legitimized by a staged, unmediated authenticity to the “global commodification of cultural difference” (2001:i). Aravind Adiga for example, is a much-hyped transnational author. His début novel *The White Tiger* (2008), depicting contemporary India, won the Man Booker Prize in 2008 and instantly became a sales success. The

book contains sensuous and poignant passages relating the life of the protagonist, an uneducated person from a disadvantaged background eventually making a leap on the social ladder through a crime he's committed. The themes of corruption and servitude are explored extensively in the novel, portrayed as endemic in the Indian society. The treatment of these issues has caused uproar in the author's native country (Jeffries 2008) but a reader I interviewed in a city in the South seems to have enjoyed the book for this reason. He remembers the reaction of his reading group to his novel:

I really liked it, I think most people really liked it. [...] I think that was the best one in 2009. That was again, thinking a lot of the tropes of what you're expecting from an Indian, Indian novel: Arundhati Roy, umm... [...] that sort of vast, sweeping India as both urban and rural and the sense of tradition again, in those other books. And *White Tiger* kind of [...] [stuck] a dynamite under it all, blew it all, very very cynical, brutal, very impressive novel. So yeah, that went down very well.

Interviewer: So by, "expectations from an Indian novel" you mainly refer to themes, rather than, like the narrative structure etc?

Yeah. [...] Part of the thing about our book group is that we do tend to do themes. My mum is the only person who goes into details on style. But we tend to do themes and characterization. [...] Yeah, I think our expectations of what an Indian novel would be were destroyed by *The White Tiger*. It was much less romantic about India.

The reader's justification of their positive reaction to the book signals ambivalence about what would be anticipated from an "Indian novel." He praises *The White Tiger* for not idealizing India, but what he values in the book – a "brutal account" – seems to be the treatment of local themes that he has not read about before. Paradoxically for this reader, the book was beyond expectations from an Indian novel in an "Indian" way. Another example of successful transnational literature is *The Kite Runner* (2003) by Khaled Hosseini. Again a debut novel, *The Kite Runner* has been immensely popular, was voted the reading group book of 2006 in the UK, made into a film in 2007, even created an eponymous category of books in the industry. The plot is set in Afghanistan and deals with the local history to a considerable extent, mixing it with social issues of the 1970s. Hosseini wrote another book in English, *A Thousand Splendid Suns* (2007), which reached #2 on Amazon.com before its

publication. These authors might have chosen to write in English, to give more currency to their work. According to Ulf Hannerz, using the language of Western Europe and North America to make consumers from these regions as much at home as possible is an evidence of centre-periphery relationships at play (1996: 107). And research by Graham Huggan (2001) reveals that post-colonial literature is effectively promoted by virtue of its exotic properties in the West.

There are also British and American writers picking up international themes to make their books appealing in the current literary climate. One example from the past decade is Louis de Bernières, whose *Captain Corelli's Mandolin* (1994) has been a book group favourite and again made into a film (2001). The British author set his book in Cephalonia, one of the Greek islands, a prime summer destination for British tourists. Both *Captain Corelli's Mandolin* and *Birds Without Wings* (2004), a subsequent book set in Turkey, are set against the backdrop of the two world wars. The latter tells of the impossible love between a Greek woman and Turkish man at the height of Greek-Turkish atrocities in early 1920s, also contains passages on modern Turkish history, covering milestones and iconic figures. One reader I met at the Waterstones London I reading group meeting told me that the book taught her “an awful lot about the Ottoman Empire,” “particularly about Gallipoli, about the [First World] War.” She found all the details interesting, and thought that being Turkish, I would have “obviously” read the book. When I explained that I had started reading the book, but left it halfway as I thought it was not meant for Turkish readers, she agreed. I had found the book overtly “instructive” and she said that this was the reason she liked it:

We learn about the Turks and the Ottoman Empire, from the historical point of view, we learn in history at school. When I was at school – ‘50s, a long time ago – it was all ... very prejudiced point of view, you know, and really this sort of opened my eyes [to] what the Ottoman Empire was like, their side of the story in the First World War.

As with *The White Tiger*, the perceived authenticity of the book is valued, without the problems associated with translation. These books provide the Anglophone reader with international content minus the inconvenience of a translation “filter.” Such novels are products of cosmopolitan consumption, like Italian food, Latin American music or Indian garments in the West. Middle class Britons, like their counterparts in the rest of Western Europe, enjoy foreign



products and experiences as part of a global value regime supported by a “cosmopolitan alterity industry” (Huggan 2001: 12).

Percentages of translated books published in European book markets show that the UK, Sweden and Netherlands are the countries that are the most resistant to translation. The UK is a striking case, considering the fact that readers in other northern European countries – e.g. Sweden and the Netherlands – do not rely so much on translation to read fiction from other national literatures, because many readers are able to read fiction written in English, German, Swedish and Dutch without difficulty. The most welcoming literary cultures, on the other hand, are Spain, Poland and Slovenia (data for Greece and Portugal not available, see Kovač and Wischenbart 2009). According to annual title production figures, UK and Germany have the most active publishing industries, yielding the largest revenue from book sales (see European Commission 2004).

In terms of book consumption figures, Finland, Denmark and the Netherlands have the highest library loan per capita rates whereas Greece, Luxemburg, Portugal and Spain have the lowest. In the UK, 52% percent of the population is considered “heavy readers” – the highest in Europe – followed by 46% in France, 44% in the Netherlands, Sweden and Ireland. The lowest percentages come from Portugal (15%) Spain (21%) and Greece (22%) (Kovač and Kovač Sebart 2005/2006: 64-65). The broad picture arising from these data seems to suggest a relationship between resistance to translation and the strength of reading culture, with Nothwestern Europe being very resistant and consuming books avidly and Southeastern Europe being more welcoming and being less passionate about books. Therefore, it might be more appropriate to attribute the reason behind the low popularity of translated fiction to the local book culture and market conditions than to assume it is due to a lack of interest in other societies. However, these percentages do not allow for a conclusion, and it is best to look at each case individually.

### **5.3 Incompatibility with Market Value Orientations**

On international literary exchange, Johan Heilbron and Gisele Sapiro argue that “the economic approach” provides an incomplete analysis since the market for symbolic goods operates through a different system of valuation (2007: 94). A further layer of complication that Heilbron and Sapiro seem to

overlook is the fact that translated literature operates through a system of valuation different from that of indigenous symbolic goods because texts do not bring their contexts with them as they cross linguistic and cultural borders (Bourdieu 1999).<sup>36</sup> In chapter 2, we saw John Frow's (1995: 144) application of Arjun Appadurai's (1986: 4) notion "regime of value" to literary markets. The reason why so few translations are published and read in the UK seems to be that these books do not fit in the value orientations of this literary culture. This happens to be the case both in the production and marketing side, and on the consumption side.

We will first focus on production. Translated books are assigned high cultural and symbolic value, but low market value, therefore of low financial value to publishers. The fee paid to the translator increases the production cost. In a survey carried out by Dalkey Archive Press with 36 publishers in Anglophone countries, 67.6% of respondents expressed that they expect to lose money from their translated titles (The Global Translation Initiative 2011:37). What industry professionals call "the commercial imperative," or what Bourdieu would call the heteronomous nature of the field of literary translation, does not produce favourable conditions for translated titles. Moreover, the market-oriented and profit driven nature of literary production in the UK has a detrimental effect for translations. British publishers are constantly on the lookout for "what the reader wants" and this means that bringing in texts produced in another literary culture and for another literary market seems unfeasible. The de-contextualization (Bourdieu 1999) puts "imported texts" at a difficult position. Literary production in some national contexts differs dramatically from the market-oriented way of publishing in the UK. China represents the other end of the spectrum; here all publishing is handled by the government's General Administration for Press and Publications. Authors send their manuscripts to the Administration, who orders them into a publication schedule, which also acts as a censorship mechanism. Censorship in other countries, like Iran, puts a tremendous constraint on the range of themes authors may address in their books, therefore themes explored in a novel is often limited to what is allowed.

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<sup>36</sup> See chapter 2 for a brief outline of Michaela Wolf's (2007b) discussion on the application of Bourdieu's (1996 [1992], 2009 [1993]) field theory to the translation industry.

Market-oriented literary production has manifold implications for translated titles. Engaged readers seek continuity in their reading, that is, once they have found a book or an author they like, they look for similar books or other books by the same author. Consequently, publishers want to be able to secure a succession of books from one author, for example by commissioning them to write another – similar – book if one has been successful. About their selection process, Pete Ayrton of *Serpent's Tail* explains: "You start from whether you like it yourself and whether you feel that this is an author that is worth supporting and is going to continue to write, because you're very unlikely to make a success with the first book you publish by an author" (Ayrton 2009). There is also the option of commissioning an author to write a book that has elements comparable to a successful book on another publisher's catalogue. The process of copyediting provides another safety measure to make sure that the book is readable and enjoyable for the specific target audience. Through processes of copy-editing, British publishers strive to make sure that manuscripts will appeal to the tastes of their target segment, both in terms of plot and narration. It is unrealistic to commission a book from an international author in the same way that publishers commission books from British authors. In translations, if publishers are happy with a particular translator's work, they want to be able to continue with the same person. Looking to publish several books written by the same author and translated by the same translator means that the time and effort invested in producing a book will be doubled because with translators, publishers also seek funding and try to engage a copy-editor who can read the source language. There are examples that worked: Maureen Freely translated five of Orhan Pamuk's books (for Faber and Faber), Jay Rubin worked on four of Haruki Murakami's books (Vintage) the two most popular novels of Roberto Bolaño were translated by Natasha Wimmer. However, it is difficult to obtain undivided time and attention from a publisher especially because relationships in the field of publishing are not durable (Wolf 2007b). Translated texts cannot be commissioned, and they cannot be altered in a copy-editing process either. Because they arrive at publishing houses as "finished texts," there is no room for structural changes; the copy-editors can only make suggestions at word level.

As translation increases the production cost of a book, publishers often seek funding for their translated titles. There are a number of possible sources

of subsidy in the UK, such as the English Pen, The European Platform for Literary Translation, Arts Council England and the EU. Moreover, UK publishers may apply for funding for numerous source country institutions aiming at promoting literatures worldwide, like the Institute for the Translation of Hebrew Literature in Israel, the Foundation for the Production and Translation of Dutch Literature in the Netherlands and the Next Page Foundation in Bulgaria. While these opportunities help overcome obstacle regarding financial cost, applying for funding still costs time and effort.

There are challenges related to publishing translated novels in the promotion stage as well. Claire Squires (2009), in her book *Marketing Literature: The Making of Contemporary Writing in Britain*, illustrates how marketing is part and parcel of literary production today. According to Pete Ayrton “The problem is selling the book into the bookstores” (King 2006: 111). For this, publishers would need to send Advance Information sheets and reading copies to central buyers, but translations have low market penetration. For this reason, publishers do not go for large print runs unless their translated titles is backed by a “3 for 2” promotion at Waterstones or WHS. According to research carried out by Dalkey Archive Press, 86% percent of booksellers in Anglophone countries think customers are open to buying translations (Global Translation Initiative 2011: 17). The problem of course, would not be about “being open” to translations or not. Even if customers have a positive attitude to purchasing translated titles, the limited availability of such books in the bookstores I have observed indicates that booksellers are not acting on that assessment.

Event-based promotion, like author signings, is an effective marketing tool. However, this is not easy in translated titles, because inviting authors from other countries would mean paying for their travel and accommodation costs, and not all international authors speak English fluent enough to address the audience. As a result, authors in translation only rarely have what James English (2002) calls “journalistic capital”: presence in the cultural scene, visibility in the media, which eventually translates to word-of-mouth promotion.<sup>37</sup> On the back cover of a booklet produced to promote a tour of international authors,

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<sup>37</sup> See chapter 9 for a discussion on how the international visibility of a Turkish author, Orhan Pamuk, has generated journalistic capital for him.

numerous logos belonging to cultural institutions are visible. The text above it reads:

This tour is supported by Arts Council England, The Finnish Embassy, The Finnish Institute and Information Centre, L'Institut Francais, Eastside Educational Trust, Serpent's Tail, Arcadia Books, Bitter Lemon Press, Sunday Times Oxford Literature Festival, Essex Book Festival, Treasure House Theatre, Foyles, Canning House, Cervantes Institute, The Arnolfini, The British Centre for Literary Translation and the Lit and Phil Library in Newcastle (Serpent's Tail *et al* 2006)

The variety of these institutions reveals the time and effort that went into organizing this event. Pete Ayrton of Serpent's Tail confirms that this tour yielded successful results for the titles it promoted, but it is understood that such organizations cannot be repeated frequently (Ayrton 2009). On the other hand, translator Frank Wynne argues that every translated title can sell moderately, if not well, provided that enough time and money is invested for its promotion, and this does not even have to involve author events:

It has become a self-fulfilling prophecy that translations are 'difficult' to publish (the author may not be able to do interviews or signings, or appear on chat shows) – but the bulk of English-language writers are never offered signings and rarely get interviews, while only a select few ever make it to the overstuffed sofa of a TV studio (Wynne 2009).

Catheryn Kilgariff of Marion Boyars explains the strategy they implemented to promote Elif Shafak, a Turkish author, for instance. The first time they organized an event with her, they held it in North London, with a primarily Turkish audience. This, Shafak found unusual, but the publisher had planned to invite literary editors, who would write reviews on her books. The next time the author came to the UK for a literary festival, it was for the Women in the Middle East Literature Tour in 2006, which included a stop at the Hay Festival. There, Shafak appeared alongside the Norwegian author Åsne Seierstad, the author of *The Bookseller of Kabul* (2003). The combination here is noteworthy, as Seierstad's book is a "real life story" aimed at offering European

readers a glimpse of modern Afghanistan.<sup>38</sup> Kilgarriff explains that the British readership was not familiar with the works of Shafak then, but the popularity of Seierstad gave her visibility as well, because at Hay, “you have everybody that matters under one tent:” 500 readers on average at each event, literary editors and international publishing professionals. The tour was in May, and it was that summer when Shafak’s sales went up (Kilgarriff 2009). In the next chapter, we will discuss how marketing cultural products produces value for them and legitimizes them. Another way of looking into marketing is Adorno and Horkheimer’s (1979) position that media present audiences with pre-digested information. By juxtaposing Shafak with Seierstad this publisher has helped locate and legitimize Shafak and produced value for her book. Pete Ayrton of *Serpent’s Tail* also finds the strategy of pairing useful:

We would bring authors over and take them to literary festivals. [...] Very often these people are big stars in their country and then they come here and [...] no one’s interested; no one knows who they are. [...] I sometimes try to persuade people who run literary festivals that you need to have a famous English – or Scottish, or British – writer introducing the foreign writer [...] and then they will get a good attendance, but they often don’t want to do that. Otherwise it’s very difficult (Ayrton 2009).

#### **5.4 Readers’ Resistance**

Chapter 2 included a discussion on the pleasure and status dimensions of reading. Here we will focus on those attitudes and perceptions of British readers that make translated books unpopular. While the general transition from books as cultural entities to commercial products has been complex for publishers and booksellers; arguably, this transition has not been complete for fiction in translation, and the multi-dimensional nature of these books tilts more towards the “cultural and educational” side. According to Amanda Hopkinson, the former president of the British Centre for Literary Translation, translation used to be “a high art,” that is, publishing translations was confined to world classics, usually texts whose copyright has expired, and which most academics studying those respective languages would be more than happy to translate for a modest fee (Hopkinson 2009). World classics do not have much difficulty

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<sup>38</sup> Seierstad has been sued for misrepresenting real persons in her book *The Bookseller of Kabul*. The book is found to portray the bookseller “as a tyrannical head of the household” and the author was made liable to pay £26,276 in damages (Guardian, 2010).

finding readers as they are seen as a source of distinction due to their canonical status. Although the boundary between high literature and popular fiction has blurred; today, genres that are associated with popular fiction also find their way into translation; one prominent example is Eurocrime. What is deemed difficult is the marketing and sales of books that are “non-canonical” or literary fiction. As translated publications have traditionally been associated with the classics, they have élitist connotations. Therefore, readers attach feelings of responsibility to the status implications of these books – books to be read to improve knowledge of world literature, or to learn about other countries in general.

Because translated books do tell about other countries, some readers feel that their reading needs to take place in an educational context. For example, in the reading group discussion on Sade Adeniran’s (2007) autobiographical novel *Imagine This*, a large proportion of which is set in Nigeria, the unfamiliar setting was a point raised by several members. One said she was “intrigued by it because it was a whole different culture.” Another added that the book “ought to be interesting because it’s a part of the world I know little about.” Although Adeniran’s book was originally written in English, the sentiment of these readers resonates with other reading groups that read translated fiction.

A book selection exercise I did with a reader at the Southwest Library Afternoon Reading Group can serve as an example illustrating the above points. After the group discussion, I asked her to think aloud as she chose one of the nine translated novels I presented her:<sup>39</sup> Alon Hilu’s (2010) *The House of Rajani* (trans. from Hebrew), Günter Grass’s (2007) *Peeling the Onion* (German), Haruki Murakami’s (2008) *After Dark* (Japanese), José Eduardo Agualusa’s (2009) *Rainy Season* (Portuguese), José Saramago’s (1997) *Blindness* (Portuguese), Mehmet Murat Somer’s (2009) *The Gigolo Murder* (Turkish), Orhan Pamuk’s (1997) *New Life* (Turkish), Sadegh Hedayat’s (1957) *Blind Owl*<sup>40</sup> (Persian), and Xinran’s (2008) *Miss Chopsticks* (Chinese). The choices of books included a wide variety both in terms of positioning in the highbrow-lowbrow scale and country of origin. The reader was in her 60s, and

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<sup>39</sup> I had originally planned this exercise as a source of data on book cover designs, but it yielded more interesting information in terms of perceptions of translated literature.

<sup>40</sup> I included in this experiment the new edition by Oneworld Classics, with a new cover (Hedayat 2008).

she goes to two book clubs run by two public libraries in the Southwest city, so, an engaged reader.

She recognized, as she looked at the book covers one by one, that all the books were translations. (When I tried to reproduce the exercise with another reader in the same group, she was not aware of this, to the point that she misread Orhan Pamuk's name as "Orphan" and thought that was the title of the book<sup>41</sup>). This reader then labelled all the titles according to where they came from, as she compared and contrasted them. She seemed to be familiar with Günter Grass only, the other books she had to judge from their covers and blurbs. When she came to Xinran's *Miss Chopsticks* she said "I've read a few books [set in] in China and [they're] quite interesting because, it's a different culture." Cultural difference would apply to all the books in front of her, but she made the comment only for this book so I understand that the underlying idea was familiarity, which made the book appealing for her. However, a later comment indicated that she was not very specific in this preference as she referred to *After Dark* and *Miss Chopsticks* as "the Chinese ones," collapsing the difference between China and Japan.

She said she was unlikely to choose the Grass title because she thinks "Günter Grass might be a difficult read – and it's translated from the German – so I'll just, put that one aside." Then she went on the *Blind Owl* and read out the blurb: "the psyche of a mad man," which she found "rather depressing." She found the cover of the Hilu novel appealing. She identified *After Dark* as a "Japanese" book, and added that she had read a couple of books from Japanese literature, but did not seem to be interested in this one, perhaps because she found the previous Japanese books inaccessible or difficult. She rejected the Angolan novel *Rainy Season*, because she was not "very keen on Africa." She associated *The Gigolo Murder* with Istanbul, and although she found the idea of a "transvestite heroine" amusing, she did not think it was a book for her. Her dislike might be due to a conservative literary taste that comes with age. When she came to *New Life*: "again, Turkey." She was attracted to the José Saramago's novel as she thought it could be a science-fiction, but upon reading the blurb, she changed her mind concluding that it "could be a true thing."

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<sup>41</sup> I decided not to use data from this respondent in my discussion because she seemed to be in a hurry and gave very short responses. Moreover, although I made it clear that I needed to hear what she thought, she mostly thought and read silently.



She finally decided on Xinran's *Miss Chopsticks* – her facial expression and her speed of reading as she went through the blurb showed that she found the book both interesting and accessible. Her justification for her choice was “because it's set in China, which would give it a different ... culture, and it doesn't sound too horrendous, as I'm afraid of a lot of these ... [laughs]” Overall, she seemed to be gravitating towards books she perceived as accessible and engaging and seemed to be avoiding books that were demanding, impenetrable and unfamiliar, based on her understanding of genre conventions, Günter Grass as “highbrow” and science-fiction as popular (see Jauss 1970). After she declared her choice, she admitted that translations put her off “slightly, if not completely.” In a previous conversation, she had told me that she left Orhan Pamuk's (2004) *Snow* unfinished, both because of its content and narration. She mentioned a few “transparent” translations that she read and enjoyed, but described others as “grating” and “clumsy.”

As we discussed in chapter 2, readers approach books with their respective *habitus*, which is shaped by their literary socialization (cf. Kraaykamp and Dijkstra 1999, Zavisca 2005, and Torche 2007). This would cover the literature education they receive at school, what they see being read by their family, friends and colleagues, or what they hear being discussed about books; recommendations, reading “fashions,” reviews they read in newspaper, magazines or online, and other exposure to reading material, including the texts and the paratexts, written or oral etc. To start with, translated novels are not integrated into the literary formation of individuals in Britain. According to the National Curriculum, English teaching in the UK is mainly confined to developing reading and writing skills in English, and appreciating English literature, both from Britain and around the world. An example from the Key Stage 3 curriculum (for students aged 11-14):

Literature in English is rich and influential. It reflects the experiences of people from many countries and times and contributes to our sense of cultural identity. Pupils learn to become enthusiastic and critical readers of stories, poetry and drama as well as non-fiction and media texts, gaining access to the pleasure and world of knowledge that reading offers (Department for Education 2007: 61).

[...]

The range of literature studied should include:

d stories, poetry and drama drawn from different historical times, including contemporary writers (*ibid*, 70)

[...]  
Contemporary Writers [...] Texts appropriate for study at key stage 3 include some works by the following authors: Douglas Adams, Richard Adams, [...] Susan Hill, Anthony Horowitz, Janni Howker, Jackie Kay, Elizabeth Laird, Joan Lingard, Roger McGough, [...] Robert Swindells and Robert Westall (*ibid*, 70).

[...]  
e texts that enable pupils to understand the appeal and importance over time of texts from the English literary heritage. This should include works selected from the following pre-twentieth-century writers: Jane Austen, [...] William Blake, Charlotte Brontë, Robert Burns, Geoffrey Chaucer, [...] Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Charles Dickens, Arthur Conan Doyle, George Eliot, Thomas Gray, Thomas Hardy, [...], William Shakespeare (sonnets), Mary Shelley, [...], Oscar Wilde, Dorothy Wordsworth and William Wordsworth (*ibid*, 71).

The national curriculum places a strong emphasis on learning about other cultures through reading literature. However, the texts recommended for English teachers to use in the classroom are originally written in English.

f texts that enable pupils to appreciate the qualities and distinctiveness of texts from different cultures and traditions (Department for Education 2007: 71).

[...]  
From different cultures and traditions: When choosing texts from different cultures and traditions, it is important to look for authors who are so familiar with a particular culture or country that they represent it sensitively and with understanding. [...]

Texts appropriate for study at key stage 3 include some works by the following authors: John Agard, Maya Angelou, Kwesi Brew, Anita Desai, Deborah Ellis, Athol Fugard, Jamila Gavin, Nadine Gordimer, Gaye Hicyilmaz, Beverly Naidoo, Grace Nichols, C Everard Palmer, Bali Rai, John Steinbeck, Meera Syal, Mildred D Taylor, Mark Twain, Adeline Yen Mah and Benjamin Zephaniah (*ibid*, 71).

Evidently, there is no room for non-Anglophone international literature, not even European classics like Montaigne, Zola, or Chekhov. In the British education system, we might conclude, literature means literature in English. It can be argued that this education consolidates a preconception that only literature written in English is worthy of attention and gives an unquestioning British reader a rather limited literary outlook. This might be due to mistrust to translation as a linguistic process, which results from the low status attached to this profession and which severely limits readers' dispositions.

Furthermore, fewer and fewer students take up foreign languages at school, which has a distancing effect for anything that requires foreign language

competence, or that is associated with linguistic heterogeneity. Foreign languages have been optional for students older than 14 since 2004. According to *the Guardian*, pupils who have been taking a language at GCSE dropped by a third (Vasagar and Shephard 2010). The worst hit languages were French and German: just over 170000 students took French at GCSE in 2010, compared with more than 300000 six years ago. The numbers for Chinese, Polish and Portuguese entries are rising, but the increase in those languages is not enough to cover up for the losses in others, and the rise in Polish is attributed to the existence of a Polish community in the UK. According to Michael Cronin, the decline in language learning is linked with the ready identification of English as the language of globalization and the “desire to maintain the benefits of connectedness without the pain of connection” (2006: 39). There is now a wide discrepancy between state and private schools in terms of language provision. In 2010, only 38% of 14-year-olds enrolled in state schools were studying a foreign language (1.9% studying two) whereas 99% of their peers in private ones learnt at least one foreign language (Edemariam 2010). This means that foreign language learning is once more confined to an élite interest. Individuals socializing in a monolingual literary culture are likely to have limited reading skills on texts peppered with foreign proper names.

Translations do not find much review space either, which removes them from readers’ agendas. The Global Translation Initiative survey suggests that 90.9% of media organizations perceive a bias against translated literature in review media (2011:26). There has been a promising trend of reviewing more translations in broadsheet newspapers, especially *the Guardian*. Moreover, the newspaper has been publishing articles by literary translators like Maureen Freely and Helen Stevenson, on the challenges of the process. Nevertheless, literature in translation still has a marginal presence in literary periodicals.

British readers also learn, quite early on, to value originality and individuality. This value orientation is deeply embedded in the history of the novel, which, as a literary form, is defined by the pursuit of individuality, as we saw in chapter 2 (Watt 1963, Goldmann 1975). The search for singularity is paralleled in the formal properties of novels as well – “having a voice of one’s own” or “avoiding clichés” are recurrent praises in reviews. The implications of this attitude on readers’ perceptions of literary translation will be elaborated on in chapter 7. The dominance of realism in the literary culture of the West also

has a bearing on readers' *habitus*, as will be explained in chapter 9. As a result of a combination of these factors, translated novels are not read widely in Britain. This could be inferred from sales figures; translated novels rarely enter bestsellers charts and it is estimated that translated fiction currently accounts for only 1% of book sales in the UK (Alberge 2010: 7). In the previous chapter, we saw that only 15% of books read by a representative sample of book groups in Britain might potentially be translations (see Hartley 2001: 158-59). The titles read between 2004 and 2010 by the Southwest Library Afternoon and Evening Reading Groups reveal an even lower percentage for translations. Out of a total of 142 books read by these two groups, only 11 of them are translated books (7.7%):<sup>42</sup> *Remembrance of Things Past* (French, Marcel Proust, 1929<sup>43</sup>), *Snow* (Turkish, read by both groups, Orhan Pamuk, 2004), *Suite Française* (French, Irène Némirovsky, 2007), *Out Stealing Horses* (Norwegian, Per Petterson, 2005), *The Swallows of Kabul* (French, Yasmina Khadra, 2004), *One Hundred Years of Solitude* (Spanish, Gabriel García Márquez, 1970), *The Shadow of the Wind* (Spanish, Carlos Ruiz Zafón, 2004), *The House of the Spirits* (Spanish, Isabel Allende, 1985), *Perfume* (German, Patrick Süskind, 1986), and *Persepolis: A Story of Childhood* (French, Marjane Satrapi, 2006). It is also worth noting that more translations are read from European languages than non-European. That said, the low reading rates for translations among reading groups could be related to the fact that public libraries do not stock translated novels in many copies, which is an indicator for the lack of demand for translations on the institutional level.

### 5.5 The Production of Symbolic Value

On the other hand, in the production of cultural goods, limited supply produces an effect of symbolic imposition (Bourdieu 1984). Therefore, the low figures for translated literature make this category a rarefied one, amenable for symbolic distinctions as books slightly lost their distinguishing feature with the intensification of market-orientation in literary production. In other words, since novels are, in a sense, (mass-)produced in line with literary trends, it is becoming difficult, for producers (and consumers) to earn distinction from them.

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<sup>42</sup> Books read by both of the groups have been counted twice.

<sup>43</sup> The dates in parentheses belong to the publication dates of the English translations, and not the original versions.

In this relative symbolic vacuum, translated literature brings status in line with the positive norms of cosmopolitanism and eclecticism.

Many titles of translated fiction are produced by independent publishers and imprints. In fact, when we look at their lists, the percentage of translated titles is often greater than the percentage of translated titles in the list of a large/conglomerate publisher. The independent sector is marked by economic disinterestedness and carries high symbolic power as the low economic revenue is compensated by high cultural capital. Not all titles issued by large publishers or conglomerates make good profit; however, increasing the aggregate profit is the primary goal of a large publishing house, whereas symbolic profit takes precedence over economic profit in independents. Financial constraint and competition from large publishing houses lead independents to develop survival strategies and actually intensify the drive to capitalize on symbolic power and consequently, the *illusio*. On the other hand, business ethics are strong in the independent community and financial constraints may provide moral leverage. In the words of a publisher “The outside world gives its support to the small independents; there is a generally desire that they should succeed” (Cohen 1996: 45).

Claire Squires (2009) argues that the individual imprint and the authors that they publish mutually define each other in perceptions of literariness. Title selection, as well as packaging and promotion, are shaped by the individual publisher’s perceived position within the UK literary market: what Bourdieu (1993) would call homological position-takings. Imprints under a conglomerate actually function like separate publishing houses and strive to develop a distinctive character. Independent publishers and imprints tend to show more awareness both in literary and cultural terms. They are more prepared to take editorial risks as they choose to represent the diverse and the neglected, a feature that they like to highlight about themselves. Publishing is a creativity-led business; therefore a highly relevant and desirable element of project management is the “personal touch” – an aspect of publishing where independents display a clear advantage over large houses. A preference for international fiction might be the reflection of the publisher’s and commissioning editors’ personal tastes and background. In the case of independents and imprints, going for non-mainstream authors and themes is a source of distinction that enhances the literary merits of the publishers’ list.

Serpent's Tail defines itself by its distinctive and eclectic taste, and publisher Pete Ayrton says that they do not set their editorial priorities according to market forces, for example the tastes of central buyers: "There's enough people buying our books to support us" (Ayrton 2009). Peter Owen publishes three to four new translated titles each year, and they try to give support translators when needed "a little bit hand-holding" (Smith 2009). Editor Simon Smith feels that "it is nice to do literature that is not well represented" (*ibid*). The production of translated titles is characterized by this discrepancy between market value and symbolic value – cultural intermediaries seek legitimacy by reproducing self-perpetuating prestige. At the Ibero-American Literature Festival at the Foyles Bookshop, Bill Swainson from Bloomsbury chaired a panel on literary translation. He started by introducing himself and his company:

[Before I started working in publishing] I tried to do an MPhil in [...] literary theory, [...] and I was attracted because there, on the reading list were all the writers who became the post-structuralist generation. [...] I took the reading list to London with me. Eventually after a year of working at bookshops I got a job in publishing and happily with John Calder. And my first job was to sort out his bookshelves. And there, on the shelves, were nearly every book on my reading list; so it took me quite a long time to sort out the bookshelves, 'cause – too busy reading the stuff (Swainson 2009).

Swainson presumably sees his background in literary theory as a relevant credential for his current profession; his education is complemented by professional achievement and taste. He implies that he was an omnivorous consumer of books; however, he was on the bottom step of the corporate ladder. As such, he exemplifies what Bourdieu would describe as the aspiring member of the new petite bourgeoisie, and a cultural intermediary (1984:359), with relatively low economic capital and high cultural capital.

### **5.5.1 Cosmopolitanism**

Not only readers, but also publishers embrace cosmopolitanism in Britain. Having authors from around the world on their list is something to highlight in their catalogue and their promotional information – a source of symbolic value. Publishing houses and other institutions promoting international literature employ the vocabulary of cosmopolitanism: promotional material contains analogies with windows, doors and bridges. Random House, one of

the largest publishing companies in the UK, boasts a wide array of international authors:

Our authors are diverse, and they range from Scandinavian thriller and crime writers such as Jo Nesbø and Henning Mankell, through to prize-winning European writers such as Geert Mark, Javier Marias, Jonathan Littell and Umberto Eco. In addition we publish Japanese and Chinese writers such as Haruki Murakami, Xiaolu Guo, Xinran and Yoko Ogawa. And we also have a list of Vintage Classics, where we publish translations of classics, such as *War and Peace*, *Suite Française* and *Les Misérables*. Some of our books – for example *Suite Française*, the Kurt Wallander novels of Henning Mankell, or the works of Haruki Murakami, sell in their hundreds of thousands. Other sell in their hundreds, or even less. So, we are a diverse publisher, committed to publishing a wide range of literature in translation. The only rule is quality (Bratchell 2009).

The commitment to cosmopolitanism at Random House spans continents; however, there's a strong emphasis on literary distinction with established hierarchies in world literature recognized. Bill Swainson from Bloomsbury gives a historical overview of their authors:

[Liz Calder] set up an imprint; she wanted to publish international fiction. In those days, Canadian, American, Australian and New Zealand fiction wasn't really getting as much of a look in, 'cause very British scene in the early to mid '80s. So she brought in writers like Michael Ondaatje, Margaret Atwood, Anne Michaels, [inaudible] from New Zealand and so on. And also was publishing Carlos Fuentes, and David Grossman from Israel. And I joined in about 2000, and we worked out that what we really needed to be doing was to carry on publishing the international fiction, but to bring in a greater mixture of literature from other languages, other cultures. So, Bloomsbury's fiction list now expanded hugely, very varied, publishes in English from India, Pakistan, Africa, and Somalia, and then, the Americas – North America – from Ireland, from Britain itself of course, and an increasing phenomenon people writing in English but coming from another country, for example one of our most successful books was Khaled Hosseini's *The Kite Runner* – he is an Afghanistan writer, but he moved to America, he wrote his novel in English (Swainson 2009).

Swainson here distinguishes between international writers from Anglophone countries, and those from non-English backgrounds. Anglophone international writers tend to dominate cosmopolitan identifications as the study by Savage and others (2010) demonstrates. However, there are several publishers and imprints in the UK that have been set up with the aim of focusing

on translations, that define publishing translations as an important part of their activity. We could name Harvill Secker, Peter Owen, Serpent's Tail, Arcadia, Bitter Lemon Press, MacLehose Press and Gallic. Harvill Secker, an imprint of Vintage, represents a long tradition of international fiction in the UK. They celebrated their centenary in 2010 and initiated the Young Translators Prize in 2011 to encourage young talent. Liz Foley, the publishing director explains in the booklet "A Short History of Harvill Secker" that

Over the years Harvill and Secker have been lucky enough to publish twenty Nobel Prize-winners, four Booker Prize-winners and to survive a variety of owners and mergers, an author who claimed his overdue manuscript had been eaten by a crocodile, a direct hit on a warehouse during the Blitz, a handful of libel actions, a fake Tibetan lama's autobiography, and a trial that rewrote obscenity laws (Harvill Secker 2011).

The independent Peter Owen was established in 1951. If we return to the Profile imprint Serpent's Tail again, Pete Ayrton started the publishing house in the belief that "you could take a British readership and turn them on to fiction in translation" (King 2006: 104). Now he finds this goal "utopian" (2009). In time, the editorial team at Serpent's Tail became more realistic and less idealist. When they started, 50% of their publications were translations; now this figure has been reduced to 15 or 20%, which Ayrton finds "quite enough." He seems to be a real talent spotter; as mentioned before, two of their authors have won the Nobel Prize for literature after they've been published by Serpent's Tail: Elfriede Jelinek in 2004, Herta Müller in 2009. They have another Nobel Laureate on their list, Kenzaburō Ōe, who won the prize in 1994 before Serpent's Tail published a book by him in 1998. Moreover, Lionel Shriver's (2005) *We Need To Talk About Kevin* won the Orange Prize for Fiction in 2005. Ayrton says that the readership of their translated and non-translated titles overlap, but people who travel regularly and who are interested in foreign cultures are likely to be interested in translated literature (Ayrton 2009). Arcadia Books's motto is "The Best of World Writing today" while Bitter Lemon Press's is "The best crime and *romans noirs* from faraway places" ([arcadiabooks.co.uk](http://arcadiabooks.co.uk), [bitterlemonpress.com](http://bitterlemonpress.com)). The About section of Quercus imprint MacLehose Press's website says: "The MacLehose Press is devoted to the translation of literature and crime fiction into English, and to the publication of a very few outstanding writers in English. This press has already broken new ground with



the #1 bestselling success of the Swedish writer Stieg Larsson and with many other critically acclaimed books including translations from Italian, Spanish, Polish, Icelandic, French, and Arabic” (MacLehose). To my knowledge, the website of MacLehose Press is the only UK publisher website that lists their translators with a search function. Gallic is a special case, because they publish translations from one language only, French.

This image has been removed by the author of this thesis for copyright reasons.

Fig. 5.1. Covers of Claude Izner novels from the Gallic Crime series.

Daniela de Groote explains the source of the cosmopolitan ethos at Arcadia:

My boss was previously working at Peter Owen for seven years. He’s quite an old, established publisher. He did a lot of translated fiction at the time – completely obscure things, not the normal things that nowadays are more popular like Steig Larsson... Real, you know, classics like Knut Hamsun, and, lots of Scandinavian and languages that weren’t so popular let’s say. I think the other factor was that Gary – that’s his name – he was American, and he came here to study and then never left but he always had a hanger for widening his, you know, American horizons, let’s say. So he had as well a personal interest in translated fiction. [...] He decided to set up a company that would mostly specialize in translation but not only. [...] I think it also matters to say that, well, we’ve always ... For a long time it was the two of us. Angeline joined us four, five – four – years ago. And we’ve always had a series of interns working, here. Some long term, some short term, but, nobody who’s been permanently at Arcadia has been English. Angeline is Irish, I’m Chilean, Gary’s American. And I think that’s not a coincidence (de Groote 2010).

In this publisher’s vision, the rare and the “obscure” are idealized. In contrast to the Random House and Bloomsbury quotes above and similar to what Pete Ayrton said about *Serpent’s Tail* in the previous section, Arcadia values the lesser-known. Moreover, cosmopolitanism features as the defining

character and the *raison d'être* of this house, to the exclusion of Englishness, which is implicitly associated with monolingualism and monoculturism.

For most of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, publishing was seen as a “gentlemen’s profession” with strong associations of “Englishness.” The trade-off between economic and cultural capital is still in place for independent publishing today; however this sector of the industry testifies to an altered conception of symbolic power where ethnic, cultural and linguistic diversity are celebrated. Very little of Britain’s ethnic and cultural diversity is represented in publishing houses today, especially in editorial and management departments. Bourdieu postulates that new cultural intermediaries tend to sympathize with discourses that challenge the cultural order and hierarchies (1984: 366). Therefore, cosmopolitanism can be understood as a new source of symbolic power for independent publishers publishing translations. A resistance to market forces and the determination to find out “neglected” authors that they feel British readers should read also suggests remnants of the “privilege of the producer” (cf. Abercrombie 1990).

The cosmopolitan disposition sets translation publishers apart from other, and the figure of 3% also has implications for consumption. In translated novels in particular, inaccessibility and rarity complement and define each other; therefore, reading translated fiction is seen as a distinguished practice. This will be elaborated on in chapter 7.

### **5.5.2 Title Selection and Promotion**

Bourdieu develops the concept of symbolic capital in *Distinction*, but he first proposes it in *The Logic of Practice*. Here he takes his examples from businessmen in North Africa, and contrasts economic capital with symbolic capital, which proves more efficient in market contexts that operate as a “good-faith” economy (1990: 112-20). The book production culture displays similarities to a symbolic capital economy in that publishers mobilize symbolic capital especially for translated titles and personal connections are of utmost importance to start projects. The publication of *The Informers* (2009) is a typical story: author Juan Gabriel Vásquez and translator Anne McLean meet at a dinner party. McLean has heard of Vásquez’s (2004) latest book *Los Informantes*, but has not had a chance to read it. Vasquez lends McLean a copy; she reads the book and loves it. She knows Bill Swainson from Bloomsbury, so she suggests they publish the book – in her translation – and

the publisher decides in favour (McLean 2009). This process constitutes a good faith economy in that it does not involve a competitive selection process but relies on personal connections. Apart from personal acquaintances, international connections are often established in London and Frankfurt Book fairs, which provide institutionalized forums for networking. Publishers make use of these events as opportunities to meet colleagues in other countries and discuss specific titles. Pete Ayrton of Serpent's Tail explains that he speaks French and Italian and meets French editors in Frankfurt to ask about their latest translated titles. He studies their catalogues, and if those books translated from, say Danish or Arabic, were a success in France, then he considers having them translated into English and publish them in Britain (Ayrton. 2009).

As Nicholas Abercrombie points out, it is an increasingly difficult for editors to answer the question "What is a good book?":

Before the last war in Britain and even for a decade after it, that question could be answered by consulting editor's taste or instinct supported by a traditional body of knowledge, culture and opinion to which the editor had access by virtue of education and experience. [...] In the past forty years, these judgements have become less secure as the privilege given to high culture declines. Editors decreasingly base their judgements on a cultural definition of quality (Abercrombie 1990: 174).

Deciding which translated titles to take on is difficult for most publishers, as predicting what will sell in translation is almost impossible: industry professionals call it "alchemy." The market orientation has lead commissioning editors to doubt their instincts, although with independents and imprints, the business is more instinct-driven. Bill Swainson from the independent Bloomsbury explains how he selects books:

So I'm looking for writers who I think can stand alongside writers that Liz Calder was then publishing – Michael Ondaatje, Margaret Atwood, John Irving, later on Richard Ford, Donna Tartt [...] And Javier Cercas was a good and lucky find, and that gave me an idea of the kind of calibre you could go for and also a bit of an idea of how you might publish because there was a non-fiction subject matter to the book. About the same time I discovered the Dutch writer Tim Krabbé and a Norwegian writer called Gunnar Kopperud.

[...]

And since about 2000 we brought into the list not only writers like Javier Cercas and Juan Gabriel Vásquez, Tomás Eloy Martínez but also from the French, the Algerian

writer, Boualem Sansal, whose first book in English will be published next January; Delphine de Vigan, José Peixoto from Portugal, Ryu Murakami – the other Murakami, from Japan... [...] So what we're trying to do is to publish a truly international fiction list. We are not specialists: we don't have a specialist Hispanic editor or a specialist German editor. We try to be as professional as amateurs can be. And it's my role as the most amateur of the editors to have the great pleasure of bringing this literature to English (Swainson 2009).

The editor's use of the word "discover" to refer to international authors who are presumably established figures in their source countries indicates entrepreneurial risk-taking. Swainson also makes it clear that his decisions are not based on expert knowledge, which increases the risk. Therefore he invests high symbolic value in his own titles, as the "calibre" metaphor indicates.

In contrast, Simon Smith from Peter Owen explains that it is relatively easy to acquire the rights for a novel from Estonia, thanks to the work of the Estonian Literature Information Centre. But, as an editor, it is not acceptable to give weight to national literatures that are better promoted when building on a publishing house's list, so it is up to those individuals still to make sure every title they choose for publication conforms to the publishing house's criteria for "good literature" and fits their list (Smith 2009). On the other hand, a "push strategy" has its limits when translated into sales. Peter Owen recently published *The Idle Years* by Orhan Kemal (2008), a novelist who is part of the Turkish canon. According to Smith, it was the author's son who approached Peter Owen, and he even supplied them with an English translation. The publishing house went on with the production and later did everything within their budget to promote the title, but after a while, they started to receive returns from distributors (Smith 2009). After such an experience, many publishing professionals would be disheartened to make decisions in the future for translations on the basis of unsolicited translated texts. No matter how important the author is in their native language, editors have to make sure that the texts they are selecting works for their audience.

The opposite would be the "pull strategy." The most obvious being the Nobel Prize for Literature, international prizes usually cause competition between publishers to acquire rights for the winning titles.

Besides title selection, publishers rely on a network of professionals for promotion as well: review copies are sent to those who are likely to write

positive reviews, publishers are keen to have their authors included in literary festivals by organizers. Bill Swainson from Bloomsbury says it with a metaphor:

The first book to be published in English [by Juan Gabriel Vasquez], *The Informers*, which was translated by Anne [McLean], was published to considerable acclaim in Britain. We worked very hard, building up the interest with the bookshops, with the radio stations, with the newspapers, with the booksellers and sometimes publishing is a bit like trying to get bump start a car, and it does help if the hand break is off and somewhere along the line the hand break did come off and Juan is now finding his readers (Swainson 2009).

Obviously, this sort of promotion requires considerable time, organizational effort and connections.

In order to locate translated titles in readers' minds, these books are "paired with" books from the home literary system – to give these texts an established position. For example, in their catalogue and Advance Information Sheet to be sent to booksellers, Peter Owen describe the writer of *The Idle Years*, Orhan Kemal as "one of Turkey's best-loved writers, with a standing equal to Charles Dickens in England" (Peter Owen 2009). On the blurb of Eugenio Fuentes's (2002) *The Depths of the Forest*, a quote from a review in *the Observer* calls the protagonist a Hercule Poirot, one of the characters in Agatha Christie novels: "The incrementally revealed denouement, in which Cupido confronts his suspects, is reminiscent of Hercule Poirot." Similarly, in his review of Juan Gabriel Vasquez's (2009) *The Informers*, Nick Caistor compares it to *Atonement* by Ian McEwan (2001): "The examination of the consequences that a single act can have not only for the person committing it but also, through the ripple effect, for many others brings us into the territory of Ian McEwan's *Atonement*" (Caistor 2008). Translation theorist André Lefevere calls these cultural or literary equivalents "analogies" (see Lefevere 1998: 82-84). It is not uncommon to have established authors write prefaces for translated novels either, such cases of pairing and introducing could be described as transferring symbolic capital to a text that enters circulation in a new field (Bourdieu 1999). These need to connect, overlap or even coincide with established domestic genres.

### 5.5.3 Genres and Themes

Lawrence Venuti argues that the strategies of producers in the book industry create domestic canons, or discourses for foreign literatures (1998: 67-76). There seem to be certain genres and themes in the UK literary market regarding literature from various parts of the world.

Bloody foreigners: they come over here, they purloin our favourite form of fiction, and then they practise it better than most of the natives... Well, many British crime enthusiasts now believe that mystery writing has more than a passing resemblance to Premiership football, with the start of imports outperforming many locally-grown talents (Tonkin 2006 :1).

These are the opening sentences to Boyd Tonkin's introduction to *Bloody Foreigners*, a collection of excerpts from six novels from European crime writers. This booklet accompanied the eponymous literary tour organized by the writers' British publishers: Serpent's Tail, Bitter Lemon Press and Arcadia Books. Here is another introduction to another Eurocrime collection by Tonkin:

The history of literature shows that, time and again, the great mind-changing works disproportionately come from the lands, the peoples and the languages at the edges of the great cultural blocs. Modern Europe would be a vastly different, and much poorer, place without the thinkers and theologians who absorbed the ideas of Kierkegaard, the dramatists, novelists, composers who learned from Jacobsen, and the storytellers of whatever kind who allowed a touch of Andersen's narrative magic to rub off on their work. Pay attention to the so-called margins, and you will often spot why the mainstream can suddenly change course. That might be one reason to greet the four newly-translated novelists from Denmark showcased in this sampler with a cheer that echoes across the North Sea (Tonkin 2007: 1-2).

Here, the literary critic justifies his taste for European crime. He seems to be convinced that crime writers from continental Europe are better than British ones, and so do many publishers think. This genre has come to be associated with continental Europe, Scandinavian countries in particular, and the huge popularity of Steig Larsson's *Millennium Trilogy* has only reinforced this. Some industry professionals and readers think that the cold, dark, gloomy atmosphere of northern European winters might be an attractive backdrop for a narrative of suspense and murder – the TV and film adaptations of crime titles from Northern Europe are set against notoriously wintry and grey backdrops. A

review on Scandinavian crime fiction in *The Economist* establishes a link between the popularity of the books and “the cold, dark climate, where doors are bolted and curtains are drawn” (2010: 90). However, Venuti attributes the success of the genre in translation in the UK to the status of realism in this literary culture. A crime novel is resolved through an “illusion of realism,” and realism has been the dominant mode in the Anglo-American literary narrative (2008: 154-55). Novels are taken for authentic accounts of the cultural, social and political realities of the regions they come from. The reader I interviewed in the South made a comment about crime novels that illustrates this point well: “I’m not gonna sit and read a newspaper article, ‘cause I don’t trust what a journalist will say. But with a novelist, I have more faith in what they’re doing”<sup>44</sup>. Furthermore, we know that genre readers, and younger readers – these two market segments overlap considerably – are more tolerant and adventurous in their reading habits, both on the linguistic and the content level.

Similarly, surrealism and magical realism are closely associated with South American literature, with Gabriel García Márquez especially. Moreover, the thematic formula of “sex, violence and drugs” seems to work quite well for publishers trying to decide on which titles to buy from South American literature. Literatures from Middle Eastern, East and South Asia are usually represented with social realism. Titles selected from Arabic, Turkish, Chinese, Japanese literature etc. are usually novels that aim to portray the respective societies and capture their locality. For example from the literatures of Muslim-majority countries, novels addressing themes such as patriarchy, fundamentalism and modernization have been sought out (see Starkey 2000: 154, Paker 2000: 623 cf. Jacquemond 1992) and interest in Israeli literature revolves around the Palestinian-Israeli conflict (see Donahaye 2011).<sup>45</sup> Moreover, after 9/11, there has been a surge of interest in Arab fiction from the Anglo-American world (Guthrie 2011: 20).

In 2011, Cairo bookseller Nadia Wassef expected a boom in interest in Egyptian literature because of the uprising that led to the overthrow of government: “Today, there’s interest in Egyptian literature that is being translated into English. Why? Because, a bunch of young people got together

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<sup>44</sup> See the chapter 8 on intercultural communication for a discussion of this reader’s comments on crime fiction.

<sup>45</sup> Chapter 9 includes a detailed analysis on title selection from Turkish novels and reception of Turkish literature in the UK.

on Facebook and did a revolution! It's that simple! And today you will find a lot of Egyptian authors being translated into languages you couldn't imagine and people will read them, because they want to know what happened" (Wassef 2011). Events with Arab authors at the Hay Festival in 2011 were extremely popular compared to previous events. The compartmentalization of national literatures with genres and themes seems to produce another kind of marketing value for novels from the respective literatures. In chapter 8, we will discuss how readers approach novels from Scandinavia, South America and the Middle East.

#### **5.5.4 A Success Story: *The Millennium Trilogy***

Christopher MacLehose, publisher of *The Millennium Trilogy*, is known as the doyen of literature in translation in the UK (Bookseller 2010:24). He built his entire career on publishing and promoting international literature, first at Harvill Secker for 21 years, and then in his own imprint MacLehose, part of Quercus. He was awarded the London International Book Fair Lifetime Achievement Award for International Publishing in 2006. He is a true cultural intermediary, in more than one way – he chooses and makes available for readers cultural products of distinctive taste, and he is committed to a cosmopolitan mission of bringing world literature to British readers. He takes translation seriously: "If [any book] is worth translating, whatever it is, then, give it to the *best* possible translator, because then the language has a chance. Hastily-done translations [...] wreck the chance of the writer to be enjoyed by [...] readers" (MacLehose 2010). Considering the authors and translators he supported and made successful in the market, he can be described as a "creator of the creator" in Bourdieu's (1993) terms.

UK and USA publishers were initially not interested in the manuscripts for the *Millennium Trilogy*: "Self-evidently, not worth doing, awful!" The translations had been commissioned by the film company Yellowbird, who would charge prospective right buyers with the translation fee as well. It was MacLehose who "discovered" Stieg Larsson and "created" a bestselling author of him for British readers: "Nobody knew who he was, he was dead" (*ibid*).

It is impossible to identify the reasons [...] [the] success of this book [is] distinct from every other book. [...]. Nor do I think that the fact that the author died in quite



unmysterious circumstances contributed anything to it. Indeed, when the book was first proposed to English and American publishers, it was turned down – already in English – turned down by several publishers at least in each country. And I think in some of those cases, the reason was that the marketing department of big houses, they have very orthodox ideas (MacLehose 2010).

Christopher MacLehose's description of his relationship to the book echoes that of Bloomsbury editor Bill Swainson. As with the independents and imprints, thanks to a careful judgement based on personal literary capital – rather than on consumer demand – and a bit of risk-taking, MacLehose spotted an author that brought his imprint sales success and visibility. Bourdieu explains the relationship between talent-spotting publishers and authors in terms of consecration:

The ideology of creation, which makes the author the first and last source of the value of his work, conceals the fact that the cultural businessman ([...]publisher[...]) is at one and the same time the person who exploits the labour of the “creator” by trading in the “sacred” and the person who, by putting it on the market, by exhibiting, publishing or staging it, consecrates a product he has “discovered” and which would otherwise remain a mere natural resource; and the more consecrated he personally is, the more strongly he consecrates the work (1993:76-77).

Christopher Maclehose's inclusion of the *Millennium Trilogy* into his highly selective list has, in a way, consecrated the books. He explains that the initial lack of appeal for the book resulted from a rumour spread in the industry by a publisher's reader who thought that the protagonist, Salander, was unconvincing as a character, but then, “The word of mouth that clearly accelerated in the English market, exponentially – one reader saying to another friend, there is in this book a completely unusual character, somebody who, just takes your breath away: Salander.” MacLehose believes that this character actually provides the attraction for the whole plot: “I mean Blomkvist, very dull; quite ordinary, we've seen Blomkvist so many times. Nobody's ever met Salander.” In the novels, Mikael Blomkvist is the investigative journalist who exposes cases of corruption in conglomerates and eventually solves the murder case with the help of the young detective Lisbeth Salander. The publisher thought that “young people will fall in love” with this Salander, because she's “so

spirited,” and actually it would appeal to people from all ages. “I think the Salander effect has been very dramatic” (MacLehose 2010).

MacLehose realized that the translations needed thorough copy-editing, and they were translated into American English. He put in considerable “aesthetic investment” (Bourdieu 1993: 79) into the books – meticulous work for three months per volume – leading the original translator to be so dissatisfied that he asked his name to be taken off the book. However, he did his revisions with the consent of the Swedish editor of the book.

The result was immense sales success. The launch of the films certainly contributed to it, as has been the case for many film adaptations. MacLehose and reviewers believe that the actors and actresses in the (Swedish) film were very well chosen, especially Noomi Rapace, who played the part of Lisbeth Salander. Contrary to what some readers of Scandinavian crime – and *The Economist* – might believe about bleak atmosphere, he does not think the physical setting of the books played a role. This might be taken as an assertion of his position-taking, with his literary capital, against a consumerist explanation through moods, emotions, and visual aesthetics. Although publishing translated fiction presupposes a disavowal of economic interest, MacLehose Press made high income from the trilogy, since the publisher was able to “sense the specific laws of the market” (Bourdieu 1993: 101).

## **5.6 Conclusion**

Translated novels in the UK seem to be governed by distinctive norms in the various stages of their communications circuit (see Darnton 1982). Part of it has to do with the fact that many are produced by independent publishers and imprints who operate in a culture driven by symbolic capital. As we saw, against the status implications of this production culture, translated novels are not attributed great financial value. The conditions of their production and promotion are costly, and today’s market-oriented publishing scene means that texts originally produced for other markets have low sales potential. Although middle class consumers of culture in Britain embrace cosmopolitanism, readers seem to resist translated fiction because their value orientation has been shaped by an Anglophone literary culture. The next chapter will include a discussion on the effects of marketing and promotion on perceptions of literary genre, introducing the idea that translated fiction might be seen as a separate genre in the UK

book market. We saw in the previous chapter the pleasure and status aspects of the reading experience, chapters 7 and 8 will discuss how the sources of pleasure and status in translated fiction is considerably different from those in fiction in English for many British readers. Therefore, the norms regarding production and consumption seem to correspond to each other, what Bourdieu calls the homology between the field of production and consumption (1993: 87-97).

The specific situation regarding translated literature has wider implications. Firstly, presenting and consuming translated novels as representations of the source cultures is a simplistic reduction of complex and multilayered intercultural connections today – according to Venuti, the greatest source of scandal (1998: 67). Moreover, this tendency is also affecting literary production, as authors aiming for an international readership are becoming increasingly aware of themes associated with cultural specificity. The case study on Turkish literature in chapter 9 will illustrate how literary production is becoming autoethnographic to cater for the demand.



## 6 Marketing and Promoting Translations<sup>46</sup>

### 6.1 Introduction

Marketing is the crucial link between consumers and producers in that it facilitates the former to make meaning in their interaction with the text and with the real and imagined Others, within a framework of paratexts provided by marketing. This chapter will look into strategies for marketing and promoting<sup>47</sup> fiction in translation. The analysis will cover the activities of publishers, booksellers and libraries to present information about translated titles, to differentiate these books from others and to increase sales. Looking at the broader picture, Claire Squires (2007) understands book marketing as

*a form of representation and interpretation, situated in the spaces between the author and the reader – but which authors and readers also take part in – and surrounding the production, dissemination and reception of texts. [...] [M]arketing is the summation of multiple agencies operating within the marketplace, by which contemporary writing is represented and interpreted, and in which contemporary writing is actively constructed. Marketing [...] is in a very real sense, the making of contemporary writing (2007: 3, emphasis in the original).*

Therefore, marketing represents a very important stage in the life cycle of books in today's market-oriented literary culture in Britain. In general, book publishers employ a three-step marketing strategy for their titles: segmentation, targeting and positioning. Segmentation refers to the breaking down of the general consumer market into segments, according to readers' age, gender, location, socio-economic class, reading habits etc. For each specific title, publishing houses identify a certain segment and devise marketing strategies geared towards that audience. This targeting decision informs the marketing mix for individual titles: they try to find the right combination of product, price, place (distribution) and promotion. The next step is then positioning, which refers to placing the product in the potential buyer's mind (Phillips 2007: 22-23). Publishers' marketing strategies often include packaging, advertisements and events. Booksellers, on the other hand, promote books through discounts, display arrangements and staff recommendations. These practices influence

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<sup>46</sup> In this chapter, I build on some of the arguments that were presented in a published article (Tekgöl 2011a).

<sup>47</sup> Although marketing is a broader category than promotion, and includes the activities of producers rather than retailers, these two terms are often used interchangeably in this chapter.

consumer behaviour to varying degrees. Research carried out by *The Bookseller* in 2010 reveals consumer priorities:

How do you typically find out about new books or new authors?

1. Recommendation from friends or family	19.79%
2. Display in a bookshop	16.60%
3. Newspaper or magazine review	14.54%
4. Internet review or recommendation	13.05%
5. Blurb on book jacket when borrowing	8.50%
6. Mentioned on TV or radio show	7.77%
7. Newspaper or magazine advert	5.34%
8. Recommend from famous person you trust (e.g. TV personality)	3.55%
9. Shop assistant's advice	2.59%
10. Librarian's advice	2.47%
11. Street poster or billboard	2.30%
12. Local reading group	1.97%
13. Book club catalogue	1.10%
14. Internet video book trailers	0.92%

Fig. 6.1. Consumers' preferred sources of information and opinion for reading material (Tivnan and Higham 2010: 25)

According to this chart, the most trusted sources of information are independent ones – family and friends, bookshop displays, reviewers, TV and radio personalities. However, readers' choices are also influenced by publishers' marketing (newspaper or magazine advert, 5.34%; street poster or billboard, 2.30%; blurb, 8.50%: total 16.14%) and booksellers' and libraries' promotion methods (display in a bookshop, 16.60%; shop assistant's advice 2.59%; librarian's advice 2.47%: total 21.66%). According to the *Guardian*, against the 3% of annual translated book production, translated fiction currently accounts for only 1% of book sales in the UK (Alberge 2010: 7). Book industry professionals have devised ways to increase sales in this category; we will discuss publishers' marketing strategies in respect to packaging and booksellers' marketing activities in terms of display arrangements. Libraries will be mentioned alongside retailer promotion.

## 6.2 Marketing Symbolic Value, and the Culture of Disinterestedness

In the previous chapter, we discussed literary distinction as a source of symbolic value in the discourse of independent publishers. British publishers are keen to highlight the literary merits of their international authors in packaging as well. Visual and verbal packaging elements serve as “paratexts,” which, in Gérard Genette’s terms, adorn, reinforce, accompany and present the main text in a book and usually mark the zone between text and off-text (Genette 1997: 2). According to Genette, paratexts are the elements that transform texts into books and are sometimes sites for aesthetic and ideological investments (*ibid*, 12).<sup>48</sup> An examination of preliminary material and blurbs used to package translated titles indicates that the quotes taken from reviews written for the authors acknowledge their literary skills, from canonical authors to writers of popular fiction:

From the blurb of Stefan Zweig’s (2009) *Journey into the Past*:

“One hardly knows where to begin in praising Zweig’s work” – Nicholas Lezard, *The Guardian*

“Fortunately, the Pushkin Press has been publishing some of Zweig’s works in fluent translations and handsome editions: it is thus performing a valuable service for British literary culture” Anthony Daniels, *The Sunday Telegraph*

The second quote earns the Pushkin Press symbolic power while the first, from a highbrow newspaper, confirms the superior qualities of Zweig’s work.

From the blurb of Orhan Pamuk’s (2006) *Black Book*:

“An extraordinary novel ... Up there with the best of Eco, Calvino, Borges and Márquez” – *Observer*

This one clearly locates Pamuk at the top of literary hierarchy. It’s from a respected source as well.

From the blurb of Haruki Murakami’s (2001) *Norwegian Wood*:

“Murakami is, without a doubt, one of the world’s finest novelists” – *Glasgow Herald*

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<sup>48</sup> See Kovala (1996) and Tahir-Gürçağlar (2002) for a discussion on the use of paratexts on translation research.

“Such is the exquisite, gossamer construction of Murakami’s writing that everything he chooses to describe trembles with symbolic possibility” – *Guardian*

The first quote for Murakami also points to hierarchy, while the second praises the literariness of the novel.

From the end paper of Irène Némirovsky’s (2007) *Suite Française*:

“Reportage at its finest, bound together by high artistic purpose” – *Daily Telegraph*

From the blurb of Xiaolu Guo’s (2005) *Village of Stone*:

“Exquisitely written and intricately constructed” – *Independent*

The *Suite Française* and *Village of Stone* quotes praise the textual-linguistic elements on a par with novels originally written in English.

From the end paper of Steig Larsson’s (2008) *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo*:

“A publishing sensation, an accomplished crime writer who seemingly came from nowhere” – Joan Smith, *Sunday Times*

“The ballyhoo is fully justified... The novel scores on every front - character, story, atmosphere and the translation” – Marcel Berlins, *The Times*

Finally, the comment on *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo* seeks to legitimize this book belonging to a popular genre. It is worth stressing that the quotes are chosen from well-known, often highbrow periodicals whose judgement potential readers could trust. In effect, readers’ choices are often influenced by these. A focus group on book selection could illustrate paratexts guiding readers’ choices. As noted before, one private reading group that I worked with had been formed as an offshoot from a larger one whose members felt they did not want to take part in my research. I presented this new group of readers with options to choose from: *Rainy Season* by José Eduardo Agualusa (2009), *The Yacoubian Building* by Alaa al Aswany (2007), *The Bastard of Istanbul* by Elif Shafak (2008), *Swords of Ice* by Latife Tekin (2007), *The Prophet Murders* by Mehmet Murat Somer (2008a), and *Enlightenment* by Maureen Freely (2007). The readers talked about news on *the Guardian* and *the Observer* before going into the main discussion, which suggests that they



are readers of these newspapers. Looking at the cover of *Swords of Ice*, one reader said she likes “the fact that it’s a ‘nihilistic wit reminiscent of Samuel Beckett’” – this was a quote from *Independent on Sunday*. After discussing the various design elements on the covers, one reader commented: “if they put a *Daily Mail* quote on [a book], they probably want *Daily Mail* readers to read it” so she said she was looking for a book with a quote from *the Guardian* or *the Observer*. In this case, an association with a newspaper of high symbolic value confers such value to a book. She also added that if a book has a Richard & Judy’s Book Club recommendation on it, she usually stays away from it. This reader’s preferences can be explained with avoidance strategies prescribed by the *habitus* (Bourdieu 1990: 61) or the Diderot effect – cultural consistency in choice of consumer goods (McCracken 1988: 118-129). According to Grant McCracken, products that “go together” are arranged into “product complements” in consumers’ minds (*ibid*, 119). He describes the resulting effect as “a force that encourages the individual to maintain a cultural consistency in his/her complement of consumer goods” (*ibid*, 123). In this reader’s constellation, Richard & Judy’s Book Club represents popular taste, which means that it would not go with books endorsed by a broadsheet. Her reasoning illustrates how marketing strategies facilitate the production of meaning by giving readers the means to relate their experiences and aspirations to other options available. Readers eventually chose the *Yacoubian Building*, *Rainy Season* and *Swords of Ice*. Their decision was based on a combination of several factors, of course, including the authors – they wanted to choose three books that were as varied as possible – the covers – with the images and the blurbs that represented the text, including quotes from reviews. It can be safely argued then, as one of the readers has explicitly expressed, that they take these quotes to be indicators of taste, which chimes in with the *Bookseller* survey cited above, where blurbs claimed 8.50% of the answers.

On the other hand, expressing literary distinction in review quotes is a strategy that needs to be employed carefully. As he was editing Turkish author Oya Baydar’s novel translated into Turkish for Peter Owen, editor Simon Smith looked at the reviews written for the German translation of the book. He was looking for a quote that would look attractive as a pull-out on the back cover, but the reviews sounded too academic – “stuffy” – as they were written by German university lecturers. According to Smith, that “is not what you want on a book,

not in the UK” (Smith 2009). Institutional endorsement certainly confers symbolic power to a translated novel. However, as discussed in the previous chapter, status may evoke feelings of responsibility on the part of readers. Jonathan Heawood, the Director of English PEN, explains that this is the reason why the English PEN prefers printing their logo inside a supported translated novel rather than the outer packaging (Heawood 2011). Prizes, on the other hand, are also a sign of distinction, and often an effective marketing tool (Squires 2004, 2007, 2009: 97-101). Mention of a literary prize on a front cover would convince potential consumers of the book’s literary merit. Moreover, prizes also help sales by increasing visibility. For example, according to Nielsen Bookscan, W. G. Sebald’s (2001) *Austerlitz* sold 603 copies during the week immediately before winning the Independent Foreign Fiction Prize in 2002. In the week after, sales went up to 2218, and the book sold over 4000 copies during the following two weeks (Bookseller 2010:25).

If we turn to what is happening in bookstores; marketing and sales professionals who have a special interest in translated fiction are supportive of these titles. Cathy Rentzenbrink, now Publisher Relationship Manager at Waterstones, explains that she is “emotionally on the side of the books that aren’t selling well,” including translations. As explained in chapter 5, translated authors often lack the “journalistic capital” (English 2002) that is crucial for marketing authors. According to Rentzenbrink, before Carlos Ruiz Zafón’s (2004) *The Shadow of the Wind* was featured in a popular media event, she supported this title by recommending it to customers:

I remember reading [it] in hardback; absolutely adored, but couldn’t see how, [...] – I think I was at Harrods’s at the time – I’d be hand-selling it to my very “élite” customers and would do that successfully, but I couldn’t really see that normal people would buy it [laughs]. And then Richard and Judy did it and, you know, it just went absolutely stratospheric. And our second best-selling book at the moment in the whole of Waterstones is a Zafón book: *The Prince of Mist* (Rentzenbrink 2011).

The ethos of disinterestedness and the idea of cultural service that characterizes the production of translations in contemporary UK seem to find their reflection in promotion as well. Booksellers working for independent bookshops have the freedom to select all the titles to be stocked in the shop; they can “hand-sell” their personal favourites to their loyal customers. However,

in Waterstones branches for example, only 30% of stock is left to the discretion of the store manager. In either case, staff recommendations are an important source of information for browsers. The *Bookseller* research quoted above also revealed that in-store recommendations have been rising in importance among factors that persuade consumers to spend more money in books: from 12% in 2008 to 13.49% in 2009 and 16.70% in 2010.

I approached a bookseller at a Waterstones branch in the Southwest about their Literature in Translation/Literary Fiction table, which included a wide variety of fiction and non-fiction books, many of them translated from European languages. The poster on the table read “Literature in Translation” on one side and “Literary Fiction” on the other (see Fig. 6.4 below). The bookseller explained that most of their stock is centrally determined, but “the books on, say, the translated fiction table, I buy and I choose for the shop [...] some from catalogues, some from publishers’ websites, some publishers show new, upcoming titles, and I make decisions from those [...] based on my experience of what sells, my knowledge of what sells.” Later, we discussed the various publishers represented on the table and he seemed to be familiar with many independent publishers, from Archipelago to Oneworld and Pushkin Press. “I doubt if any Waterstones in the whole Southwest has any books from Archipelago, apart from us. Yes, we are selling more [titles from independents compared to other Waterstones branches]. It’s not difficult.” Although he initially hinted that sales is a major concern in stock selection, his later remark about Archipelago might be interpreted as a sign that they are striving to make their individual stock distinctive, and that they are not granting the consumers the “privilege” of determining what would be available. Moreover, he obviously spends time and effort to choose titles from independents by studying their catalogues and promotional material, which would indicate that factors of literary capital and taste are at play. Nevertheless, he chose to be modest by claiming that “it’s not difficult” to sell these titles, given the store’s clientele and the lack of competition.

### **6.3 Translations and Market Penetration**

Given the low percentage of translated titles in the market, they are not as visible as non-translated titles. This section will focus on booksellers’,

librarians' and publishers' strategies of making their translations stand out for potential readers.

### 6.3.1 Point of Sale Visibility

Display arrangements are a key tool to introduce books to readers' agenda. An ordinary high-street bookshop in Britain will have several special display arrangements to showcase books brought together around a particular theme by the staff. These do not merely serve as a source of ideas for Mother's Day, but carry implied meanings for readers as well.

After the 2011 uprisings in Tunisia and Egypt, the Roman Gate Waterstones branch in Exeter prepared a free-standing shelf titled "the Arab Spring" in a prime location – on the way from the second-floor café to the staircase. This shelf could suggest to readers that there is such a body of knowledge on this historico-political subject that it is worth knowing/learning about it – remember that in the *Bookseller* study mentioned earlier, display in a bookshop claimed 16.60% of the answers (second highest) to the question "How do you typically find out about new books or new authors?" (Tivnan and Higham 2010: 25). The shelf contained 12 non-fiction titles, mainly history; some general studies on the Middle East and some focusing on individual regions like Israel-Palestine, Libya, Iran, Saudi Arabia. The books selected here included a "Beginner's Guide" to the *Palestine-Israeli Conflict* (2001, Dan Cohn-Sherbok and Dawoud El Alami) and the work of the high-profile journalist Robert Fisk (*The Great War for Civilisation: The Conquest of the Middle East*).

Similarly, display arrangements for translated fiction can create that effect. In 2009, Waterstones started a campaign to promote literature in translation. The flagship Waterstones store in London Piccadilly as well as branches around the country – like Edinburgh West End, Greenwich, Hampstead, Manchester Dean's Gate and Nottingham featured "translated fiction" tables. The Greenwich branch was one of the shops that showed the most commitment to this campaign. When I visited the branch in May 2010, there was a dedicated translated fiction section that composed of seven shelves, marked with author tags: Roberto Bolaño, Albert Camus, Jostein Gaarder, Pedro Juan Gutiérrez, Michael Houellebecq, Franz Kafka, Milan Kundera, Naguib Mahfouz, Sándor Márai, Yukio Mishima, Herta Müller, Irène Némirovsky, Marcel Proust, Bernhard Schlink, W.G. Sebald, Patrick Süskind

and Stefan Zweig. This eclectic mix includes some lesser known authors as well as names who have been identified with world literature. Near this shelf, there was a poster that read “Translated Fiction: Our Choice of Translated Fiction that we just can’t stop talking about.” This poster draws attention to the pleasure aspect of reading, and also the social one, without creating the aura of responsibility around translations. The branch’s commitment to cosmopolitanism was further evidenced by the “Black and Asian Writing” section, to be found near the Translated Fiction section. This section was further divided into genres such as Black Writing, Biography & History, American Romance and A-Z Black Fiction. This branch must have been making full use of the autonomy that centralized buying system offered them: there were many books from independent publishers in these two sections as well as numerous Faber & Faber, Penguin, Bloomsbury and Vintage books. I went to this store to attend a book club meeting. Perhaps unsurprisingly, this was the only book club I saw in my two-year fieldwork that was run by a black bookseller. This was also the only book club with black members.

When I asked the bookseller at the Southwest Waterstones branch, about the Literature in Translation table, he went as far as saying arguing that translated fiction is a genre in itself:

Yes, it is, it is a genre. I mean effectively... In the same way that literary fiction is a genre. You can identify it... It would be as accurate to term it a genre as it would be to talk about crime novels, chick-lit, or literary fiction.

Interviewer: So, what kind of people would be interested in this genre?

Generally, people who are described as heavy book buyers would be amongst them. Serious fiction readers, literary fiction readers, students, academics...

For this bookseller, the distinctive norms governing the production and consumption of translated fiction seem to have drawn the boundaries of a separate category of books. In the current book market, the effect of marketing and promotion in generating meaning structures is so strong that genre now seems to be a construct of marketing, no longer solely defined by the literary establishment. According to Paul DiMaggio, classification in art is culture-bound: “genres represent socially constructed organizing principles that imbue artworks with significance beyond their thematic content and are, in turn,

responsive to structurally generated demand for cultural information and affiliation” (1987: 441). Agents of print culture in Britain – publishers, as we discussed in chapter 5, sales professionals, and readers – seem to draw the symbolic boundaries of a genre for translated literature. Display arrangements for translated fiction provides evidence of genre defined by promotion strategies. Seeing translated titles assembled on sign-posted tables may lead browsers to place them in a different category in their minds.

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Fig. 6.2. Display arrangements at Waterstones Notting Hill, April 2009.

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Fig. 6.3. Display arrangements at Waterstones Exeter High Street, June 2009.

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Fig. 6.4. Display arrangements at Waterstones Exeter High Street, March 2010.

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Fig. 6.5. Display arrangements at Waterstones Greenwich, May 2010.

In line with this campaign, one issue of the Waterstones magazine *Books Quarterly* had a dedicated review area for translations. In a separate half-page section titled “In Translation,” the magazine provided an eclectic selection of translated novels with the subheading “For a head-spinning read, travel further afield: the pick of modern classics from around the world” (Lovely 2010:45). Here we find short reviews on Roberto Bolaño’s *Nazi Literature in the Americas* (from Spanish, original publication date 1996, English translation 2009) Mikhail Bulgakov’s *Master and Margarita* (Russian, 1967, 2007<sup>49</sup>), Jean Echenoz’s *I’m Off* (French, 1999, 2002<sup>50</sup>), Günter Grass’s *The Tin Drum* (German, 1959, 2004<sup>51</sup>), George Perec’s *A Void* (French, 1969, 2008<sup>52</sup>), and Joseph Roth’s *The Radetzky March* (German, 1932, 2002). Canonical books have been combined

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<sup>49</sup> *Master and Margarita* was translated into English in 1967 but the review features the cover of the 2007 Penguin Classics edition.

<sup>50</sup> 1999 refers to the publication date of *I’m Off* only whereas the English Vintage edition reviewed here also includes *One Year*, by the same author.

<sup>51</sup> *The Tin Drum* was translated into English in 1961 but the review features the cover of the 2004 Vintage edition.

<sup>52</sup> *A Void* was translated into English in 1994 but the review features the cover of the 2008 Vintage edition.

with works of lesser-known writers, and there is a focus on European languages. However, the names of the translators are not given, readers are not told from which languages these titles have been translated from and they have not been organized around a common theme. In other words, the only feature they share is that they have been translated from another language.

Arrangements like these may create awareness about translated fiction; however, given the dubious status of translation in British literary culture, it is questionable whether such awareness would work to the advantage of translated novels. Suzie Dooré, fiction buyer at Waterstones says: "I don't think that people go into a bookshop looking for translated fiction – or with a view that they don't want translated fiction. They just want a good book." Dooré is aware that there is "a certain resistance" among British book buyers towards translations but she believes that by promoting translated fiction, Waterstones can communicate to its customers that "not being able to pronounce the author's name is no reason to doubt that you'll enjoy this book" (quoted in Clee 2005:26).

Before brick-and-mortar retailers, Amazon.co.uk had installed a Literature in Translation page late 2008. This page lists novels translated from 27 languages, from Albanian to Turkish. It also features a best-seller chart, along with "Spotlight" sections focusing on specific authors, national literatures and publishing houses specializing in translations. Head of book buying at Amazon.co.uk, Kes Nielsen, explains:

Customers will always respond to well written books, regardless of whether they were originally written in English. However there is also the appeal of reading fiction set in cities or countries that are either familiar based on travel or that are simply different to the traditional setting of most books, specifically the US and UK. It can make them all the more exciting to read (quoted in Neill 2008).

Nielsen would like to see the other side of the coin in translation; that of exoticism instead of inaccessibility. Exoticism as a marketing/promotion strategy is explored below.

Public libraries also employ strategies to promote their translated fiction. Angela Hicken, Literature Development Officer for Hampshire County Council Libraries explains:



Promoting literature in translation really needs exactly the same models and techniques as promoting any of our stock. Research has been showing that 75% of people who come into a library are browsers, and unfortunately the way that we kind of furnish our libraries in the rather rigid A-Z sequence is really for the 25% who know what title they're after. So we need to be imaginative and creative in the ways that we promote different areas of our stock. And we do that by accessibility and visibility: taking them off of the A-Z sequence and putting them in face front scene display. And we do this with different areas of stock, including literature in translation. [...] Far more traffic comes through that sort of funnelled amount of books that we put out. And public libraries' aim is to widen the choice for readers; to get them to borrow more widely, come out of their reading comfort zones (Hicken 2011).

The Southwest Library, which I frequently visited for the Afternoon and Evening Reading Group meetings, also featured a literature in translation shelf in June 2011. The shelf contained 14 books, mostly translated from European languages, but there was one book representing Hebrew literature, one Japanese and one Chinese. The poster on top of the shelf read "literature/books in translation" in nine different languages. The librarian who had organized this shelf explained that they're constantly trying to find new ways of making people think about what they read. Her motive for coming up with this display arrangement indicates that promotion is a tool for making, or restructuring meaning. As discussed above, such meaning may denote genre affiliations, aesthetic positioning or geographical or cultural origins.

In the library book groups that I visited, librarians' efforts to incorporate translated fiction into the reading groups served as a promotion strategy. Reading group leaders try to choose books that will appeal to most members of the groups, but they like to provide them with an opportunity to choose from a wide variety of reading material, presented to them through a judgement based on their literary capital. In the Smaller Southwest Library Reading Group for example, each member read a book (or books) of their own choice each month, and told about their own reading to the rest of the group. This group convened in the afternoon, so most members were retired individuals, many probably over 50. I observed that members preferred English-language books from British authors. In one meeting, as the librarian was reading out loud the list of possible future reads, she mentioned Chinua Achebe's (1958) *Things Fall Apart* (written in English, set in Nigeria). However, readers noticeably avoided eye contact

with both the librarian and each other so she joked, “Well I don’t see you jumping up and down” so this option was eliminated.

There are examples of display arrangements geared towards highlighting exotic elements. Daunts Bookshop, which has several branches in London, targets sales based on the association between books and travel. There are designated parts in the bookshops where books from all genres are displayed geographically: travel books, non-fiction and fiction. So, a browser is likely to find a social sciences title on Uzbekistan next to a travelogue set in Central Asia, or a book about chocolate making next to a translated novel from a Belgian writer. The prospective reader is then able to map the whole world through stereotypes, making or structuring meaning with the help of semiotic cues provided by the display arrangement. Other bookshops adopt this method on a temporary and limited scale. Blackwell’s Oxford bookshop promoted books from India in 2009 on a table with a poster that read “Asian Tigers” and “Tales of the East” on either side. The books on display were not all translations; some of them were written in English by Indian authors, but set in India. Cambridge Heffers promoted Japanese fiction like this too.

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Fig. 6.6. Display arrangements at Blackwells Oxford, April 2009.

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Fig. 6.7. Display arrangements at Cambridge Heffers, April 2009.

Such strategies strengthen the symbolic links between translation and travel, placing the genre of translated literature between fiction and travel writing. Max Porter from Daunt's Fulham Road branch in London thinks that cultural stereotypes are key when browsers choose books. He gives the example of modern German literature:

Customers would say "It's depressing to see your entire German section made up of books about Hitler." That is, that is the consumer; that's not us, you know. I put Peter Schneider's *Wall Jumper* face out. Every time I walk past my German section, people are going to buy *Alone in Berlin*. [...] There's nothing the bookseller can do about that (Porter 2011).

*Alone in Berlin* is Hans Fallada's 1947 novel about a couple who committed acts of civil disobedience during the Second World War by leaving postcards denouncing Hitler across the city. With the element of suspense and drama, the book became an instant hit with reading groups when Penguin Classics published it in English in 2010. Word-of-mouth recommendations initiated the sales success of the title, which in turn generated posthumous journalistic capital for the author (Alberge 2010: 7). *The Wall Jumper* (1983), on the other hand, is the story of ordinary Berliners before the fall of the Wall. This book proceeds in a moderate pace with no sensationalism. As noted before, cultural memory plays a role in reading (de Certeau 1984: 169, DeVault 1990); therefore readers may relate more readily to the plots of books exploring major world events. In other words, the relative lack of appeal of *The Wall Jumper* compared to the popularity of *Alone in Berlin* is not necessarily an indicator of ineffective promotion strategies in this branch.

Porter explains that the difficulty imposed by having to pay high rent translates directly into considerations of shelf space; therefore, they are forced to allocate their limited space to books that are likely to sell (Porter 2011). Daunt's Bookshops are successful in promoting translations, and Porter himself won the Sue Butterworth Young Bookseller of the Year award in 2009. However, consumers' attraction to foreign books with familiar plot elements in order to derive more pleasure from the reading experience constitutes the marketing leg of the cycle of producing and consuming cultural specificity.

In some contexts, universal themes work better than exotically local ones in increasing sales. David Del Vecchio, a bookseller from New York, explained in London Book Fair 2011:

In the past we've tried different things [...] we had a section in the beginning where it would say "5 Books from Iran," "5 Great Books from Turkey," "5 Great Books from France" and that didn't sell so many books. We then did it thematically, we had sort of like "5 Great Books for People Who've Recently Been Laid Off" and you can have there a Russian book, a Turkish book, an Egyptian book, an American book, and people went for it, without really noticing that this one's translated from Russian, this one's been translated from French... (Del Vecchio 2011)

Del Vecchio thinks that an acknowledgement that the book is a translation will not help marketing: "Certain organizations that promote translation are wrong to think that people are gonna read books because it's [related to] an active responsible global citizenship. I don't think the reader cares about translation" (*ibid*). Del Vecchio here gives primacy to the pleasure to be derived from the internal factors of texts over the status aspect of cosmopolitan reading. We see that the concerns about visibility for translated titles leave booksellers in a difficult situation. However they organize books into clusters, and whichever aspect of these books they choose to highlight is likely to have a bearing on readers' consumption strategies of the book.

### **6.3.2 Visibility in Packaging**

For the last several decades, packaging has played a special role in the wider strategies for marketing books (Matthews 2007: xiii) and book covers have been described as a key selling device similar to advertising in their format and purpose (cited in Pickford 2007: 88). Catchy designs encourage consumers to pick up books, study the front and back covers and maybe read the blurb. The potential buyer is then five times more likely to purchase the product (cited in Phillips 2007:29). The 16.60% percentage claimed by the option "display in bookshop" in the *Bookseller* survey also signals the importance of packaging (Tivnan and Higham 2010: 25). Moreover, promotional material like adverts, posters and catalogues usually feature book covers alongside text. Even if the attention is initially drawn to the plot of a book in a review or a personal recommendation, prospective readers do decide for themselves if the cover

leaves a positive impression on them before finally committing to read the book. Book covers play a vital role in convincing consumers that the book they are browsing is worth buying, or checking out from the library. In addition, a book cover can also reveal taste and preference when a reader is seen by others while reading, which links to the status relevance of books.

Packaging has a specific implication for translations: the name of the translator can signal symbolic affiliation with the “genre” of translated fiction. A marketing professional from a large UK publishing company admits that when publishers are deciding on packaging strategies for translated books, they sometimes try to hide the fact that it has been translated from another language, because it “poses an impediment” for people to decide to read these books (Bratchell 2009). Hiding the translated book fact can be achieved by writing the author’s name in small print on the front cover. The browser’s attention then will not be drawn to a foreign-sounding name, which automatically suggests that it has originally been written in another language. An editor from an independent publisher also explained that they might choose to put the name of the translator on the back cover, rather than the front. These examples clearly show that British publishers are aware of the resistance among British readers towards texts that have been translated from another language. Marketing professionals also seem to think along the same lines: in an event at the Literary Translation Centre at London Book Fair 2011, Cathy Rentzenbrink of Waterstones said: “All I really want to do is to find something that somebody will want to buy. It’s absolutely as simple as that. [...] So very good point about the Murakami, there are authors who transcend [national boundaries]. I think Isabel Allende is another one; people just don’t think of her as being in translation. That’s something to aim for” (Rentzenbrink 2011). Rentzenbrink joins the publishing professionals from large and independent publishing houses in their belief that the fact that a text has crossed linguistic borders is to be hidden from readers. However, writers from Asian, Middle Eastern and to a certain extent, African countries have names that sound inescapably “foreign” to Western readers, which could appeal more to individuals who are making their book selection with a cosmopolitan conscience than to readers who are seeking enjoyment from the internal dimensions of the book, such as style and plot. In that case, the perceived “foreignness” of a book

is a factor that publishers should carefully consider in their attempts to make a certain book as appealing as possible to potential consumers.

Front covers usually feature a carefully designed combination of imagery and text. They might be seen as a tease, “partially revealing, partially concealing the content” (Weedon 2007: 117). Generally, the wider the target segment of a particular book, the more likely it is that the cover and blurb will feature clichés, which serve as simple signifiers to a wide audience (Phillips 2007: 22). Moreover, cover designs are an indispensable tool for genre affiliation (see Squires 2007: 75-85). Booksellers prefer publishers to design covers that bear strong associations with genres, so that potential buyers can easily recognize the type of book that they’re interested in. Bookshop layout is a similar cue for browsers: bookshops today have elaborate organizations, well sign-posted for genres (*ibid*, 94-97). The modern book buyer navigates bookshops based on this knowledge, in addition to the awareness for the genre indicators in covers of course: pink for chick-lit and lonesome silhouettes for thrillers. Ken Worpole explains how the pricing of books used to be a determining factor for the inclusion or exclusion of readers into the intended audience of books (1982: 83-91). Nowadays, though, it seems to be the packaging of a book, and where and it’s displayed, that more often helps potential buyers or borrowers to decide if a book is for them. The meaning structures generated by publishers and retailers help consumers decide if a book fits with their other choices for cultural products, confirmed by Bourdieu (1984) and McCracken (1988). As the case studies in the next section will illustrate, the use of iconic imagery suggesting particular geographical locations can signal cultural difference to prospective consumers, appealing to their cosmopolitan affinities.

### **6.3.3 Cover Design Case Studies**

We will now examine examples of book covers designed for translated titles. Random House’s Vintage started a series called “Vintage East” in 2006 consisting mostly of books translated from East Asian languages: *Norwegian Wood* by Haruki Murakami (translated from Japanese), *Autobiography of a*  
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Fig. 6.8. The “Take Your Imagination East” page on the Vintage website.

*Geisha* by Sayo Masuda (Japanese), *The Girl Who Played Go* by Shan Sa (French), *The Sailor Who Fell from Grace with the Sea* by Yukio Mishima (Japanese), *Balzac and the Little Chinese Seamstress* by Dai Sijie (French), *Out* by Natsuo Kirino (Japanese), *The Good Women of China* by Xinran (Chinese), *Red Dust* by Ma Jian (Chinese) and *Waiting* by Ha Jin (written originally in English).

Although three of these books have been written in European languages, in this series, they are all seen to be representatives of East Asian literature only. The book covers feature iconic imagery reminiscent of East Asian cultures, and the series is promoted with the phrases “Take Your Imagination East” and “Full of Eastern Promise.” We will now move on to examples representing a wider variety of source cultures, this time contrasting the English edition covers with the original ones. The original images suggest a concern with general aspects of human life whereas the translation covers reveal that the definition of content through local specificity has been superimposed on the universalist aspiration of the source texts.

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Fig. 6.9. The cover of *The Village of Stone* by Xiaolu Guo (2005) and the original cover designed by the Chinese publisher

On the cover of Xiaolu Guo’s (2005) *The Village of Stone*, translated from Chinese, there is the face of an East Asian girl, and some goldfish. The cover of the original; however, shows a woman leaning against a wall, and the photo has been cropped so that we cannot see her face.

The two covers designed for *the Housekeeper and the Professor* by Yoko Ogawa (2009) feature cherry blossom and decorative pattern typical of traditional Japanese porcelain.

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Fig. 6.10. The two book covers designed for *The Housekeeper and the Professor* by Yoko Ogawa (2009), and the cover designed by the Japanese publisher. The first cover belongs to Picador USA while the second one was designed by Harvill Secker.

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Fig. 6.11. The front cover of *The Home and the World* (2005) by Rabindranath Tagore and the cover designed by the Indian publisher.

Rabindranath Tagore's (2005) *The Home and the World*, translated from Bengali, features the henna applied hands of a lady. *The Cairo Trilogy* is composed of *Palace Walk* (1994a), *The Palace of Desire* (1994b) and *Sugar Street* (1994c) by the Egyptian author Naguib Mahfouz. The covers of the translations contain a *fez*, a lady in a *hijab*, sitting on what seems like a praying mat and playing a lute, and a low table with a jug on it.

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Fig. 6.12. Book covers designed for Naguib Mahfouz's *Cairo Trilogy*, and the covers used by the Egyptian publishing house.

One may observe here images that signify particular geographical locations, cultures, or religions. Goldfish connote Chinese culture, cherry blossom Japanese; henna Indian, and *fez*, *hijab*, lute and low table Middle Eastern, while praying mat and domes are signifiers for the Muslim religion. These objects may or may not play an essential role in the plot; in this respect, it might be an interesting exercise to contrast the translated book covers with the original ones.

The examples that we have examined suggest Edward Said's Orientalism, which refers to Western constructions of the East. The West has been both fascinated and threatened by the East for centuries, and Orientalism is the result of these volatile and ambiguous attitudes. In Said's analysis, Orientalism refers to the aggregate of Western statements, representations, descriptions and analyses on the Middle East and Asia starting from late 18<sup>th</sup> century onwards. Said sees this as a tool for "dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient" (Said 1979: 3).



Orientalism has been expressed in literature, along with social sciences, in circulating its discourse (Said 1979: 15). Scholars and artists studying the Orient have principally aimed at ethnographic realism, while also seeking to maximize the appeal of their accounts, even if that means compromising realism. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, European travellers to the East brought back their travelogues describing life in Istanbul and Cairo. These accounts, sometimes coloured by passages inspired by the *Arabian Nights* (1960), were received with much enthusiasm and served to reinforce Western ideals of the exotic (Roberts, 62-63). Orientalist subjects were also embraced in fiction, notably in the works of artists such as Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Percy Bysshe Shelley, Edgar Allan Poe, Victor Hugo, Gustave Flaubert, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, Gérard de Nerval and F. Scott Fitzgerald (Said 1979: 53).

Along with the vogue for writing about the Orient, there was also a passion for representing it visually. Western painters depicted events and picturesque scenes from daily life in the Middle East and Asia. Fed by a mix of fact and fantasy, this visual expression of the movement employed themes like violence and eroticism widely (Lemaire 2005: 60). Orientalist art had its heyday in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, starting with Delacroix's *Massacre at Chois* (1824) (Rodinson 2002:68). From then on, other painters following this fashion depicted

fierce and lavish scenes in a wild array of colors; harems and seraglios; decapitated bodies, women hurled into the Bosphorus in sacks; feluccas and brigantines displaying the Crescent flag; round, turquoise domes and white minarets soaring to the heavens, viziers, eunuchs, and odalisques; refreshing springs under palm trees; *giaours*<sup>53</sup> with their throats slit; captive women forced into submission by their lustful captors (*ibid*, 69).

Therefore, from works of visual arts to verbal accounts, sensuality has been a source of exoticness. Postcolonialist writer Malek Alloula points to the centrality of this element: "Arrayed in the brilliant colours of exoticism and exuding a full-blown yet uncertain sensuality, the Orient, where unfathomable mysteries dwell and cruel and barbaric scenes are staged, has fascinated and disturbed Europe for a long time" (Alloula 2002: 519). Other critics point out the fact that Orientalist visual representations have functioned as spectacles for the Western eye: "The central role of the white spectator, the objective of

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<sup>53</sup> from the Turkish word "gâvur," a derogatory word used to refer to non-Muslims.

spectacles as a confirmation of their position as global consumers of exotic cultures, and the stress on authenticity as an aesthetic value, all remain fundamental to the spectacle of Otherness many continue to enjoy” (Fusco 2002: 560). The Orient originally referred to a geographical designation; but soon came to be an imaginary place that is variously located in any space from the Jewish East End of London to the European colonies in North Africa, the Middle East and Asia. In short, the Orient is not so much a physical space as the idea of everything exotic and other (Mirzoeff 2002: 475). Even everyday objects and experiences can give the feeling of exoticism, which is described as “the thrill of ‘escape,’ that sense of being transported through art or lifestyle without ever leaving one’s own culture” (Rodinson 2002: 38). For Graham Huggan, exoticism refers to a mode of aesthetic perception (2001: 13) where cultural difference is spectacularized (*ibid*, 15, cf. Hall 1992: 304). The cultural value attached to exotic literature serves as a “sales-tag” in globalized commodity culture (Huggan 2001, ix).

The book covers that have been examined in the case studies fit these descriptions in a number of ways. In all of the book covers there is an emphasis on cultural difference, and also on racial difference on the cover of *The Village of Stone*. The focus on tangibility and sensuality leads these representations to be objectified. The lute and the jug on the covers of *The Cairo Trilogy* suggest music and drinks, while the cover of *The Home and the World* shows female skin to a certain extent. The fact that we only see the hands of the lady on the cover of *The Home and the World* mobilizes our imagination. Moreover, it might be observed that the imagery on the covers of *The Housekeeper and the Professor*, *The Home and the World* and the three books that make *the Cairo Trilogy* has been detached from any temporal indicators and thus rendered ahistorical, which is a sign of fixation. Finally, almost all of these book covers have been intended to show glimpses of spectacles.

To sum up, with their focus on racial difference, their binaristic fixation of Eastern peoples in ahistorical contexts, and their objectification of elements pertaining to Eastern lifestyles through iconic imagery suggest that these book covers are part of an Orientalized representation. Arguably, these works of graphic design are the modern-day extensions of the Orientalist tradition in visual arts.

Edward Said makes a distinction between latent and manifest Orientalism. The former is described as an almost unconscious positivity, perhaps a well-meaning but one-dimensional representation of Eastern countries, cultures and peoples. Manifest Orientalism, on the other hand, involves an overtly hegemonic and misleading view of the East, including the various statements about Eastern society, languages, literatures, history, sociology etc. (Said 1979:206). The type of Orientalism that is observable in the marketing practices of British publishers is most probably of the former, as it is intended as an aesthetic framework for the consumption of a cosmopolitan reader. The covers discussed above signal cultural sophistication, which is necessary to understand the “enigmatic” East, while affirming difference. They also feed into an imperialist nostalgia, representing exoticism with connotations of eroticism and escapism. Given that they are in contrast to the universalist aspirations of the texts as expressed in the original covers, the question then arises as to whether these paratexts inform, or alter, the interpretation of the text itself.

Arguably, in translated books, although the text inside is preferably domesticated (Venuti 2008) the packaging – the paratexts – are often foreignized. This foreignization leads to a visual cultural translation (see Bhabha 2004 [1994] 303-337); the book cover does not only represent the text, but also the image of the culture where the text comes from. Therefore, these book covers can be described as metonymic translations of cultures. The whole project of selecting and publishing a translation has a metonymic aspect, due to the conditions of the UK literary market. According to translation scholar Maria Tymoczko, metonymy characterizes the act of translation: It is a form of representation in which parts or aspects of the source text come to stand for the whole (1999: 55).

We will refer to Roland Barthes’s (1967) model of semiological representation to analyze display arrangements and book covers as marketing tools for translated literature. A semiological sign is composed of a signifier – a word, an image, a sound, a gesture – and a signified – the mental representation that the signifier elicits. Signifiers exist in planes of expressions, and they correspond to signifieds that are found in planes of content (Barthes 1967: 39). The act which binds the signifier and the signified is known as signification (*ibid*, 48). As we are presented with verbal, audio or visual stimuli in

our daily lives, we produce meaning out of codes and signs that we recognize (Strinati 2004: 98).

Connotation, on the other hand, is a complex structure that involves a sign, whose signified is another signifier in itself (Barthes 1967: 90). Let us take the Union Jack as an example. The picture of a Union Jack is a signifier for the concept of “British flag;” it elicits the representation of the British flag in our minds, which in turn signifies Britain the country. As a result, the Union Jack serves as a connoter for Britain in most cases. We come across connotations in various media in our daily lives, especially in advertising, which makes extensive use of this tool. The third, and the most complicated level of representation is the myth. Myths are closely linked to ideology. Barthes explains myth through the example of a magazine cover:

I am at the barber's, and a copy of *Paris-Match* is offered to me. On the cover, a young Negro [sic] in a French uniform is saluting, with his eyes uplifted, probably fixed on a fold of the tricolour. All this is the *meaning* of the picture. But, whether naively or not, I see very well what it signifies to me: that France is a great Empire, that all her sons, without any colour discrimination, faithfully serve under her flag, and that there is no better answer to the detractors of an alleged colonialism than the zeal shown by this Negro [sic] in serving his so-called oppressors. I am therefore again faced with a greater semiological system: there is a signifier, itself already formed with a previous system (*a black soldier is giving the French salute*); there is a signified (it is here a purposeful mixture of Frenchness and militariness); finally, there is a presence of the signified through the signifier (1973: 125-126, emphasis in original).

Barthes expresses the ideological power of the myth by saying that it transforms history into nature (1973: 140). This is how a myth is visualized:

1. Signifier	2. Signified
3. Sign I SIGNIFIER	II SIGNIFIED
III SIGN	

Fig. 6.13. The visual representation of a myth (Barthes 1973: 124)

The marketing strategies employed by publishers are usually in line with their book selection criteria. We will see in chapter 9 how covers designed for Turkish translations have been a reflection of the priorities in title selection. Before that, we will take a closer look at a book cover designed for a novel translated from Turkish in terms of the cultural signifiers it contains. The front cover of Perihan Mağden's (2005) *2 Girls* is a clear example of Orientalist art. Here we see two young women sitting on the edge of a swimming pool in their bikinis, accompanied by the photograph of a mosque in the background. An analytical look reveals that this image communicates messages on a number of levels. The signification on the first level includes nudity and a geographical/cultural location, the combination of which leads to the Barthesian myth of erotically suggestive leisure in a Muslim country, in line with the popular Orientalist stereotype. This myth runs parallel to the myth that this book will offer an experience akin to a trip to Turkey. A further level of interpretation revolves around the ambivalent ideas of the Ottoman harem representing both sensuality and captivity in the European fascination. This book cover actually bears a striking resemblance to Jean-Léone Gérôme's painting *Bathing Scene* (1881), which shows four harem women near a pool in a Turkish bath. The first is completely naked, sitting at the front, facing away from the spectator, whereas the two behind her are covered from the waist down by *peştemals*. The fourth woman is almost invisible, behind the third. The focal point of the painting is the reflection of the two foremost naked bodies on water: we can see the hips of the first woman, and the upper body of the second. The painting creates an Orientalist myth whereby the Ottoman harem signifies Eastern irrationality and eroticism. Furthermore, the book cover discussed above serves as a signifier for the myth represented by such Orientalist painting, which means that it works because images of the Ottoman harem, like this painting, are already in the cultural repertoire of Western post-Enlightenment discourse.

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Fig. 6.14. Jean-Léone Gérôme's *Bathing Scene* (1881) and the cover designed for Perihan Mağden's (2005) *2 Girls*.

The tendency to use exoticism in the promotion of translations is not limited to fiction from Middle Eastern and Asian languages, as it is possible to come across geographical and cultural themes on the covers of novels from European and South American authors. The covers designed for the books of Andrea Camilleri, Claude Izner and Roberto Bolaño, for example, carry cultural symbols. Moreover, the exoticizing trend is paralleled in the packaging strategies for books that have been written by English speaking authors, depicting Middle Eastern, East or South Asian countries. While the most obvious cases might be guide books and travel writing, books from all fiction and non-fiction genres are showcased for their exotic details. This includes the works of world authors who have chosen to write in English to give their books more currency in the international readership. That said, the element of historical difference is often utilized in promoting 19<sup>th</sup> century English literature as well. According to research carried out by Val Williamson (2007) on the evolution of front covers of Liverpool saga fiction, local specificity was employed to market these books. In the 80s, Liverpool became a tourist attraction, “a set of curiosities and spectacles for the outsider” (*ibid*, 36) and during this period, poverty and city landmarks were stock images in cover art. Nevertheless, iconic imagery became irrelevant as the popular perceptions of the city changed in the 90s.

Marketing and promotion strategies used by publishers and retailers to make their products more appealing create meanings alongside value for

potential consumers. From a book cover to a table for displaying books around a particular theme in a bookshop, these arrangements convey messages not only concerning the texts inside the books but also concerning the contexts which these books are linked to. In their critique of mass culture, Adorno and Horkheimer postulate that the culture industry schematizes life, i.e., it patterns or pre-forms experience (1979: 124). Therefore, in the context of books, the commercial imperative of marketing constructs and reconstructs knowledge for book consumers.

#### **6.4 Reading Exoticism in Book Covers**

In chapter 5 and up to now in this chapter, we have concentrated on the meaning constructed by producers of books; at this point we are turning our attention to reception by audiences. This section will analyze readers' use of the paratexts before they enter the actual text. This discussion will set the scene for chapters 7 and 8, which analyze readers' contributions to book group discussions.

Since translated novels are packaged and promoted in particular ways, their presentation to readers has implications on the reading experience. The tendency of representing foreign fiction as *exotica* might create and consolidate a preconception that translated novels are not to be read for their literary quality, but for their exotic details. This "myth," in Barthes's terms (1973: 117-126) might lead to a situation where books translated from other languages are enjoyed to the extent that they offer exotic glimpses of the country and the culture of their setting, thus reducing reading almost to a "touristic" activity.

Obviously, readers use different strategies for interpreting texts that are based on different epistemologies. For example, the information in a current affairs magazine article will not be processed in the same way as fiction, because the former is intended to relay knowledge about a relatively objective truth, whereas a novel is conceived of as the product of an author's imagination. The same applies to visual representation as well. However, imagined representations are based on realistically intended ones, or at least are perceived to be so; as a result, they cannot be totally divorced from objectivity. Even if they are consumed as fictional realities, representations on book paratexts have the power to influence perceptions about other cultures.

The results of my questionnaire on book covers suggest that respondents interpret cultural signs and their interpretation creates expectations for the themes employed in the book. When presented with the questionnaire reproduced in Appendix 4, my respondents guessed the origins of book covers with exotic illustrations more or less accurately. As discussed previously, this is the questionnaire I prepared in order to find out about readers' responses to iconic imagery on book covers. The books included in this survey are all translations – I tried to represent a wide variety in terms of source language and geographical locations – but some covers reveal more about the plot and the setting while others reveal less. 50 respondents filled the questionnaire.<sup>54</sup> Before I analyze the results, I would like to mention the limitations on the validity of these questionnaires. This exercise might have manipulated respondents' process of free association, in other words, because images heavily laden with cultural signs had been juxtaposed in an artificial way for them, respondents might have actively tried to find exotic themes – they would not encounter such an array of book covers in a bookshop. Moreover, since the question "What could this book be about?" follows questions about the contents of the cover image, the questionnaire is based on the assumption that guesses about a novel *can* be made on the basis of the cover. Some respondents' incorrect guesses led me to this conclusion. A few people thought that *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo* (Sweden) was from China, referring to the dragon tattoo on the cover (other answers include Asia and Thailand). One thought that this book could be about "the struggles of women caught between two cultures," which shows that they felt obliged to incorporate cultural aspects in their guesses. In short, these results need to be taken with a pinch of salt; however, they could be thought of giving us an idea of readers' interpretations.

To start with the "I think this book is from..." question, the majority of respondents guessed correctly that *The Home and the World* (India) was a book from India, usually referring to the henna and the bangles. One respondent called the henna "exotic markings" and wrote that the cover made them think of "far away places." Another expressed that this cover made them

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<sup>54</sup> However, not all respondents answered all questions, therefore the data that each book cover generated is not equal. The questionnaire material included the 2008 cover of Steig Larsson's *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo*, which became an instant bestseller. The book cover was thus identifiable to many readers, even if they had not actually read the book, so they had to leave the corresponding questions blank. When the trilogy was adapted to film, the title became very strongly associated with the author, and the film trailers gave away elements of the plot, so I had to omit that book cover from the questionnaires that I had already printed.



think of “Spirituality – the hands look like they are about to receive an offering at a special religious ceremony or cultural celebration.” Others thought this book could be about “cultural issues,” “people travelling across traditional pastures,” “India and the Raj,” “women’s lives in Morocco,” “a young girl getting married,” “a culture threatened by globalisation” or “an experience of the world through the eyes of an Indian/Asian upbringing.” The novel has considerable political content; the plot revolves around the relationships between one rich but passive man, his young and naïve wife and an attractive radical revolutionist. The entire repertoire of Oriental cultural difference has been activated in the responses. The reader who brought up spirituality has perceived it as cultural capital. Travel has been a prominent theme, and exoticism has manifested itself with an erotic tinge. Comments such as religious ceremony, pastures and marriage suggest that even apparently innocent images are capable of provoking referents that are not actually present.

Many thought *The Palace of Desire* (Egypt) was from a Muslim country – answers include the Middle East, Arabic countries, Arabia, Morocco, Egypt, Turkey, Iran, Iraq, India and Asia (respondents who wrote “India” and “Asia” refer to the dome silhouettes). About the plot, the guesses were “dreams and desires,” “people urging for their desire, e.g. entertainment,” “someone’s experiences in a palace,” “a character who is struggling with their religious faith,” “fantasy, magic things [...] tropical treasures” and “women in Arabic countries, e.g. women in burka.” Most of these respondents justify their answers with the existence of the lute, the potted plant, the prayer mat and the *hijab*, which shows that they have interpreted the signifiers correctly. The fairy tale quality of this book cover finds its reflection in the answers that include a mention of Aladdin, probably prompted by the existence of the carpet. *The Palace of Desire* is the second installment of Naguib Mahfouz’s *Cairo Trilogy*, which narrates the story of three generations of a family in Cairo. From the guesses, it is apparent that the potential readers of this book are ready for a mystical reading experience since they are expecting the book to contain sensual descriptions and religious themes, and perhaps also social tensions around tradition.

*2 Girls* (Turkey) was also mostly correctly guessed to be from a Muslim country, but there were more incorrect answers for this cover than for *The Palace of Desire*. Many answers were as specific as “Turkey” and some even

wrote "Istanbul." The combination of the minarets and the swimming pool on this cover took many respondents to the right answer: some wrote that the book cover made them think about "holidays." However, the image of the girls in bikinis misled others into thinking that it would not be from a Muslim country: a few wrote Russia or Moscow for the source country question. As noted earlier, this cover has strong Orientalist associations; however, the scene with the public swimming pool also carries secularist connotations that compete with the other interpretation. Actually, the book is about two teenagers who become passionate for each other, but their love is not actualized in a sexual relationship. Religion does not play a role in the book, neither is there a mosque scene anywhere in the plot. Therefore, the inclusion of the image of a mosque might be justified as signifying geographical location.

*The Village of Stone* (China) was usually correctly guessed to be from Asia, and specifically from China; other answers are Asia, East Asia, Japan, Malaysia and Vietnam. Respondents based their guesses on the existence of the fish and the Asian girl with her slanted eyes. She looks low in spirit, which elicits pessimistic ideas of the plot: "painful childhood, longing for better life," "a story of a troubled people" and "trials and tribulations in a rural village." The image of the girl on the cover represents the protagonist, who has spent an unhappy childhood in a remote fishing village in China.

Responses related to *The Housekeeper and the Professor* (Japan) also often had to do with Southeast Asia, with reference to the cherry blossom: answers include Japan, China and Thailand. Guesses about the topic of the book revolve around love and romance, probably because of the name of the book. However, this novel tells about the familial bonds built between a former mathematics professor, whose memory has been reduced to 80 minutes due to a car accident, and a female housekeeper who is hired to look after him and who brings his 10 year-old-son along. One reader thought this book could be about "the cultural encounter of a western educated man with a woman who enlightens his knowledge." This remark represents a typical Orientalist fantasy that restates superior Western rationality and desire for Eastern spirituality, bringing them together in a presumably erotic encounter.

There were mixed answers on the questions for *My Name is Red* (Turkey 2002). This cover features Arabic script on the wall and we can see a man with Asian features through a door. Since the focal point of the design is the person

inside, most guesses about the country of origin were either “Asia” or some Asian country: one respondent explicitly refers to the “Asian looking woman.” Another, who correctly guessed that the book is from the Middle East, thought it could be about “oppression of women,” which suggests that they interpreted the figure stabbing another as domestic violence in this context. *My Name is Red* is a murder mystery set in 16<sup>th</sup> century Istanbul. It tells of rivalry among a community of miniaturists.

Two trends emerge from the results, one concerns agency; the other local specificity. Many respondents imagined the characters of these books to be caught in conflict and unable to help themselves. These ideas are usually manifest in the answers given for the covers of *The Palace of Desire* (Egypt), *The Home and the World* (India) and *Village of Stone* (China). Answers for *The Palace of Desire* include “experiences of women in enclosed community,” “a woman from a rich, arab [sic] family who was faced with (inner?) conflict between sexual desires & Islamic strict rules of life” and “sex within a strict culture & religion.” After all, when the central figure in the book cover has been made to wear a *hijab* and sit on a prayer mat, there’s little room for imagining this book outside of a religious context. I came across only two questionnaires that contained an answer with positive sentiments about this cover. I also found only one questionnaire that attributed agency to this cover: “repressive society, main protagonist ‘breaking the mould.’” For one respondent, the book cover brought to mind “a secret society behind the external view.” This person refers to the “black robes” to justify their country of origin answer. I understand that they have picked up the idea of “covering” or “being covered” but the title has prompted suggestions of sexuality. For *The Home and the World*, one respondent came up with “weddings (Indian),” being “tied down” to family, traditions.” It is the troubled expression on the girl’s face on the cover of *Village of Stone* that encourages associations of non-agency. One respondent wrote that the cover of *2 Girls* made them think of “a conflict between (especially conservative) religious & secular society.” Therefore, many people interpreted the images on the covers to convey a lack of agency on the part of the characters they understood to live in faraway lands, which could correspond to passivity and fatalism, as part of the Orientalist myth.

Another recurrent theme is local specificity. Respondents mostly perceived cultural difference, and in a few instances, racial difference as well.

Only two respondents correctly guessed that Mia Couto's (2006) *Sleepwalking Land* (Mozambique) was from Africa; however, one referred to a "black guy an african [sic] looking beach." The cover made another think of "slave trade, or modern-day exploitation of cheap labor in Africa." One answer regarding the *Palace of Desire* is "casbahs, [sic] realistic Aladdin type stories, mosque:" although the expression "realistic Aladdin type stories" sounds like an oxymoron, it is evident that this respondent refers to ethnographic realism in the book. This answer might also imply an Orientalist conviction that stories without the overt use of magic would otherwise be realistic. On one questionnaire the sentence "This cover makes me think of" was completed with the words "ethnic & outside cultures, different artforms." The words "ethnic" and "outside" in combination indicate peripheral countries.

The incorrect guesses are also based on recognition of some sign. As mentioned before, *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo* (Sweden) was thought to be from China, because of the dragon tattoo on the female figure's shoulder. One respondent thought the book could be about "modern day Chinese interests & culture." According to another respondent, *The Blind Owl* (2008) could be from Italy, because the translator's name, D.P. Costello, "sounds Italian." Another thought it could be from Sweden, as the cover features a "wooden building." This respondent wrote that the book could be about "social life in rural Scandinavia." The cover of *The Master and Margarita* (2007) was often thought to be reminiscent of Spain, probably because the cover contains the colours of the Spanish flag, red and yellow. However, none of the respondents who gave this answer point to the colour, their answers do not suggest any local specificity but involve rather universal themes. For example, one thought the book could be about "tales of fantasy, about terror."

Looking through the answers, I thought that some respondents might have been influenced by their own comments in interpreting the covers. For example, one thought that Ismail Kadere's (2008) *The Siege* (Albania) could be from India, referring to the "title writing" (calligraphy) and "building architecture." Although I do not find this cover design particularly exotic, the respondent answered the next question ("because the cover features...") "an exotic place." There are four flags waving in the mediaeval-looking town on this cover, and three visibly have crosses. Moreover, I find the architecture to be European in style, with geometrical shapes, turrets and a tower that looks like a bell tower.

There are soldiers in metal armour defending the castle. In sum, it is difficult to decide whether the respondent finds precisely these architectural elements exotic or what they visualized after they decided that the book is from India.

It is interesting that the respondents who thought Roberto Bolaño's (2007) *The Savage Detectives* (Mexico) could be from the USA also made comments in the other sections that suggest agency. The word "detective" in the title probably reinforces this image of the plot and the characters. Answers include "travelling around while solving things," "investigations by detectives across the US," "violence/car chases/thriller." Similarly, one person thinking *The Blind Owl* (Iran) was from "America" wrote "power, proudness [sic], ability" for the possible themes and "a strong person, someone who survives alone & succeeds" for the plot. Actually, the title of this book suggests the opposite of agency, as eyes are a prominent feature of an owl, and a blind owl cannot fly. However, when the image was perceived to be American, masculine powers seem to have been attributed to it alongside agency. On the other hand, the Orientalist interpretations of book cover designs involving a lack of agency also implied a feminine passivity.

The questionnaire also asked respondents if they would pick up these books at a bookshop. Unsurprisingly, when the book cover elicited negative feelings in them, respondents usually answered this question in the negative. For example, the cover of *My Name is Red* suggested "unhappy lifestyles" and "hard work" to one respondent, who wrote that they would not be interested in this book. Similarly, another indicated that the cover of *The Blind Owl* brought to their mind "brooding atmosphere" and "suspicion," therefore they answered the final question "no." Consequently, designing book covers for translations with characters lacking agency might be undermining the appeal of these books.

What is more interesting about the questionnaire answers is that, although it was made clear in the introduction that the questionnaire featured covers of books translated from other languages, when respondents did not see prominent cultural signifiers, they gave the answer England, UK or USA. *The Blind Owl* (Iran) and *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo* (Sweden) were thought by some to be from either the UK or the USA. One of the answers to the country of origin question for *The Blind Owl* was "no idea" with the "this book cover makes me think of" question answered "nothing specific." One person wrote "Europe" for the source country question, and when asked to justify their answer, they

answered “that it has been translated.” The name of the translator is very visible in this minimalist cover; therefore we may infer that if it were not translated, the respondent would confidently say that it is from the UK. One respondent thought that *The Housekeeper and the Professor* (Japan) could be from England, because “the words sound very English.” Another thought this book could be from “America” and referred to the design and the layout of the cover. According to this respondent, the cover signals “a novel, something nostalgic & intriguing” and the book could be about “a romance affair, a family, a journey through time.” Two respondents thought that *Sleepwalking Land* (Mozambique) could be from “America.” One thought the figures on the cover were “hard, solid, nothing soft” the other referred to “war.” According to one person, *2 Girls* could also be from Britain, because there is a swimming pool on the cover: “a holiday romance involving 2 girls & their exploits.” The *Master and Margarita* was also understood to be from the UK due to the Penguin Classics logo on the cover.

The answers to the questions about these book covers thought to be from the UK or the USA rarely refer to local specificity; they usually revolve around universal themes. This could be interpreted as an indication of how British readers expect books from other cultural contexts to carry cultural signifiers; since apparently if they do not carry these signifiers, readers think the book can not be very “foreign.” To sum up, British readers interpret cultural signifiers on book covers and pick up on elements of exoticism and cultural difference. Val Williamson argues that book covers constitute a “paratextual threshold” to the narratives (2007: 31). These results show that readers start “reading” books as they stand on this threshold. In the following two chapters, we will see how this reading further informs the interpretation once readers are inside the book.

## **6.5 Conclusion**

This chapter discussed strategies used in marketing and promoting translated literature. Visibility emerges as a major concern for translated titles. Moreover, considerations related to the translation process, the name of the translator especially, seem to present publishers with difficult choices. The case studies on book covers prove that some publishers try to give their titles visibility by emphasizing the exotic contents of their books. Exoticism remains a strong element in both packaging and promotion strategies. Along with the symbolic

value vested on translated titles by publishers of literary fiction (see chapter 5), exoticism serves as a legitimizing agent for these books in the book market. Moreover, this brand of foreignization is likely to produce stereotypes, especially considering the fact that readers perceive a lack of agency within exoticism. In fiction, exoticism mediates the tourist gaze, which manifested itself in the results of the questionnaire on book covers. Answers discussed above indicate that the hermeneutic process mostly takes place as intended by these meaning-makers.





## **7 Translation as Linguistic Transference**

### **7.1 Introduction**

In the previous chapter we saw how translated fiction is constructed as a separate literary genre in the contemporary British book market. Such classification necessitates a closer look at the visibility of translation as a linguistic phenomenon and readers' evaluations of style, fluency, word choice etc in translated texts. The symbolic benefits of this category of books for the cosmopolitan and omnivorous consumer are also worth investigating. This chapter will therefore analyze responses to translated literature as texts originally written in other languages and then translated into English by language professionals. This analysis is aimed at revealing the multiple meanings attached to translated fiction in the various scales of reception – from literary magazines to individual readers. The concept of visibility as a textual strategy has been productively explored in translation studies, so I will try to go beyond translators' use of heterogeneous language and move towards readers' perceptions. Readers' assessments of the textual-linguistic dimensions of translated literature provide key insights into the complex nature of omnivorous and cosmopolitan endorsements in cultural consumption.

### **7.2 The Visibility of Translation and Translator**

The section will discuss the visibility – or the invisibility – of translation as a linguistic process and a cultural phenomenon in discourses on translated works of literature in the mediated public space. Visibility has been discussed among translation scholars as a textual phenomenon until recently (see Hermans 1996, Arrojo 1997). According to this literature, translators have been idealized by the tradition in translation history as torn between their authorial interests and the proper respect owed to the author. It is the ideology of translation, the illusion of transparency that blinds the reader to the presence of the voice of the translator. Lawrence Venuti (2008) maintains that translation remains an invisible phenomenon in the Anglo-American literary culture. He discusses invisibility as an issue in the reception of translated books, mainly by the literary élite. Reviews often fail to mention the translators, and translations are judged by their degree of transparency, a condition resulting from the conception of authorship in the literary culture of Anglo-American society:

According to this conception, the author freely expresses his thoughts and feelings in writing, which is thus viewed as an original and transparent self-representation, unmediated by transindividual determinants (linguistic, cultural, social) that might complicate authorial originality. This view of authorship carries two disadvantageous implications for the translator. On the one hand, translation is defined as a second-order representation [...] On the other hand, translation is required to efface its second-order status with the effect of transparency, producing the illusion of authorial presence whereby the translated text can be taken as the original (2008:6).

This discussion supports Toury's statement that "the more peripheral the status of translation in a community, the more translation will accommodate itself to established models and repertoires" (1995: 271). This hegemony of transparency has shaped the expectations of Anglo-American publishers as well as reviewers, so the texts chosen for publication have been those deemed amenable to fluent translation. In translations into English, fluency has been valued in translation since the seventeenth century (Venuti 2008: 35-82). Domestication has been then the preferred strategy for translation, which perpetuates, in Venuti's opinion, "the ethnocentric violence of translation" (*ibid*, 16).

As Venuti's work is intended as a history of translation, it does not account for the differences between contemporary literary institutions in their treatment of translations. Moreover, some progress has been made since he published the first edition of his book in 1995. Therefore, there is great variety in the attitudes of periodicals towards translated literature today. In a review of *A Hero of Our Time* by Mikhail Lermontov (2009) for the *London Review of Books*, James Wood compares the latest translation of the novel with the previous version:

Natasha Randall's English, in her new translation, has exactly the right degree of loose verocity – this sounds like someone taking notes, patching together as he goes along and unable to make up his mind. (Nabokov's version, the best-known older translation, is a bit more demure than Randall's, less savage.) (Wood 2010:19)

In his review of Roberto Bolaño's (2009) *Nazi Literature in the Americas* for the *Literary Review*, Michael Jacobs explains how this novel made it into the English language:

That such an eccentric book as *Nazi Literature in the Americas*, with all its in-jokes and wealth of obscure Hispanic allusions, should be translated at all into English (twelve years after its original publication) owes much to the belated success in the United States of Bolaño's *Savage Detectives* and to the massive international hype surrounding his incomplete and posthumously published masterpiece, *2666* (Jacobs 2009:68).

This attentiveness to the linguistic and sociological aspects of translation might be contrasted with the reviews written in higher circulation periodicals, which tend to ignore translation when discussing the book. This comment in *the Guardian* would probably be not acceptable for the editors or the readers of a literary magazine: "*The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo* is now followed by the second volume, in an English translation that has none of the awkwardness common to cross-tongue novels" (Lawson 2009). A review of Scandinavian crime fiction in *The Economist*, where book titles are not italicized but put in double quotes, and special characters are missing from Peter Høeg's and Arnaldur Indriðason's surnames, links the popularity of these crime titles to their language, forgetting to mention the process of translation:

Three factors underpin the success of Nordic crime fiction: language, heroes and setting. Niclas Salomonsson, a literary agent who represents almost all the up and coming Scandinavian crime writers, reckons it is the style of the books, "realistic, simple and precise...and stripped of unnecessary words," that has a lot to do with it. The plain, direct writing, devoid of metaphors, suits the genre well (*Economist* 2010: 89).

In reviews, the level of visibility of translation depends much on the periodical's position-taking and its target audience. As we will discuss in a comparative example in chapter 9, generally, if the newspaper, magazine, or literary supplement aims to reach a wide audience that represents popular taste, visibility of the translator is not a priority. Contributors tend to pay more attention to the translation of a novel if they are addressing a more literary minded, cosmopolitan readership.

Reviewers contributing to UK literary magazines and literary supplements often make negative judgements on the fluency or style of translated novels, however, these should be considered in the context of the tradition of reviewing in the UK. According to James Curran (2002) the selection, promotion and critical assessment of literary works is strongly influenced by the cultural values and social networks that literary editors operate in. Curran holds that bias in

reviews is a product of the background of reviewers. Negative judgements on fluency or word choice are believed to be indicators of sophistication and commitment to high literary standards, therefore unsubstantiated claims on bad language use in translations might be attributable to the *habitus* of reviewers, or the *illusio* of reviewing.

### **7.3 Cosmopolitan Consumption of Translated Literature**

This section will discuss the implications of an awareness of consuming cultural products from around the world. This will be contextualised within the current trends of cultural consumption in contemporary Britain. Among British individuals today, cultural forms – music, cinema, literature – demanding linguistic competence are skewed towards Anglophone referents (Savage *et al* 2010). And beyond the Anglophone world, the first point of contact is Western Europe: from tourism to food and to art, France, Germany, Spain and Italy claim the majority of cultural consumption in Britain today.

As translated literature is a rarefied field in the UK, reading a translated book can be seen as a form of cultural distinction, signalling membership to a cultivated group, and possession of a distinctive taste. Against the backdrop of a cosmopolitan norm that was elaborated on in chapter 2, the reading experience is accompanied by a sense of discovery and a sense of distinction in taste. Since cosmopolitan tastes are closely linked with self-perceptions about social status, they reinforce a reciprocal relationship between reading practice and distinction. In other words, as Ulf Hannerz explains, “cosmopolitanism often has a narcissistic streak; the self is constructed in the space where cultures mirror one another” (1996: 103). Moreover, the perceived complexity of translated literature might attract readers with high literary capital, since dealing with this complexity will give them aesthetic pleasure (Kraaykamp and Dijkstra 1999: 206, see Ganzeboom 1982).

Most texts we read involve some level of intertextuality. However, against the backdrop of cosmopolitan consumption, reading fiction in translation particularly encourages readers to mobilize their international cultural capital. The discussion on Haruki Murakami’s (2008) *After Dark* at London Library I reading group, which includes several heavy readers in a group of engaged readers, indicated this pattern:

G: I thought the whole thing was very cinematic and it reminded me of the angels in *Wings of Desire* – movie by Wenders. While hovering above, they can't affect the action, but they comment on it, see what's going on. I think he [the author] was very aware of all the cinema references: *Alphaville*, *Love Story* referenced. There are certainly references to other movies.

[...]

B: [In Murakami's novel] There are constantly references to particular pieces of music being played and I didn't know any of them – so totally meaningless – apart from Scarlatti. [...]

D: But didn't that make you want to go and find the snippet of the music?

B: Absolutely not.

E: He had a jazz café, or he had a kind of rock bar or something before, or, before he started writing I guess. All [his] novels are full of these unknown songs, which I always thought about going and finding but I never would.

As the readers point out, there are references to other works of art – film and music – in the book, and they all have a function in the plot: the author has carefully inserted selected pieces for background music in certain scenes. Knowing at least some of these films, or songs, is essential for decoding, or unpacking what the author has formulated for readers. Reader B declares that he is not familiar with the pieces of music mentioned; however, in this case, his ignorance is a rather knowledgeable sort of ignorance, as he is probably aware of the fact that they are songs, or albums, but simply has not heard them himself. Therefore, it is legitimate unfamiliarity when compared to cultural distance. It is also suggesting that the only music reference he identifies belongs to a composer of classical music, while the ones he claims to not recognize are jazz and pop, so this might be a strategy of hinting at an exclusive taste, especially given that he was an elderly reader whose other comments signified conservative aesthetic attitudes. *Wings of Desire* is a 1987 German romantic fantasy film directed by Wim Wenders. Note that reader E recognizes that these are rare pieces, and they come from the author's professional engagement with music. Her comment sounds like she's trying to justify why she does not know – or why us readers should not be expected to know – all of these references.

G: Again it's like quite a lot of movies, isn't it: shortcuts... umm Cra- was it *Crash*, the one with different life [?] stories into ... *Magnolia*, there's one movie called *Magnolia*... umm, where there's lots of stories. Also maybe think about like that Edward Hopper painting of the couple in the café at night.

B: Well certainly. Very much like Hopper painting.

L: Did anyone think of Jim Jarmusch's *World at Midnight*? I mean that was what occurred to me. I've got very limited experience of movies... [...] This Japanese couple trying to visit Elvis.

[...]

F: Maybe think of that Big Brother sort of thing where you're just pointing, trying to make sense but nothing really...

[...]

G: ...like the *Great Railway Bazaar*. It must be... 30 years (ago)? He, I remember the bit where he's sitting on the Japanese train, next to a kid – Japanese kid – reading a comic mag. And he looks over at it, and it's porn! I don't know how young the kid was, but it's definitely in there ...

[...]

B: The other [...] Japanese is the guy who committed suicide. Miri? Mishima. And the Anglo-Japanese chap around who writes in English, doesn't he? Ishiguro... And they're very different aren't they?

With the reference to the Edward Hooper painting, we can see how, in order to convey the different moods in the book, the readers cited other works of art that share the same atmospheric qualities. The painting in question is called *Nighthawks* (1942), one of the best known paintings of Hopper; it shows customers sitting at the counter of an all-night diner. The film where a Japanese couple try to visit Elvis Presley is *Mystery Train* (1989), an independent film by Jim Jarmusch and set in Memphis, Tennessee. *The Great Railway Bazaar: By Train Through Asia* (1975) is the famous travelogue by the American novelist Paul Theroux. Theroux's account details his four-month journey through Europe, the Middle East, the Indian subcontinent and Southeast Asia, and he eventually returns via the Trans-Siberian Railway. His book is considered to be a classic in the genre of travel writing. The references to other forms of art contain examples of both high and popular art, and various media, including books, films, TV shows, paintings etc. Thinking about one piece of international art seems to activate memories of previous omnivorous and cosmopolitan consumption. This is not surprising, considering the fact that cross-linguistic cultural products are seen as more profitable in terms of their status implications

than for their intrinsic qualities in the largely monolingual literary culture of Britain. Note here how reader L seems to be intimidated by all the art references thrown in, and he makes a remark that signals modesty.

Reading a translated novel might turn into an exercise of finding intertextual connections. For example, during a discussion on Nikolai Gogol's (1936) *Dead Souls* with heavy readers in London Library I again, one reader found the novel almost "Dickensian." Another agreed, explaining that she detected two tones in the novel, one comic and one socio-critical. In the same meeting, where Bulgakov's (1967) *Master and Margarita* was being discussed in conjunction, a reader disagreed with the publisher's description of the plot as "Faustian." She pointed out to a Faust figure, Margarita, who sells her soul to the devil; however, in her opinion there was "no moral come-uppance" as required by the original Faust story. This example also shows how readers with international literary capital mobilize and perhaps re-process their cultural capital in relation to the consumption of works of high literature.

#### **7.4 Translations at the Intersection of Omnivorousness and Cosmopolitanism**

As we discussed before, omnivorousness is closely linked with cosmopolitanism and extensive engagement is now considered a marker of good taste in Britain (see Warde *et al* 2007), which makes such an orientation socially profitable. Consequently, in interviews and especially book group meetings, which are social gatherings, engaged readers who have adopted cosmopolitan ideals avoid the image of someone consuming only high forms of art. The horizontal and vertical borders between genres in literature have become blurred, but readers still attribute distinctive characteristics to what they believe to be relatively highbrow and lowbrow literature. Although high cultural status individuals in the wider middle class group consume translated novels as part of their practice, these books are read and enjoyed to a limited extent in the rest of the middle class because of the cosmopolitan capital these books require. As noted earlier, classification in art is a cultural phenomenon (see DiMaggio 1987). Status is ascribed to works of literature by the agents involved in the literary network – publishers, reviewers and to a certain extent, lay readers – through an evaluation of the relevance of the book in the value system of the literary culture. Values change over time, and also across socio-

cultural contexts. Similarly, the literary theorist Robert Alter (1989) discusses the shifting nature of the canon, considering literary output almost as a plastic resource shaped by societal forces. He points out to the importance of perceptions:

To think of any piece of writing as literature, it has been argued, is to attribute special value to it without in the end being able to specify the nature of the class of textual objects to which it has been attached. The act of classification, then, has to be a reflection of cultural or political values, not intrinsic to the writing (1989: 28).

Translated literature exists at the intersection of the cosmopolitan and omnivorous trends in cultural consumption. Translated texts are perhaps more amenable for omnivorous patterns of consumption than novels written originally in the local language because they adopt new positions, contexts or statuses as they cross cultural borders (Even-Zohar 1979, Casanova 2004). In literary cultures that are resistant to translation, such as western European societies, the new position is often marked by rarity and perceived inaccessibility, which constitute the translated novel's distinctive value (Bourdieu 1984:229). In Kraaykamp and Dijkstra's (1999) empirical research on book classifications in the Netherlands, for example, translated literary novels come second in complexity, after popular science, in a list of 23 subgenres of books in descending order. On the other hand, when translated novels are packaged and promoted as exotica, as we saw in chapter 6, they might be relegated to middlebrow literature even though their position in the aesthetic scale of the source literary culture is higher. It might be argued then, that translated novels are subject to a reshuffling of positions in the aesthetic hierarchy, simply by virtue of their being from another literature, with symbolic boundaries destabilizing and becoming fuzzy.

In terms of the perceptions regarding translated novels in the UK, these books are associated with rarity and a distinctive taste both from the point of producers and consumers. According to Pete Ayrton of *Serpent's Tail*: "People who appreciate and read Proust don't read Stephen King. I don't think when we select translations we are following in the footsteps of Stephen King. It's probably readers with a different kind of expectation, different literary tastes, that are attracted to fiction in translation" (Ayrton 2009). In the consumption of translated fiction in the UK literary culture, the aspect of cosmopolitan status



overshadows aesthetic pleasure in the narrower sense, and by virtue of their rarity, translated novels are often upgraded, in reader's minds, to positions higher than they are placed in their source literary hierarchy. In many cases, translated literature is a nice solution for readers with highbrow aspirations because even middlebrow translated literature carries cultural prestige. For these reasons, in British readers' consumption pattern, translated novels straddle both vertical and horizontal axes in hierarchies.

Value judgements from the reader I interviewed from the South private reading group illustrate the fuzzy symbolic boundaries of international fiction. This reader implied that he had considerable literary capital: he'd studied Literature at Oxford University, where he read "gallons and gallons of stuff, mainly the classics." For the last six years he had been part of a book group that defines itself with highbrow taste. The list of books that the group has chosen includes George Orwell, William Golding, V.S. Naipaul, Doris Lessing, Ian McEwan (two titles), John Banville, Kazuo Ishiguro and Ali Smith from Britain; Vladimir Nabokov, Paul Auster, Philip Roth (two titles), Kurt Vonnegut, Michael Ondaatje and Margaret Atwood (two titles) from North America, Gabriel García Márquez, Isabel Allende (two titles) and Mario Vargas Llosa from South America; Irène Némirovsky, Milan Kundera from Europe; Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie and Chinua Achebe from Africa and Haruki Murakami (two titles) from Asia. They have also read popular fiction by Mark Haddon, Lionel Shriver, Sarah Waters, Andrea Camilleri and Peter Høeg. In our interview, it struck me that he discussed *The White Tiger* (2008) – written in English – and the *Yacoubian Building* (2007) – translated – in the same breath as two of the world classics he had read in the book group. As mentioned in chapter 5, *The White Tiger* provides a portrayal of the life of lower-class Indians. On the other hand, Alaa al Aswany is not known as one of the best writers of Egypt, and the criticisms to be levelled against this particular book could include characters lacking depth, the reliance on coincidence in the plot and one apartment building being instrumentalized as the microcosm of the whole Egyptian society. Remember that this reader said (in chapter 5) that their book group is mainly interested in the themes of the novels they read, so the exotic themes of the *Yacoubian Building* seem to take precedence over the weak technical construction of the novel. The status conferred to these two titles – *The White Tiger* and *The Yacoubian Building* – by cosmopolitanism seems to have lifted

the books up in the literary hierarchy next to the world classics the South reading group had previously read. That said, genre fiction seems to function differently than “international fiction.” Eurocrime is effectively marketed as crime in the UK, which signals popular taste. The *Millennium Trilogy* has been extremely visible and popular as an exemplar of this genre, especially with the launch of the films. In many Waterstones branches that participated in the translated fiction promotion campaign, I have seen the three books of the *Millennium Trilogy* being displayed in the crime section rather than “translated fiction” desks. On the readers’ side, however, the books have a mixed reception. As we will see in the following chapter, some readers see the plot elements as illustrations of Swedish society while others foreground universal themes.

Engaged readers’ intertextual interpretations often transcend boundaries between art forms, providing further evidence of their eclectic cultural capital. Like the Murakami readers who mentioned a painting and several films in conjunction with *After Dark*, one reader at a meeting of the private reading group in the Southwest established a connection between José Eduardo Agualusa’s novel *Rainy Season* (2009) and the art of installation artist Marina Abramovic. *Rainy Season* is set in Angola and mixes elements of humour and violence in an unusual plot, with quite a fluid narration style. Abramovic is a New York-based Serbian performance artist who appeared at the New York Metropolitan Museum of Art at the time. The reader learned about her as she was reading a copy of *the New Yorker*, and thought the fact that Abramovic uses her own body as part of her installations, including elements like nakedness and self-inflicted pain, could be discussed in combination with the book which includes scenes of physical torture. So we understand that in this reader’s mind, reading this book by this Angolan writer is associated with seeing the work of this avant-garde Serbian artist. The reader sent an e-mail to the members of the book group (including me) with a link to a slideshow on Abramovic’s art at *The New Yorker* website.<sup>55</sup>

A reader I interviewed about Orhan Pamuk’s *My Name is Red* called the novel “one part *The Name of the Rose*, one part *Cabaret*, and one part *Reservoir Dogs*, with a dash of *1001 Nights* and *The Perfumed Garden*.” This

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<sup>55</sup> See

[http://www.newyorker.com/online/multimedia/2010/03/08/100308\\_audioslideshow\\_abramovic](http://www.newyorker.com/online/multimedia/2010/03/08/100308_audioslideshow_abramovic)

list contains three translations: *The Name of the Rose* (1984, Umberto Eco), *1001 Nights (Arabian Nights)* (1960, Anon.) and *The Perfumed Garden of Sensual Delight* (1982, Umar ibn Muhammad Nafzawi). Additionally, *Cabaret* (1972, Bob Fosse) has international content. The reader placed the Turkish novel right next to Eco's, which suggests that he accords high value to this translation. *Cabaret* the musical is also known as a highbrow form; moreover, it embraces a cosmopolitan stance by inviting viewers to denounce Nazi fascism. The works of art have been listed roughly in descending order of aesthetic status, actually: After the novel and the musical comes *Reservoir Dogs* (1992, Quentin Tarantino) which is an independent film, but classified as crime and has had great box office success. *1001 Nights* and the *Perfumed Garden* are probably juxtaposed because they are both from Arabic literature, and the latter represents the lowbrow in this comparison, as it is a work of erotic literature. When asked about his comparison, the reader provided a sophisticated answer signalling structured cultural capital.

*The Name of the Rose* – [and *My Name is Red*] Both are literary detective novels. In both, the motivation for the murder lies in the artistic/philosophical ramifications of a book (of philosophy in the case of *The Name of the Rose*, and of a collection of illustrations, in the case of *My Name is Red*).

*Cabaret* - I was referring to the Bob Fosse musical, which is based on some short stories by Christopher Isherwood. There's a famous film version with Liza Minnelli and Michael York. All of the musical numbers take place in a Berlin nightclub and comment obliquely on the main story which is set in 1930s Germany. The main story is quite tragic and takes place against the background of the rise of the Nazi party. In my mind, the chapters with the storyteller (which take place in a café) reminded me very much of the nightclub scenes in *Cabaret*.

*Reservoir Dogs* - This is a bit of a long shot, I admit. In *Reservoir Dogs*, the main characters are only known by nicknames (Mr. Blonde, Mr. Blue, Mr. Brown, Mr. Orange, Mr. Pink, and Mr. White). The main action takes place in a large warehouse after a botched robbery, where these characters all try to work out who betrayed them (one of them is a police spy).

*1001 Nights* - The retelling of old stories like Husrev and Shirin.

*The Perfumed Garden* - This was just to indicate that the book contains sex. I can't think of any other justification for this reference.

The reader's explanation includes further references to works of art. Two of the analogies are drawn based on technical aspects: the narration and point of view in *Cabaret* and *Reservoir Dogs*. The rest are similarities of content: *The Name of the Rose*, *1001 Nights* and *The Perfumed Garden*. The connections indicate mastery of these cultural products, and also possession of further cultural capital, as they are thrown together in a relatively effortless comparison. By describing *Reservoir Dogs* a "long shot," and admitting that the *Perfumed Garden* does not bear many resemblances to *My Name is Red*, he legitimizes his inclusion of these in his evaluative response. He probably found it more appropriate to cite the *Perfumed Garden* rather than point to the erotic content, as it is culturally more legitimate to make a reference to a work of literature.

*My Name is Red* is essentially a crime novel. It is set against a historical and Oriental background. The reader recognized the author's technical skill of using multiple narrators, but is also aware that this is not entirely an innovation.<sup>56</sup> *My Name is Red* can be defined as a whodunit, a genre whose prime examples have been given by Agatha Christie in Britain. Successful examples of the historical novel in palace settings abound in this literary culture, recently by Phillippa Gregory, for instance. These genres are usually considered to be popular, and the crime and history aspects of *My Name is Red* could have led this reader to place it in a popular, or midbrow context. However, he only implicitly acknowledged this aspect of the novel by including *Reservoir Dogs* into the analogy. Due to the element of foreignness, an appreciation of the novel's technical qualities, and perhaps a familiarity of the author's international standing, the reader ascribed it a status similar to that of Eco. These examples illustrate how translated novels are consumed in the context of overlapping cosmopolitan and omnivorous affiliations and how these cultural products display great mobility in the aesthetic spectrum in readers' valorization.

### **7.5 Literary Difference**

Readers are aware of the different norms and conventions governing different literary cultures. In some cases, they can make evaluations as to where particular translated novels would fit in their own literary system. The reader who made such a comment on Pascal Mercier's (2007) *The Night Train*

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<sup>56</sup> Multiple narrators have previously been effectively employed in literature by William Faulkner (*As I Lay Dying*, 1930), an author whom Pamuk looks up to as one of his sources of inspiration.

to *Lisbon*, for example, found the book to be substandard: “I kept thinking if this chap was writing in England, I don’t see it really happening.” In such negative aesthetic judgements, readers often foreground literary difference. Literary difference here is understood as the perceived difference between the norms and conventions of the source and target literary cultures. With the Southwest Library’s Afternoon Reading Group, we were discussing Xinran’s (2005) *Sky Burial*, a travel/memoir book, written in Chinese and translated into English. Readers said they found the account “light,” “simplistic” and “contrived”: “You would want more depth I thought.” Then one reader suggested this might be due to the fact that the book was written by a Chinese author: “I wonder if it’s anything to do with the Chinese aspect of it because in my head I was always hearing this Chinese voice, which to me is, [...] an absolutely amazing ability to keep on going in the face of adversities.” Here we see that the reader is ready to accept the perceived foreignness of the account on the content level, but not on the narration level.

However, not all readers know what to make of the different structure and narration, and the result is confusion, which hinders the pleasure to be derived from reading. One of the readers I interviewed at the Southwest University had read *The Informers* (2009). He was in his 20s and was an English Literature student, which meant that he would have some background information on the novel as a literary form. Although he generally enjoyed the book, he expressed that he detected something unfamiliar in the narrative structure of the book, something that could be attributed to the fact that it was written in another literary tradition. I understand that literary difference was a negative aspect of his “entanglement” with the book (Iser 1980). Members of the Southwest Library Afternoon Reading Group found Gabriel García Márquez’s (1970) *One Hundred Years of Solitude* a difficult read for the same reason. The book has a cyclical narration style, which did not agree with some of the readers: “I got very confused instantly about all these people and places and [...] how one sentence started in the present and ended in the past – I had trouble keeping all those in my mind at the same time.” The reader then explained how she went on to Wikipedia because she “did not want to struggle any more.” She “needed to find out why this was such a famous book” and read that the book was about the circularity of time, and people and place, so things started to make sense for her. Publishers recognize that less engaged readers

might experience confusion with translated novels, and in an effort to overcome it, they try to provide points of reference for the readers, as mentioned earlier.

Literary difference is one aspect of translated novels whereby the visibility of translation as linguistic transference is foregrounded. However, in book group discussions, it is more likely to be raised directly in negative evaluations, unless readers with high cultural capital make intertextual connections, as discussed above.

### **7.6 Linguistic Difference**

In this section, we will see how readers make aesthetic judgements on translated novels based on the perceived qualities of translated texts. These are of course woven together with the intellectual (or cultural) challenges posed by fiction in translation; however, we will be mainly concerned here with readers' evaluations of the linguistic aspect of texts. Readers' judgements on the textual-linguistic features of translated titles are often informed by their respective *habitus* – specifically, the permutations of age and reading history. Here the basic parameters of status/pleasure, and the tensions between the two, pose a situation that seems to be specific to translated novels for British readers.

Style is an important aesthetic consideration in works of literature, and might involve deviations from the norm in language use. Robert Alter defines stylistic writing as “a summoning of the resources of language to convey the precise nuance of attitude and concept the writer desires and also as an orchestration of those very resources that is repeatedly felt to be in excess of the occasion of communication” (1989: 81). Translators may adopt distinctive styles as well as authors do, and empirical research on corpora of translated texts has demonstrated that there are British translators who effectively build up distinct styles (see Munday 2008 and Saldanha 2011). As we discussed earlier, readers roughly divide their aesthetic judgements about a book into two categories: plot and language. In reading group discussions, readers do not foreground the textual-linguistic dimension in translated novels more often than in novels originally written in English, but when they are talking about the language of a translation, they tend to foreground it in negative evaluations. Comments revolve around fluency and style. Reading group members are known to topicalize language in evaluative discourse (Swann and Allington 2009), and I have seen in my fieldwork that people like to make judgements

about the various aspects of a novel and compare them with those of fellow reading group members – it's part of the pleasure of collective reading. However, linguistic transference is seen as an obstacle that blurs the judgement on language. One statement I have heard repeatedly is "I like / I don't like the language of this novel, but when it's a translation, I can't really know if it's the author or the translator."

### **7.6.1 Agency of the Translator**

In book group discussions that I joined, the fact that a book has been translated from another language was mostly visible to readers when reading a book. We already discussed in chapters 2 and 5 the relatively low prestige attributed to literary translators compared to authors in Britain. Having internalized the value orientation of the literary culture through their literary socialization, readers' responses to texts that have undergone linguistic transference echo that of reviewers in relegating translation to second order, derivative and qualitatively inferior writing. Whether they appreciate the literary translator's art depends on if they recognize the agency of the translator. When readers do not allow agency to the translator, they are likely to evaluate translated texts on the level of "accuracy" or in "correct/incorrect" binarisms. In these cases, translation is often associated with clumsy writing and readers seem to find the translation lacking either in adequacy or in acceptability. Adequacy and acceptability are two basic parameters in translation criticism, put forward by Gideon Toury (1995). The former might roughly be defined as the extent to which the translated text reflects the semantic, stylistic, formal etc. qualities of the source text, while the latter refers to the extent to which the translated text conforms to the norms and conventions of the target language. Although most readers are not really in a position to make objective evaluations on adequacy and acceptability, I have met a few respondents who "don't read translations" because they're "interested in language [style], and that gets lost in translation," and who "don't think translating novels is a good idea." Although these are unsubstantiated claims, from the perspective of the readers, they serve as indicators of cultural competence, as we will also see later. Along these lines, readers who do not assign agency to the translator tend to see translation as a technical aspect, a mechanical process, one of the publisher's responsibilities, almost like copy-editing. In the reading group discussion on

Pascal Mercier's *Night Train to Lisbon* in Waterstones Midlands II, the fact that the book was a translation was mentioned within the first two minutes of the meeting. Readers did not like the translation and they said they were irritated by the "quite a few editing things to pick up." One of the readers even said that she wanted to "get her red pen out."

If a reader has anti-translation dispositions, once they have realized that the book they're reading is a translation, the reading experience can turn into a mistake spotting exercise. This is how a reader felt about Reg Keeland's translation of Stieg Larsson's (2008) *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo*:

A: It's very good, and then there are even English phrases in it, they use, I can't remember. There's one mistake, I felt, in it, that's the only one, they talked about somebody going to a vocab-, a boy going to a vocational school, which we don't actually have.

Interviewee: But, maybe they do in Sweden.

A: They probably do, they do in Germany. It could be a [...] college. [...] No, he went – It was in England. Ohh, I'll tell you who it was: it was Plague, who is umm, Salander's umm, friend, who is living in England and who is a computer hacker. [...] That's the only jarring note.

Similarly, in a reading group discussion in London, a member who had been keen to reveal his cultural capital said "In the few occasions when I look at translations from a language I know, I always think 'Hmm, I wouldn't want to put it that way.'" Such a comment was an implicit suggestion that the reader speaks several foreign languages, which is an indication of a good education and membership to a cultivated class in this society.

Again with readers who display attitudes against the textual-linguistic features of translated texts, the flavour of the original is thought to be lost during the translation. When asked about his experience of reading translations, a reader I interviewed said: "As a person who only speaks my native tongue, I often wonder how much I miss from the original." So even when readers do not have access to the original, they comment on the adequacy dimension, based on their preconceptions of literary translation.

Some readers define the boundaries of the translated literature category through negative evaluations; foreseeing all translated novels to share similar



qualities in terms of adequacy and acceptability. In one reading group meeting, a reader remembered one particular translated novel – David Bellos’s translation of H el ene Berr’s (2008) *Journal* – he found lacking in adequacy, and he seemed to be generalizing this to other translated novels:

But you do lose something in translation and I’m sure that a lot was lost in the translation of [the book we’re discussing] [...] I’ll give you an example: there’s a brilliant book published by, or written by, a lady who was a Jew in Paris, called *Journal* [...] It’s a bit like the *Diary of Anne Frank*. And it was translated into English quite recently, following the approval of the relatives, the remaining family, to authorize the publication of the diaries [...] And I started reading it, I found it very interesting, it raised all sorts of questions, but I happened to come across somewhere, the original French version. And as it happens, I can read a little bit of French. In the very first few sentences, when I read them in French, I realized that in fact ... translated it, but actually, missed some quite serious innuendo in the translation.

It is interesting here how the reader, who is modest about his French, seemed to assume that he would have a better understanding of the French text than the translator, not recognizing the translator’s agency. When I asked him if he looked up the translator, he said he did not.

A reader I interviewed at the Southwest Library on Orhan Pamuk’s (2009) *The Museum of Innocence* (translated from Turkish) seemed to be happy about the fact that a Turkish translator has revised the translation after the first (Anglophone) translator Maureen Freely. In the acknowledgement page of this novel, the author thanks the Turkish translator for “ensuring fidelity.” So the reader commented:

I think it’s so smooth that you do wonder... Obviously translators have the obligation to be true to the narrative. I noticed that he’s – I had to look back to see – he’s got other people in there as well as the translator, who’ve checked on the authenticity of the translation. And I think that’s so crucial.

This comment signals the reader’s belief that having a copy-editor to go through the manuscript to improve acceptability (among other things) is not enough for a good translation, as only someone who can understand the source language can check for adequacy. Acceptability is closely linked with transparency, which seems to be the hallmark for a successful translation for

many readers (see Venuti 2008). When we were discussing Roberto Bolaño's (2008) *2666* in London Library I, the discussion leader asked:

Did you find this was a transparent translation? Did you think, this is translation, or this is just another book, I mean if you hadn't known, can you sort of, subtract the information you had, that he's Bolaño, and he's Chilean – can you subtract that information? 'Cause it seemed to be quite a good attempt, I mean quite a good candidate for being linguistically anonymous.

Notice here that he seems to relegate translations to an inferior category of books, due to their shared textual linguistic features, and he wanted to know whether the original Spanish could be seen through the translation. He discussed linguistic anonymity as an ideal, excluding the possibilities that the translation might bear the author's original style, or the translator might choose to use a visible style of his own. Occasionally, readers find the translation fluent, which they think is the mark of a good translation.

B: You see, the Steig Larssons, the easiest reads imaginable – you read them on the train, with umpteen interruptions, and it's completely compelling, [...] you can't, you cannot get behind that, you can't ever say it trips up on the English, or, ... I wonder what that was in Swedish, 'cause it doesn't, *never* once, it's in the most colloquial, idiomatic English.

A: So the translator is a genius.

B: Absolutely genius, and he should have full billing on the cover.

In line with Venuti's (2008) arguments on visibility, readers become aware of the translation process mostly when they spot an unpleasant feature in the text. Again in *2666*, the author has not used speech marks in one of the sections. Readers thought that this made the text dense and made it difficult to tell which character said what. At this meeting, the librarian leading the discussion suggested that it might have resulted from an oversight on the part of the translator: "But they don't have the same punctuation in Spanish you know, so I suppose the translator's to blame for actually not inserting them."

Moreover, what readers perceive as stylistic flaws, such as repetitions, may be attributed to translation. When readers were discussing Alaa al Aswany's *Yacoubian Building*, they pointed out the repeated use of the word

“homosexual” instead of a variety of words from other levels of register, and agreed that they found this usage rather “clinic.” Later, they concluded that this might be the translator’s word choice. Moreover, one reader argued that the word “bosoms” appeared in the text more frequently than average texts written in English. She seemed to find this unpleasant, and attributed it to the fact that the text was a translation.

To sum up, many readers who do not attribute due agency to the literary translator consequently perceive translations to be qualitatively inferior, displaying a sort of textual-linguistic intolerance towards novels in translation. Often, they find these novels to be lacking either in adequacy or acceptability, believing that fluency and/or style are compromised. In these cases, readers foreground translation almost always in negative evaluations.

### **7.6.2 Foreign Words**

Translations will inescapably contain foreign words, for instance the proper names of people, places or institutions. Although seeing these words on paper repeatedly might help remember them, international readers with no familiarity with the source language naturally have difficulty following the plot when the names look unfamiliar – understanding the book then turns into an intellectual challenge that does not leave much room for pleasure. Considering the fact that many people are socialized into a monolingual literary culture in the UK, this contributes to the creation of a resistance to the consumption of translated novels, which are deemed “difficult” reads.

One example with foreign words comes from Latife Tekin’s (2007) novel *Swords of Ice*, which contains more than just foreign names. This novel is peppered with recurrent Turkish words of French origin, like *perspektif*, *sistematik*, *organizasyon* etc. In the lower-class urban circles that Tekin depicts in her novel, using these words of Western origin would have certain connotations, as they would imply an elevated, if somewhat pretentious rhetoric. In their translation, Saliha Paker and Mel Kenne have made the bold decision to keep these Turkish sociolinguistic elements in the English text. This translation strategy is motivated by the desire to mark these words, which would have to remain unmarked in the English language if they were spelt in standard English. Thus the translation contains italicized Turkish words, which would only be comprehensible to English-speaking readers if they read the words out syllable

by syllable. This linguistic feature was brought up in the reading group discussion on this book. Although this group was composed of well-educated readers with considerable amounts of cultural capital, only one reader seemed to see through this strategy. She needed confirmation from me as a Turkish speaker, and other readers found this aspect of the book interesting, but not particularly accessible. This novel, as with other Tekin novels, makes use of magical realism and requires some background information on internal immigration in Turkey. This translation strategy seemed to have gone largely unappreciated as the readers struggled to follow the plot. Venuti proposes that translators should adopt foreignizing strategies as a “dissident” practice (2008:125-63). However, this example shows that his call for heterogeneity clashes with reader expectations, and ultimately, the commercial imperative.

This difficulty with foreign words arises in novels written in English but set in other countries as well. When discussing Aravind Adiga’s *White Tiger*, set in India, one reader explicitly said that she had difficulty keeping the names in her mind, and the librarian in the group had to remind another reader of the protagonist’s name: Balram. Similarly, in the discussion on Elif Shafak’s (2008) *The Bastard of Istanbul*, all readers without exception referred to Armanoush as “the Armenian girl” as they found her name too difficult to pronounce. A family tree is often included in the preliminary material of a translated novel. Readers of *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo* and *One Hundred Years of Solitude* explained that they had to consult the family tree occasionally to keep track of who was who. Readers of *My Grandmother* (2008), a biography/memoir set in Turkey, felt that the absence of a family tree was an omission, so much so that one reader brought to the meeting a tree she had drawn at home.

The challenge concerning foreign linguistic elements is in essence a cultural barrier. For British readers, translations from European languages are easier in this respect, because naturally, the names will sound more familiar. I noticed that during discussions on the *Girl with the Dragon Tattoo*, the names of the main characters were uttered more often than discussions on translations from non-Western languages. The protagonist’s name, Mikael, in the *Dragon Tattoo* was consistently referred to as Michael. The same book contained numerous names and acronyms belonging to Swedish corporations or government institutions, especially in the first 100 pages. Readers recognized these passages as necessary background information, but it constituted a

challenge for some. One reader announced “I am not good at linguistic things,” so she found it difficult to follow the proper names.

The linguistic obstacle can be overcome through cultural familiarity. In the Waterstones London I book group, we discussed Tolstoy’s (2008) *The Death of Ivan Ilyich and Other Stories*. Readers pointed out that the stories here, especially “The Forged Coupon,” contained a lot of diminutive Russian proper names, which made it difficult for readers to keep track of characters. One reader explained since her daughter married a Greek man, she has been familiar with this linguistic feature and developed an awareness of it: “You call something different by however you’re related to somebody [...] you can actually understand where they’re coming from; whereas before that, I found it [difficult]; I’d go back and try to remember what is related to what as a name.”

### **7.6.3 Paratextual Visibility**

Paratextual visibility refers to any paratexts – forewords, afterwords, translator’s notes, footnotes etc. – that the translator inserts into the target text, and which inevitably draw attention to the process of translation. The previous chapter concentrated on book covers as paratexts, which guide readers’ interpretation and serve as a threshold to the text inside the book. Publishers are usually reluctant to add a Translator’s Note at the beginning or the end of the novel, unless it is a “world classic,” which would justify the visibility of the translator as intermediary. There are exceptions of course. One is Xinran’s (2008) *Miss Chopsticks* (trans. Esther Tyldesley), which features “A Note on Chinese Names” and a “Translator’s Note” before the main text, as well as an “Editor’s Note” after. The note on Chinese names explains how surnames precede given names in Chinese, and how Chinese pronunciation provides opportunities for puns, so people exchanging names – as characters in the novel do – would have to clarify the actual meanings of the syllables in their names. In her translator’s note, Tyldesley elaborates on the challenges of translating Chinese into English, comparing it to trying to capture a cloud and putting it in a box (Tyldesley 2008: vii). She implies that she’s had bouts of indecisiveness on whether to keep the idioms, or to find English equivalents for them, and explains the difficulty of reflecting the textured register of the original: “Trying to give all the characters in this book individual voices, retaining their liveliness and local colour without slipping into parody, was far from simple!”

(*ibid*, ix). Another is José Eduardo Agualusa's (2009) *Rainy Season* (trans. Daniel Hahn), where the translator has inserted the blog he kept while translating the novel. Here, Daniel Hahn discusses the translation process, asks for readers' advice, and explains how he communicates with the author and the publisher (see Hahn 2009: 197-264). We will see, in the following section, how a group of readers reacted to the translator's diary.

The translator's paratextual visibility is mostly an unpleasant feature for readers. According to Gregory Currie, readers enjoy books if they can sustain a systematic and reflective sequence of instances where they can imaginatively project themselves into the story, and a "narration that is helpful without being alienating through its intrusion" is equally conducive as an engaging plot and interesting characters (1998: 172). A translator's footnotes may hamper these projections for some readers, especially those with less literary capital. In one group we were discussing Giorgio Bassani's *Garden of the Finzi-Continis*. The book was originally written in the Ferrarese Jewish dialect of Italian, and there were multiple translations in the book group: the Quartet edition (1978), translated by Isabel Quigly, the Everyman's Library edition (2005), by William Weaver, and the Penguin Classics edition (2007), rendered into English by Jamie McKendrick. All three translators had used strategies that somehow made them visible. For the Penguin Classics edition, McKendrick has kept the dialect-specific expressions in italics in the main text and has translated them word for word in the footnotes, so that the readers can see through the expressions. William Weaver had resorted to inserting explanations in the text, while Quigly inclined towards a source-oriented translation for culture-specific terms.

Readers were discussing the languages and dialects spoken by European Jews and the footnotes provided by the translators. Then they realized that they were actually holding different translations (editions) of the same book in their hands. Someone who had the Jamie McKendrick translation [JM] said:

JM: You do get quite a lot [of footnotes] and I had to refer to that a lot [...] I mean it didn't give us extensive, like you say, but it did give you translations of everything, 'cause...

[...]

WW [William Weaver translation reader] : This is a different translation; I only discovered it at school today. Haven't realized... And, it's the Everyman edition that's

got a huge, long introduction. And there are no footnotes and no notes at the end and the translations are all within the text.

JM: Is that the same as mine I wonder. Who's done it?

[...]

IQ [Isabel Quigly translation reader]: Mine's done by Isabel Quigly.

WW: William Weaver

Interviewer: [Mine is by] Jamie McKendrick.

IQ: We've got three different translations!

WW: A little bit I read of this, I felt flowed better. [...]

JM: This [McKendrick translation] doesn't flow...

IQ: I think that she's trying to be very true to the text, sometimes, you feel like you're reading something translated quite straight-...

IQ2: Some passages, well especially the more psychological, more emotional ones, flow really well, but when it comes to, sort of, trying to weave in the explanations about the school system, and the exams and stuff...

JM: Yeah but [...] a solution in there, the notes, it's [the footnotes are] quite hard to follow.

Reader WW, who had the Everyman edition, read a few passages from the introduction. And then I joined in, explaining that the Penguin Classics editions – the Jamie McKendrick translation was a Penguin Classic – tend to be footnoted since the series was aimed at providing a context for the readers as well. The other reader with the Isabel Quigly translation was not happy with the way the translator paraphrased culture-specific elements in her translation, as it made the texture uneven for him. The second Isabel Quigly reader objected to her source-oriented translation too, as she found it lacking on the acceptability dimension. In conclusion, readers found the visibility of their respective translators unpleasant. While the group was talking about the languages of European Jews, reader H had said that it must be wonderful to understand the dialects, which appeared like a cosmopolitan remark, and he agreed (with everyone else, albeit reluctantly) when I said that I personally enjoyed reading the footnotes with translations of Jewish Ferrarese, so that I could get a glimpse of the universe of language of that specific dialect.

In Esther Tyldesley's translation of Xinran's *Miss Chopsticks*, the translator's note comes before the text, and there are no explanatory footnotes. This seemed to suit two readers<sup>57</sup> in Southwest Library's Afternoon Reading Group:

I found the introduction and the notes about the Chinese language more interesting than anything else, because the same person who's translated [*The Sky Burial*] has translated it, [...] she explains something which, I'd no idea, that in Chinese there are [...] four tones [...] so one, depends on how you pronounce it, what it means, so it can mean something completely different. And even when one of the girls meets a young man who is from the other side of her province, even, the pronunciation is different and they find it difficult to communicate. It goes into quite a load of detail about the Chinese language, which, not knowing anything about this, I found it interesting.

Because the translator's visibility strategy did not hinder the reading process – as readers of Bassani's novel felt it did – this reader did not mind the note, and she clearly enjoyed the text as a cultural encounter, and not a linguistic encounter. After the reader's comment, others threw in what they knew about the various languages and dialects spoken in China. These instances indicate that readers do not appreciate translators' cultural (and linguistic) mediation in paratexts that slow down their reading.

#### **7.6.4 Appreciation of the Translator's Skill**

During my fieldwork, I have also met many readers who are conscious of the translator's competence and skill. This is often the case with readers with relatively high literary capital and cosmopolitan orientations, who recognize the agency of the literary translator as an artist. In Waterstones Midlands I book group, where we discussed Jay Rubin's translation of Murakami's (2001) *Norwegian Wood*, for example, several readers praised the translation for its fluency.

A: You mentioned the translation, I was quite intrigued about [...] with this book has been translated and I thought the descriptions and some of the phraseology was absolutely fabulous. [...] It kind of made me wonder what happens when books are translated.

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<sup>57</sup> We had actually met to discuss *The Sky Burial*, by the same author, but two readers shared their experiences of this novel, which they had read previously.



B: This one read I thought so well. I've actually just read the *Garden of the Finzi* – what we're doing in a couple of months – and it seemed to be quite stilted [...] you know it just jarred with me and then I thought maybe it's 'cause I speak other Western lang.. you know to me I just took the Japanese 'cause there's no word I'd ever understand.

C: I'm just reading the Roberto Bolaño *Savage Detectives*, and that's fantastically translated, it flows totally and ... 'cause sometimes you can actually almost translate backwards.

Readers are often aware of cultural difference in translations, but this aspect seems to stand out more with the works of non-European authors. Note that here readers are contrasting the translation of the Murakami novel with that of the Giorgio Bassani book, which was the topic of a discussion quoted in the previous section. One reader suggested that the translation of *Norwegian Wood* thus “has lost some of its Japanese identity” because “it didn't feel Asian.” One wonders then, what an “Asian” translation would feel like, and if the reader's conception of an “Asian” text is not characterized by inaccessibility. Another reader talked about the Western influence on the protagonist: in his taste in music and film. Later in the discussion, Reader C quoted from the book the expression “trees moaning in the wind,” which he found fabulous and most members of the group agreed. The readers were incorporating evaluations regarding the intellectual dimension of reading with those regarding the emotional aspect.

In the private Southwest reading group, we were discussing Daniel Hahn's translation of José Eduardo Agualusa's *Rainy Season*. Readers all agreed on how beautiful they found the narration, and right after that, they moved on to discussing the translation, recognizing somehow, that the translator should take credit for it:

A: I did really like the writing style. The clarity... There was something about it that was also – I guess beyond the descriptions of Angola, just something about the writing style that struck me as very South American [others agree]. Like, García Márquez or something. [...] It's kind of like the lots of different characters with names who I cannot remember, and, wasn't it like elements of fantasy...

B: Yeah, that magic realism...

Reader A stated that he had difficulty following the plot due to the Angolan proper names. Then another reader mentioned the Translator's Diary at the end of the book:

C: I guess I didn't have a chance to read the end bit, 'cause after I kind of got to the book end of the book I was like "But there's always pages, [...] this translator's blog?" So I didn't read that section, and so I guess it would be interesting 'cause you say, ...

B: Yeah I started it...

C: ... you know that the writing was really great, but my impression from – I didn't look at [the translator's diary] but – is that presumably the translator really spent a lot of time [...] 'cause the idea that the writing was amazing but when it's a translation, then you're kind of seeing it through the eyes of the translator, so it's kind of how close the relationship has become to the original author and then the translator that actually is able to convey, like, presumably, the beauty that's in the original one [others agree].

B: I thought like, since he'd already translated a number of his books, and this was another, I was like "Presumably, he's very happy with these translations – the author" [...] if he's still working with the same translator.

A: So you read a few of the blogs, did you?

B: Yeah, a few, I wanna, I wanna finish reading them. So... yeah. But I almost thought it spoiled the magic ...

D: I thought so too.

E: Yeah, that's what I was thinking, a little bit long...

As we can see, reader C brings up the visibility of the translator as well as acknowledging and appreciating the time and effort that he put in his work. In his diary, the translator explains the problems he encountered and the strategies he came up with – reader B describes this at one point tellingly as "spoiling the magic." This implies that she prefers translation to be a mystical aspect in a translated novel, and finds any demystifying uncanny. A diary by an author reproduced at the end of a novel could have intrigued the interest of a reader with a literary orientation; however, it is found to be disruptive in a translation.

Reader C then got more curious about the translator's blog and implied that she should read it because she does not know enough about the

translation process or translation as a profession.<sup>58</sup> She mentioned a novel, *Small World*, by David Lodge (1984), which had a translator character who had difficulty translating various registers of English into Japanese. She shared with others the insights she obtained from the novel about being a translator. Readers continued discussing the translation.

A : I think it is, I mean I found it a little bit disappointing, not so much because of that, like talking about the tricks of it, but there was something I found slightly dull and mundane about the translator. I don't know if you thought that... [others agree] but it was just like sometimes if you know watch a movie or something and you think this person is a fantastic actor, he must be, has some amazing [skill] and then you actually hear them talk...

C: And you're like, I wish I just didn't listen to this interview.

[...]

B: I mean I do wanna finish it just because I – it is kind of interesting but I was completely unimpressed by his persona as it comes across in the blog.

C: It's a bit flat isn't it, it's a bit ... dull.

B: I don't know, but, I mean, it's funny on the one hand translation, you know, what an unbelievable skill [others agree] then on the other hand I was like "why not write your own novel" [everybody laughs].

Reader A compares reading the translator's blog to listening to an actor's interview after watching him perform excellently in a film – shattering the image that the viewer constructed for the actor. By using the word "persona," reader B actually develops this actor analogy, as if the translator is acting out a role by rendering the novel into another language. Readers build a fantasy world for his professional role, almost otherworldly in his patience and skill.

These readers' discussions are relevant for our understanding of appreciation of a translator's art. Alfred Gell's (1998) ideas of enchantment and the occult resonate with their descriptions and analogies. In his discussion on why people find art enchanting, Gell mainly has objects of visual and plastic arts in mind, but his analysis can be extended to less visible and tangible art forms like literary translation. He uses the term enchantment of technology, technology being the application of relevant skills to produce a work of art. Gell discusses the example of prow-boards in Kula boats in the Trobriand Islands,

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<sup>58</sup> As far I know, she did not know a foreign language well enough to try and see it for herself.

which are used as a tool of psychological warfare to deprive the spectator of their reason by bewitching them. He argues that:

[...] the fact that technical processes, such as carving canoe-boards, are construed magically so that, by enchanting us, they make the products of these technical processes seem enchanted vessels of magical power. That is to say, the canoe-board is not dazzling as a physical object, but as a display of artistry explicable only in magical terms, something which has been produced by magical means (1998: 46).

Readers discussing the translation of *Rainy Season* recognize the translator's skill, and the effort and patience that went into the translation. As Gell points out, "the attitude of the spectator towards a work of art is fundamentally conditioned by his notion of the technical processes which gave rise to it" (1998:51). None of the readers in this reading group spoke Portuguese, which meant that they lacked the minimum requirement for such a task and they were aware that linguistic competence was not even enough for rendering a literary piece into another language.

Moreover, reader B describes the translated novel as possessing a magical power, which would be spoilt if she read all of the translator's diary entries. Gell defines artists as "occult technicians," and here the translator is seen as someone who performs occult transubstantiations of words in one language into words in another, and puts them in a special order to create special effects of style. Experienced translators are aware of that mysterious quality of the art of literary translation, which arises from inspiration rather than craft, and which requires creative language use such as connotative meaning and word play; hence the various metaphors to describe it, for example, Esther Tyldesley's "capturing a cloud in a box" (2008: vii).<sup>59</sup>

Later, reader B especially acknowledges that fact that translating a novel requires almost as much skill as writing a novel. However, the assumption here is that those skills should be used towards producing something original. According to Gell (*ibid*), the idea that art is a good thing is universally accepted, but the definition of art and the aesthetic value attributed to objects of art are culture-bound.<sup>60</sup> Literary translation is not an art that has been assigned high

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<sup>59</sup> See James St. André's (2010) edited volume *Thinking through Translation with Metaphors* for discussions on translation metaphors across cultures.

<sup>60</sup> This idea is parallel to Appadurai's (1986: 4) concept of regime of value; it also resonates with the arguments of DiMaggio (1987) in his article "Classification in Art."

value in Britain, because original production is idealized. The perceived agency of the translator eventually depends on readers' conception of literary translation: some may view it as a craft that involves mechanic processes (like looking up words) and people who do not speak a foreign language may have ambivalent feelings about literary translation. From these readers' comments, it is evident that a literary translator is expected to be a magician, but a lesser magician than an actual novelist.

#### **7.6.5 “The Unpardonable Sin” of Americanisms**

Literature translated into American English occupies an ambiguous, somewhat uncomfortable grey area in readers' perceptions of cultural difference and linguistic heterogeneity. American literature is read and enjoyed widely in Britain, and for some readers, it is preferable to anything translated from another language. When we were discussing a novel set in the US, written in English, an elderly member of the Central Library Afternoon Reading Group said:

This was lovely, this was real life, and it wasn't boring, about the life I know here, about people getting married, and trouble with kids and getting divorced and losing their jobs and – I *know* that from my own experience, I loved this sort of slightly foreign setting, but they spoke English, so that was OK.

This American novel seems to offer this reader the right combination of the familiar and the foreign: slight cultural difference without the distractions of a translator. Such a combination indicates Savage and others' (2010) idea of Anglophone cosmopolitanism. In their discussion of the consumption of US drama series like *Dallas* and *Colby's*, the authors explain that Anglophone international cultural products involve a feeling of escape, which puts Britain at a distance:

It does so through an appeal to a non-fixed space, yet at the same time we can see it as under-girded by a cultural geography that involves features of difference and familiarity. This focuses either on an English fantasy past or Anglophone parts of world reflecting [...] a nostalgia for an imagined national past and a dissatisfaction or melancholy with a particular interpretation of the national present (*ibid*, 609).

In this case, it seems to be a slightly exotic interpretation of British reality that's providing pleasure for this reader, rather than nostalgia for an imagined past. American novels notwithstanding, the unpleasantness attached to American English was a recurrent theme in my fieldwork. Considerations of readers' attitudes to American English have led publishers to exercise caution about using American English in books. Catheryn Kilgarriff, editor at Marion Boyars says:

If somebody writes a translation and the first sentence has got a word like "gotten" in it, it's a disaster. Because, the reviewers would go \*gasp\* "This is American" [...] they just will. Even if the author is originally from Poland or something, and is a prize-winner, if you put an American slang word in, in the first few chapters, [...] then it's not good. [...] I do think you can get rid of very obvious American slang words quite easily. [...] You can't get rid of "color." So it's very hard if you have the word "color" in the title of the book. A good example is a book called *Harbor*, by Lorraine [Adams]. But she insisted on it being spelt h-a-r-b-o-r and it's about emigrants turning up at Boston Harbour [...] I don't think it did that well in England, even though it had fantastic reviews (Kilgarriff 2009).

Here, Kilgarriff seems to believe that what hindered the sales of this particular book was consumers' resistance to American English, especially the American spelling on the cover. When the book is a translation, and it has been translated by an American translator, some readers appear to be rather impatient with the dialect. In the reader discussion on Murakami's *After Dark*, one reader had quite strong opinions about it:

B: And it would have been helpful if it had been translated into English, for me. It was translated into American and kept jarring; I had to find out what a cell phone was. [Oh's and ah's; people agree.] A number of things kept jarring, calling someone a "mutt," 'Well, that's just dandy', "Sorry hon," "Threw you for a loop"... I don't even know what any of these mean. I just wonder whether that was deliberate. Mentioned it was translated by an American professor of Japanese, and Japan was taken over in 1945 by the Americans.

L: As we were actually, never mind... [Everyone laughs.]

B: But I just wondered whether – you do get novels translated by just altering cell phone to mobile – just these odd translations – or was he actually reflecting what the Japanese actually said? But it kept jarring this with me. Particularly cell phone.

Interviewer: Do you not like reading American novels then?

B: This isn't an American novel. It's a Japanese novel.

Interviewer: Yes, but it's you know... Can you not enjoy something written in American English?

L: B is making a point about, about proper En– I mean not, but...

Interviewer: Well, proper is a loaded word.

L: I guess there's a point in favour of pedantry, isn't it?

C: Well, if you can get to translate into English, can we have the English English version and then and American English version?

It is quite interesting here how reader B is not ready to grant the translator the right to use his own dialect. His description of Americanisms as “odd translations” suggests that he finds this translation to be lacking acceptability. He knows that the translator is a Professor of Japanese Literature, so in his eyes, has a legitimate background and motive to engage in the enterprise of translation. But he would prefer a historical justification – that Japan was taken over by the USA after the Second World War – rather than seeing it as a part of the translator's licence. Moreover, he does not seem to want to engage in any intellectual effort to follow the American words. His statement on not knowing the meaning of the expression “cell phone” could be a pretence to ignorance. He was British and spoke English as first language, so it could be expected that he would not have much difficulty in guessing the meanings of the American expressions. His protest regarding American expressions is an example of how mild linguistic difference can be used to construct Otherness.

Reader C, in an effort to defend reader B, suggests that it's the publisher who is neglecting their professional duties to the readers. Translation figures here as a technical operation: if it is possible to have the American English version of a text it must be automatically convertible to British English.

These ideas seem more interesting in the light of an earlier comment by reader, B, who is not happy about Americanisms:

B: Yes, I wonder why he chose the [?] two present tenses in English, this form, no “he sits,” “she sits” as opposed to “he is sitting,” “she is sitting,” are there two forms of present tense in Japanese [...] whether it would change the feel of the thing. Hardly any adjectives; very very sparse descriptions, and the whole thing I feel, ... well impersonal. Like the lady who's asleep, this camera is watching that what we were: there's little plot,

they didn't seem to be particularly involved with each other, the characters. It didn't involve me.

The question is, of course whether this reader would be equally critical of the use of tenses if the book was written originally in English. Many works of literature contain marked uses of language that we try to understand and enjoy, and actually, quite often, the more experimental the language is, the more literary skill is attributed to an author. Readers recognize and respect an author's license, but what might appear to the reader as an intellectual challenge in an original work of literature is more likely to be discarded as an aesthetic flaw in a translator's work, like how another reader found the translator's diary disruptive in the previous section. Furthermore, the fact that the language of the book is emotionally detached made this reader find the book emotionally uninvolved. He seems to discuss the scarcity of adjectives alongside poor choice of tenses in English – which means that he attributes these to the translator, rather than the author.

American English also has cultural associations for readers in Britain. Here is a dialogue between two readers at Southwest Library Afternoon Reading Group, when we were discussing *Anna Karenina* (Tolstoy 1965). Reader A, who is over 60, read Turgenev's (2008) *Fathers and Sons* instead, so she commented on that novel:

A: By the way, [I once read bits from a translation] – very good translation, very good translator, much of a literary background, and I, I got comfortable with it, and then, I bought myself a copy of the Oxford translation done last year by Freeborn, who brought [out] a lot about Russian literature when [he was] professor at University of London. And, he has, I think committed the unpardonable sin, of throwing in Americanisms. It's not all Americanisms, he's thrown those in. For instance, one scene with a group of about seven-year-olds [...] And he has the hero Bazarov the nihilist, who's going to do everything scientifically, [he tells] children he'd like to cut up some frogs, because, if he finds out what goes on inside the frogs, he'll know what goes on inside of people. In this [previous translation] one little fellow said "I think that's funny." In the new translation – complete with spelling – "That's crazee:" C-R-A-Z-E-E [everyone laughs]. So, my pleasure was reading the pertinent chapters – that chapter 10 is so interesting, I read it in both translations and it, it was very interesting.

B: Is your objection to the Americanisms, really modernism? I mean you wouldn't want it written back in 19<sup>th</sup> century English, would you?



A: Umm, no, I wouldn't. But I don't want it to be written in 15<sup>th</sup> century English either, I need something to which I could relate, I'm sorry, I cannot...

B: You feel the flavour of the...

A: ... a social structure that has been beautifully delineated, seven year old boys who're being snobs can't say "crazee." It, for me, it is just too much. And, also, expressions like, "right royal" I think have to be used carefully, you know, it's true, the hero does have a caustic sense of humour, it's quite true, but when he tells the woman with whom he's fallen in love, so he does have his weakness, when he says to her "royal, dove" in one translation, he's paying a compliment [...] "Right, royal" does not for me, convey the same thing. [...] It jars, in other words, for me, no phrase should jump out and hit me.

Reader A feels that American English does not belong to a Russian classic; moreover, she does not want to hear it from the mouths of upper class characters in a novel – a perceived incongruity of register. This fits in with other responses to translations of Russian literature, proving that the function of language in a novel is not merely referential; and that readers expect the quality of the language to complement their perception of the fictional reality. In a reading group meeting in Waterstones London I branch, readers thought that the translation of Tolstoy's (2008) *The Death of Ivan Ilyich and Other Stories* was easy to read, while one reader pointed out that the translation of her Anthony Briggs version was very modern: "It was so colloquial that it jarred slightly." This reader, like the Southwest reader, needed some linguistic distance to put the 19<sup>th</sup> century Russian identity of the collection in perspective for her. Later in the discussion, she suggested that "you sometimes need that antiquity" saying that she knows a lot of people who will only read the authorised versions of the Bible because of the "poetry" and "musicality" of the verse, or in Watt's terms, its elegant concentration (1963: 31).

The intolerance towards American English might also have to do with the popular perceptions of Americanness. Britain has traditionally looked to continental Europe for "high" culture, whereas the USA has been identified as the source of "mass culture" (see Hoggart 1957; Savage *et al* 2010). The anxieties regarding mass culture have found their reflection in "Americanization" as well, since "American popular culture is seen to embody all that is wrong with mass culture" (Strinati 1995:19). Americanization is believed to threaten not only aesthetic standards but also national cultures (*ibid*). Anti-Americanism is a distinguishing middle class attitude, it signals "left-wing" affinities and anti-

egalitarianism and élitism at once. Furthermore, intolerance towards American mass culture comes across as a conservative aesthetic stance, especially in light of the omnivorous and cosmopolitan norms prevailing in contemporary cultural consumption. What makes this reader's case paradoxical is that she speaks American English. She later told me that she's originally from Canada but she is resident in the UK and she attends the book club meetings regularly. Nevertheless, we should not lose sight of the fact that she is an older reader, and age is a significant factor in art consumption.

The relationships between textual-linguistic tolerance, age and cultural capital are complicated. The *Rainy Season* readers who appreciated the literary translator's skill all had PhD's, and the meeting I attended to make this recording was part of their second book group, which makes them engaged readers with good education.<sup>61</sup> Moreover, the connection between the Serbian installation artist Marina Abramovic and this book was also made in this group. Therefore, there seems to be a negative relationship between literary/cultural capital and textual-linguistic tolerance. Textual-linguistic tolerance<sup>62</sup> also seems to increase as what Bryson calls "multicultural capital" increases – the prestige afforded by familiarity with a range of cultural styles (1996: 888). As we will see in chapter 8, *Rainy Season* readers were the same people who criticized author Alaa al Aswany's homophobic remarks in his novel *Yacoubian Building*. These readers represent the opposite of homophobic attitudes, in their practice and their elective affinities: during the discussion one member of this group made statements that would indicate that she likes women. Furthermore, the *After Dark* reader who found Jay Rubin's American English intolerable also made a joke about "Orientals" being "inscrutable" (see again chapter 8). It was argued in chapter 2 that art tolerance was concomitant with elective affinities like political tolerance (see Bryson 1996). Therefore, textual-linguistic intolerance seems to decrease with educational and cultural capital. Intolerance in matters of linguistic taste also seems to bear associations with age, as both the *Fathers and Sons* reader and the *After Dark* reader were aged 60 or over. Booksellers actually agree that younger readers are more open to experimenting with different types of reading material, both in terms of content and form. Older

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<sup>61</sup> Apart from following these reading group books, they continued to read their own material in their own time.

<sup>62</sup> For Paul Ricoeur's related concept of "linguistic hospitality", or a translator's accommodating stance towards a source language, see Ricoeur (2006: 523). Ricoeur later extended this idea to all instances of understanding (Ricoeur 2007: 246).

readers seem to have more strongly defined tastes and comfort zones. Although literary/cultural capital is expected to increase with age, I have observed that age-related taste preferences often override this variable in readers' *habitus*.

### **7.7 Conclusion**

This chapter focused on the linguistic/literary dimensions of translated novels; we looked at the meanings that readers attach to the consumption of international literature. We saw how readers engage in practices that define their Self as a cultural consumer.

Engaged readers consume translated literature as part of their omnivorous and cosmopolitan preferences. From the visibility of translation to the translator's agency, readers' perceptions of the various aspects of translated texts determine the status or pleasure implications of their reading experience. The discussion on the textual-linguistic elements of translated texts supports the claim that readers in the mainstream British literary culture approach linguistic transference with suspicion. The only readers who enjoy the literariness of a translation seem to be those who recognize literary translation as an art, rather than a mechanic process. Venuti's (2008) proposition on foreignization agrees with readers if the translated text has a more or less homogeneous texture, as the examples from responses to the "old" versus "modern" translations of classical Russian literature indicate. However, elements that break the stylistic continuity, like Turkish words of French origin in an English translation, are likely to be perceived as unpleasant.



## **8 Translation as Intercultural Communication**

### **8.1 Introduction**

This chapter will deal with readers' construction (or re-construction) of the Other in their consumption of translated fiction. As we discussed in chapter 2, the meaning-making process occurs in the space between the text and the reader, and in book clubs, group interaction facilitates and enhances this process. Therefore, rather than simply highlighting instances of Othering prompted by texts (and paratexts), we will examine collective constructions of identity based on observations of group discussions, guided by the collective dispositions of readers. As we will see below, as translated novels offer opportunities for cultural encounter, they are often treated as informal histories or ethnographies. They are effectively appropriated into readers' cosmopolitan capital as they initiate imaginative journeys to other places and other times. However, the cultural encounter elicits a variety of responses in readers depending on their dispositions.

Readers' experiences with translated fiction are ultimately preconditioned by the literary culture that they are surrounded with. Realism has been the prevalent narrative method in the Anglo-American literary culture since the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Verisimilitude, or truth to extratextual reality, is seen as a distinctive feature of the novel (see Watt 1963, Lukács 1971). According to Ian Watt (1963) the plot of a novel is characterized by realistic particularity: it has to be acted by particular people in particular circumstances. Watt compares the novel's commitment to reality and authenticity to that of a jury in a court of law:

[The jury's] expectations, and those of the novel reader coincide in many ways: both want to know "all the particulars" of a given case – the time and place of the occurrence, both must be satisfied as to the identities of the parties concerned, and will refuse to accept evidence about anyone called Sir Toby Belch or Mr Badman – still less about a Chloe who has no surname and is "common as the air;" and they also expect the witnesses to tell the story "in his own words" (1963: 32).

The treatment of time and place, and the establishment of causality give the novel those characteristics that make it the epistemological reflection of social reality in literature. Therefore; according to Ian Watt (1963), the novel exemplifies the modern European culture in its orientation of thought.

Fiction of all sorts can activate intercultural communication. According to Iser, even a work of literature set in one's own social background will enable a detached observation of the norms of one's society (1980: 74). Factual events and physical descriptions render the reader's experience satisfying, either with an informative, or a hedonistic perspective, or both. Especially in reading groups, this feature is foregrounded in many aspects of the reading experience. For example, The Community Centre Book Club had a strong focus on reading books "about different cultures." The group mainly read non-fiction, and travel writing was a popular genre here. Reading a book that tells of a different country was seen as a way of exploring their culture, and people from the country in question were usually invited and respected as sources of information, with readers asking those guests to confirm the facts and opinions discussed in the book. At the beginning of each discussion, members briefly introduced themselves, and once a newcomer explained that he had not watched TV, read newspapers or listened to the radio for almost 20 years, and finally decided that it was time for him to open up to the world, implying that he joined the book club to this end. This remark clearly illustrates the function of the book group for this reader.

In other reading groups, the cultural encounter opportunity is exploited to varying degrees, due to the social nature of these events. Radway, whose research focused on the consumption of romance novels, states that the escapist nature of reading often involves an element of exploration of "faraway places and times" (1984:107). Similarly, Adam Reed, in his research on English readers reading English fiction, explains that readers "encounter" or "reclaim" the past by consuming period novels (2011: 149). In the Southwest Library Evening Reading Group, *The Hound of the Baskervilles* (1907) by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, and *The Kraken Wakes* (1953) by John Wyndham, were discussed as an experience of "travel through time." Especially the former book, which is set in Dartmoor in the Southwest, enabled a cultural connection between the readers and the plot, also due to the perceived Englishness of the author's work. The latter, a science-fiction title, was still seen in this light, especially the character who worked for the "English Broadcasting Company."

In her book *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation*, Mary Louise Pratt defines "contact zone" as "the space of imperial encounters, the space in which peoples geographically and historically separated come into

contact with each other and establish ongoing relations, usually involving conditions of coercion, radical inequality, and intractable conflict” (2008 [1992]: 8). The consumption of travel writing that she analyzes in her study takes place in an explicitly “imperial” context; however, Self/Other relationships still have salience for reading international writing for British readers within centre-periphery relationships. The reading groups I visited for my fieldwork were mainly composed of English people; and the translated novels we discussed gave them opportunities to make comments on the Other. Reading translated fiction prompts a range of practices and discourses of identification, which not only construct and Other, but also structure the Self. This fashioning of the Self, furthermore, takes place both on the personal and the collective level. In a contact zone, encountering other readers from the same culture as well as encountering the cultural Other, facilitates the construction of collective identity.

Such identity construction is encouraged by the metonymic nature of translation projects: one novel portraying one segment, or one aspect of a society is often taken to be representative of the whole nation. Due to their metonymic effect, translations direct the attention to symbolic representation and mute other possible existences in the source culture (Tymoczko 1999: 55). In other words, those who produce, market and consume translated novels often lose sight of the other expressions of local identity in the source culture and literature. In the eyes of publishers, one book from one national literature may tick off the entire repertoire. The market forces that were analyzed in chapters 5 and 6 create a tendency to value translated literature for its content, and not for its literary merit. Even Russian literature, whose literary tradition has defined the Western canon, might be viewed from this perspective. After the demise of socialist regimes in Eastern Europe, the number of translations from Russian into other languages decreased considerably (Heilbron and Sapiro 2007: 97). On the translation and reception of Russian literature in the UK in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Falchikov writes:

Many western publishers, translators, and indeed sometimes writers themselves sought to engage their public with works which could be described as “banned,” “dissident,” or “taking the lid off Soviet society”. Many of these were works which by any standards were important and worthwhile, but the political subtext was unavoidable, just as, on the other side of the divide, the Soviet authorities sought, [...], to disseminate examples of “progressive” literature. For example, Maxim Gorky and Mikhail Sholokhov have

enjoyed a high profile as ambassadors for Soviet literature. In the case of Gorky, the artistically inept *Mat'* (1906, *Mother*) has appeared in translation many times for political reasons in preference to the more interesting earlier works (Falchikov 2000: 606).

Russia was the market focus country in London Book Fair 2011, and although this feature of the book fair is promoting translations by providing an opportunity to display the diversity of literature from the market focus country, it was easy to fall into the tendency to market contemporary Russian literature with cultural icons. Defying the criticism that Falchikov raises above, the feature article on the publishing industry's magazine *Bookseller* in April 2011 started with the title "Russian Revolutionaries." As the book fair coincided with the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Yuri Gagarin's flight into space, the "cosmonaut" theme was highly visible around the Russian pavilion. The celebration included a show with Russian cosmonauts conversing about literature via video link. To conclude, even a national literature that has been invested with high symbolic power is represented in an exotic framework due to the "commercial imperative."

Within the context of the British book market, producers of translated fiction, i.e. publishers, encourage an approach to translated novels as symbolic expressions of local identity, again as a result of the market forces. The blurb on an uncorrected bound proof, used as business-to-business promotion material, could provide some illustrative points. Najat El Hachmi's *The Last Patriarch*, released in April 2010, was presented to central book buyers and reviewers with this blurb in December 2009:



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Fig. 8.1. The blurb of the uncorrected bound proof copy of Najat El Hachmi's *The Last Patriarch* (published April 2010).

From the copy on the back cover, it is evident that the publisher is encouraging reviewers to read this novel as ethnography of a Moroccan family in Spain. By including a brief biography of the author, which unmistakably parallels that of the protagonist, they aim to increase the ethnographic value

invested in the novel, with the “ethnographic translation of personal experience into a composite metonymy for a range of cultural practices” (Huggan 2001: 155-56, cf. Hall 1992: 304). East and West – represented by Morocco and Spain respectively – and tradition and progress are presented as binaries in an Orientalist outlook and readers are led to think the protagonist would be caught between these forces. (The irony here is that Morocco is geographically to the southwest of Spain.) Paradoxically, “patriarchal culture” refers to Morocco *and* the Moroccan community in Spain, whereas Morocco and Spain are identified as distinct cultures, which also raises the question of whether Spanish society does not display any signs of patriarchy. Nevertheless, these dichotomies are understood to be part of the book’s unique selling point, enhancing its legitimacy as a product of cosmopolitan consumption. The sentence on the protagonist “duly” taking out his frustration and rage on his wife and children has a normalizing effect regarding domestic violence in Muslim families. The Orientalist interpretation on the blurb is likely to bring the cultural aspects forward in reviews of this novel. The book was packaged with a colourful cover with a door from Islamic architecture and colourful rugs hanging from the top.

## **8.2 Reading Translations as Proxy Travel and as Ethnography**

I borrowed the expression “proxy travel” from an interviewee, who likened reading Russian and French classics to actual travelling. From reading group discussions and interviews, it is obvious that readers enjoy the virtual sense of transportation when they are reading a book set in another geography. This virtual travel experience allows readers to exercise the “tourist gaze” upon the people and places they read about in books (Urry 1990). As John Urry explains, the tourist gazes upon places with feelings of anticipation and fantasy, as these offer intense pleasures involving senses different from those habitually experienced. Other variations include the explorer’s gaze – for novels set in remote areas – or the anthropologist’s gaze – for novels written from an autoethnographic point of view (see Waring 1995: 462).

Travelling is a recurrent theme in book club discussions, both on translated novels and in books written by international authors, set in different locations. For readers, reading Aravind Adiga’s (2008) *White Tiger*, for example, was like taking a trip to India without leaving their house. Before the actual

discussion of the book, members who have been to India exchanged memories from their trips, which indicates that they associate their reading experience to their travelling experiences. People discussed the grim conditions of life in Indian slums, and wanted to check the descriptions in the book with people who have been there. In another group meeting on Haruki Murakami's (2001) *Norwegian Wood*, one reader said that the passage describing Watanabe's trip to Hotel Ami in the countryside was so vivid that it made him want to take the trip himself. On a discussion on Pascal Mercier's (2007) *The Night Train to Lisbon*, one reader said:

I enjoyed it... I thought it was a bit – like a thriller really – ‘cause he went off on his voyage of discovery, and I've been to Lisbon anyway, so parts of the, when he was saying “I'm going here, I'm going on these trams” I could picture it.

This reader's reading experience was supplemented by her memories of Lisbon. Her use of the word “anyway” leaves the impression that if she had not been to Lisbon, she might not be able to visualize the city – or what she is suggesting could be that she might have created a different picture in her mind; however, having been there, she could at least be sure that she is interpreting the book correctly. At the end of the same meeting, when a small group of readers were discussing whether they'd recommend the book to others, one of them mentioned that he found those parts of the book about Portuguese history fascinating. Later, one lady said: “I'd prefer a non-fiction book on Portugal. I've got relatives in Portugal so I'd prefer to read a little bit more on Portugal really.” This comment reveals her ambiguous expectations from the novel, which she found short of a guide to the country. Her attitude shows that her evaluation of this translated novel depended on the book's potential informative properties.

The associations between travelling and reading are commercially exploited. Daunts Bookshop, which organizes bookshelves according to geographical location, was already mentioned. Books set in Mediterranean countries are promoted in the summer through ads and reviews. One advertisement for Orhan Pamuk's *The Museum of Innocence* included information on a competition that the publisher organized, offering Waterstones customers the chance to win a “Turkish Delights” trip to Istanbul (see Fig. 8.2. below). Finally, some readers of translations will have actually decided to read a translated novel before, during or after travelling to a foreign country.

Guidebooks often contain a section at the end listing available translations from the country's literature.

Readers are aware of the tourist gaze, or in some cases the “explorer gaze” in the foreign books they read, especially in travel accounts. For example, one reader compared Xinran's (2005) travelogue *Sky Burial*, set in Tibet, to the sort of stories one would find in *National Geographic*. Reading with the tourist gaze encourages actively looking for symbolic expressions of identity. As Stuart Hall (1991) explains, this is an essential process for constructing the Self:

To be English is to know yourself in relation to the French, and the hot-blooded Mediterraneans, and the passionate, traumatized Russian soul. You go around the entire globe: when you know what everybody else is, then you are what they are not. Identity is always, in that sense a structured representation which only achieves its positive through the narrow eye of the negative (1991: 21).

In the following sections, we will see how readers who seek cultural difference foreground this element in the plot or in the characterization. Alongside proxy travel, armchair travel is also widely used, and it is perhaps a very apt metaphor for the reading activity. The word “armchair” denotes comfort, it is something we associate with home, and thus armchair travel might indicate an experience that is within the comfort zone.

This image has been removed by the author of this thesis for copyright reasons.

Fig. 8.2. Faber and Faber advertisement for Orhan Pamuk's (2009) novel *The Museum of Innocence*, published in Waterstones magazine *Books Quarterly* issue 35, 2010, page 81.

Picking up on cultural (or ethnic, or historical) difference also serves to reinforce the self, especially positive attributes thereof, which is a reassuring experience. On the other hand, the idea of reading a book set in an unfamiliar culture and society might be daunting for some readers, forcing them out of their comfort zone. As explained in chapter 4, readers mark comfort zones in terms of the form (the narration style) or the content of the book. In her work on book groups, Jenny Hartley argues that if books are too “culturally removed”, they might not be very popular among book readers. She gives examples with groups who found the book of the month to be “alien.” Readers in one group could not finish *Christ Recrucified* by Nikos Kazantzakis (1960), and in another, Ben Okri’s (1991) *The Famished Road* was found to be “too far from the experience of any members” (2001: 77). She reports that in other book groups she included in her study, readers found books “difficult – meaning lost due to culture and style” and “culturally so foreign, a lot of energy was spent, while reading, keeping track of people and things” (*ibid*, 78). In my fieldwork, Latife Tekin’s (2007) *Swords of Ice* elicited such a response. As explained in the previous chapter, this book is written within the magic realist tradition, and addresses issues of internal migration in Turkey. Readers in this book group seemed to have difficulty visualizing the characters and the plot.

Overall, readers are happy to glean ethnographic details from a work of fiction. The reader I interviewed on the London Waterloo train was reading Naguib Mahfouz’s (1994b) *Palace of Desire*. She explained that she likes learning about other cultures: she gave “Indian” and “Muslim” as examples. She read and enjoyed Indian author Vikram Seth’s (1993) *A Suitable Boy*, and did an online search for similar books, which is how she came to read Mahfouz’s *Cairo Trilogy*. She finished the first book, *Palace Walk* (1994a), and read more than half of the *Palace of Desire*. Reading the books made her feel as if she was transplanted into a different culture: “like travelling but you don’t have to go anywhere.” She found that Egyptian culture is very different from British way of life, and she’s surprised by how Egyptians seem to have “absolute trust in God and faith: it is amazing that people base their decisions on that.”

In a BBC4 Book Club programme that I attended at BBC Bush House, Orhan Pamuk told how he did extensive research to provide a realistic setting description for *My Name is Red* (2002): “For two years, every morning I left home telling my wife ‘Today, I am going to start writing my new novel’ but I

spent every day doing meticulous research in my office” (Naughtie 2010). From the questions that the readers asked him, I understood that they appreciated the primary research behind the book, and found the book credible for this reason. Because the book is set in 1591, the novel is not only a travel through geographies and cultures, but it also prompts a travel through time. This fits in with imperialist discourses of cultural consumption, which, according to Anne McClintock (1995:30), equate geographical distance with chronological distance.

Readers’ approach to translated fiction could be interpreted in terms of the *illusio* of translation in a book culture like that of contemporary Britain. Following Bourdieu’s (1996 [1992]) arguments in the *Rules of Art*, translation theorist Jean-Marc Gouanvic (2005) points out that the *illusio* of a literary text resides in the “willing suspension of disbelief” (Coleridge 1907: 6), which means that aesthetic pleasure in reading derives from “playing the game of fiction.” Gouanvic then goes on to argue that

Optimal translation is that which (re)produces in the target text the capacity of a work of fiction to provoke the adherence of a reader to the source work of fiction. [...] If a literary source text establishes a readership that adheres to the *illusio* of this text through distinctive methods that it has actualized, the text is likely to find a correspondent readership in the target culture through the agency of a translation carried out under the principle of homology, which is to say ‘resemblance in difference’ (163).

The nature of this homology between the *illusio* of the source text and that of the translated text is worth thinking about, as the *illusio* of a translation seems to be doubled up. In saying that the *illusio* of a translated text exists “only in the action of agents equipped with the habitus and symbolic capital acquired in [a given] field” (2005: 164) Gouanvic takes stock of the readers’ perception of the stakes in the act of translated fiction reading. The niche status of translated fiction in the UK, coupled with contemporary British readers’ cosmopolitan affinities, locate the *illusio* of translated texts a step beyond realism, which represents the *illusio* of the original novel. We may argue then, that the *illusio* of translated fiction in contemporary book culture in Britain is that of a conspicuous ethnographic realism, or virtual travel. In other words, the novel presents a Barthesian (1973) myth to reflect society, which means that a translated novel would be a myth of a myth. In the previous chapter, we discussed British

readers' preference for transparency in translated texts, which might be linked to this *illusio*: the reason why some British readers are impatient with the translator's visibility might be that they take the content of a translated book to be much more worthy of their attention than the form – i.e. the narration. In this point of view, any instances of textual or paratextual visibility on the part of the translator would seem like impediments to immersing oneself in the plot.

### 8.3 Readers' Dispositions and Expectations

Readers have different motivations for reading various types of material, and as noted before, they recognize that the nature and quality of their reading is accordingly different. The South reader who had studied Literature at Oxford University and read “gallons of” fiction is now “bored of” it, so leans towards non-fiction in his leisure reading, including history and poetry. He needs books that give him pleasure other than the aesthetic type:

I just kind of got bored of [inaudible] narrative, which you can deal with in a history book because there are loads of unknowns, whereas in the conventional fiction, you find that all the gaps have been filled in, and I just, I find myself a lot of the time predicting what's going to happen.

Later in the interview, as he was naming the Eurocrime authors he'd read – Andrea Camilleri, Henning Mankell etc. – he explained that he enjoys these as pieces of social commentary. Although the Camilleri title he'd read did not meet his expectations in this regard, he finds crime interesting as a social phenomenon. When I asked him if he read the *Millennium Trilogy*, he answered that Larsson's reputation is not as interesting for him as that of Henning Mankell – a reputation for his “analysis of this dark side of Scandinavian society:”

Sounds to me like Ian Rankin, Scottish [author writing about] the underbelly of Edinburgh, [...] I quite like that added dimension to the crime, because as with the Aswany [*The Yacoubian Building*], it's doing something that's not kind of highbrow, literary, but it addresses issues that a highbrow literary work often doesn't bother with at all, and it does it in an accessible way [...].

Interviewer: So, this literature, that is not highbrow, and is touching on social issues, you think is good because it's serving a purpose?

Umm, yes [...] Part of its appeal to me is definitely that I see parts of the world that I wouldn't see through travel. [...] Yeah, that to me is, I know it sounds horrible to say, but it's kind of cultural tourism through a crime novel.

The reader seems to value crime novels for their authentic representation of society, and the more so with international crime, as it gives him the ability to virtually chart these otherwise inaccessible societies. Translated literature for him performs a function that is distinctly different from the "literary" books he's read during and after his years at University. He approaches the kinds of "informative" books he's reading nowadays with a different disposition that is defined by the tourist gaze. As Venuti says, translations extend the possible uses of literary texts (1998: 68). For many readers with cultural capital, translated novels have this added value of complementing the aesthetic and pragmatic uses of reading laid out in chapters 2 and 4.

In chapter 6, we saw how paratexts shape a reader's horizon of expectation (Jauss 1970). These can range from the cover and blurb to a recommendation from a friend. I interviewed a reader about Latife Tekin's (2001) *Dear Shameless Death*; I had presented her with a few translated novels and she had chosen this one. Naturally, at the interview, one of my questions was about her selection. She said she made her choice for that particular title based on the cover and the blurb. The cover illustration shows a young woman on a roof. At the back cover, a smaller version of the same image showing a larger area on the roof is visible. This illustration shows more details of the neighbouring buildings, and there are two washing lines with colourful laundry on them.

The blurb confirms that the novel is the story of this woman:

A strange, magical story of a young girl growing up in modern Turkey, from her birth in a small rural village haunted by fairies and demons to her traumatic move to the big city. Based on her own childhood experiences, Latife Tekin's literary début marked a turning point in Turkish fiction. Set against the pressures of a rapidly changing society it concentrates on a daughter's struggle against her overbearing mother. Fantastic and hallucinatory, *Dear Shameless Death* provides fascinating insights into what it means to be a woman growing up in Turkey today.



Like the *Last Patriarch* blurb hinting at biographical authenticity, this blurb establishes a similarity between the plot and the author's life, drawing attention to the wider context of womanhood in Turkey. The reader mentioned "women in Turkey" a few times during the interview, therefore I concluded that from the cover and the blurb she thought the book would tell about the role and status of women in Turkey and that this is why the book was appealing for her. Later, I asked her whom she would recommend the book to, and why. She said she'd recommend it to her mother; both because it told about a daughter-mother relationship, and because reading the book, her mother too would see what it means to be a woman in Turkey. From our conversation, I inferred that the cultural aspects of the novel might have been slightly overwhelming for her. At the end of the interview, I asked what would make her enjoy the book more, a question that is aimed at eliciting the most prominent negative aspect of the novel for the reader. She answered this question: "Being Turkish would help me enjoy the book more, because I feel I am missing so much."

Another translation from Turkish enabled a similar reading experience for an interviewee, who was a PhD student in Political Science. Orhan Pamuk's *Snow* (2004) was recommended to her by a fellow academic who studies Politics, and from the way she focused on the social and political aspects of the novel, it was clear that she expected to read about such themes. As a result, she read the book as a social/political commentary, and saw the book as an alternative to reading a sociology or politics text on Turkey.

#### **8.4 Discourses of Intercultural Communication**

As readers approach texts with their own preferences, the cultural encounter afforded by the reading experience activates various discourses. These range from essentialism to critical reception and self-reflexivity. Although most engaged readers profess cosmopolitan affiliations, some have superficial commitments to this aesthetic stance, leading them to reveal prejudices by foregrounding stereotypes.

##### **8.4.1 Essentialism**

Essentialism represents one end of the spectrum of discourses. With novels translated from Middle Eastern and Asian languages, the essentialist discourse often feeds from Orientalism. During the Waterstones Midlands I

book group discussion on Murakami's *Norwegian Wood*, readers pointed out the fact that most of the main characters, except from the protagonist, commit suicide in the course of the novel.

They're a very honour-bound nation though, aren't they? In all these issues that were inve... - looked at, instead of investigation, looked at – the solution was always *seppuku*, they always ended up or quite often ended up killing themselves and that was the solution rather than the solution we'd sort of have [...] in this country.

[...] Japanese culture is very honourable. The way that family honour, the way that, you think of it, in the war, the way that the pilots would give their lives for the cause, the way that warriors if they've let their side down, [...] it's almost as if these characters, [...] when they find that something'd gone wrong they couldn't cope with it, that solution was their honourable way out.

Then one of the readers raised the point of how one of the characters, Kizuki, commits suicide at the age of 16: "They're having a game of pool, and afterwards he kills himself [...] There's no failing or anything, it's just young people who haven't had a chance to prove themselves." And then another reader mentions Hatsumi, the girlfriend of the protagonist's friend "who suffered in silence" and "who also ended up killing herself as well." Readers obviously interpreted this theme in the novel to be a characteristic of Japanese society. Their comments indicate a generalizing and fixating Orientalist rhetoric legitimized through perceived cultural difference.

What one reader said about *The White Castle* (1991) also suggests an Orientalist approach: "I like it a lot. Oriental setting, the plague, pashas, viziers, fabulous and ponderous weapons, abduction... everything but a seraglio. What's not to like?" As mentioned earlier, *The White Castle* is a postmodern historical novel set in 16<sup>th</sup> century Istanbul; it tells of the relationship between Hoja,<sup>63</sup> an aspiring Ottoman scientist and his Venetian slave. The reader was still in the process of reading the book when he made this comment, and his perception of the novel tells us about his expectations from the rest. He explicitly refers to the Oriental setting, which probably led him to think of matching themes like abduction. In the novel, the Venetian slave once makes an attempt to escape, only to be returned home by Hoja. Later, he is aware that

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<sup>63</sup> "Hoja" is a title used to refer to learned men in Turkish. It is used to address professors as well as religious leaders and clergymen.

he has opportunities to run away, but at that stage, he actually enjoys life with Hoja, not only as a case of Stockholm syndrome, but also because he has increased prestige and power through the science projects he is involved in. When Hoja withdraws to his passive and pensive state of solitude, it is the Venetian who frequently visits the palace to offer his services to the Sultan. In short, there is nothing to suggest an act of abduction in the plot, but the reader has associated his other observations to this theme.

Abduction, in turn, signified the concept of seraglio for the reader, perhaps in reference to Mozart's Orientalist opera *Abduction from the Seraglio* (1782). Although the word "seraglio" might be used interchangeably with "palace," it precisely refers to the sequestered sections in an Ottoman palace, including the harem. The reader picks up on this as a conspicuously absent essential element of the Oriental setting.

Essentialist interpretations are not limited to culturally "distant" societies. Steig Larsson's *Millennium Trilogy*, which has enjoyed great sales success in Britain, was often a topic of such assessments. As discussed earlier, as a genre, the engagement of crime with social reality is an intricate one. Jessica Mann, in her review of Steig Larsson's (2009) *The Girl Who Kicked the Hornet's Nest* for the *Literary Review*, agrees that the crime trilogy can be read as social commentary. She praises the book for providing a portrayal of Swedish society, and more so for exposing some myths:

One fascinating aspect for foreign readers is the demonstration that Sweden is not and never has been the social-democratic paradise or egalitarian haven of legend. Larsson shows that Swedish neutrality in the Second World War was a fiction, and far-right extremism survived in Sweden long after the war (Mann 2009:75).

*The Guardian's* Mark Lawson, on the other hand, is of the opinion that perceptions of Swedish society are what made the *Millennium Trilogy* appealing:

Indeed, the success of these books will do little to diminish a popular stereotype about the author's native country. A Swedish girl who is hot for almost anything, Salander moves among people defined by genital activity. This endorsement of a myth about Scandinavia may account for some of the global popularity of these books (Lawson 2009).

As these reviewers emphasize, *Millennium Trilogy* does have an ethnographic potential, and a discussion with readers in London Library II on *the Girl with the Dragon Tattoo*, the first installment, indicates that the book can be read as an ethnographic account. In this meeting, readers picked up on various aspects of contemporary Swedish society explored in the book. One reader admitted that Sweden was a country she did not know much about, and so the book was instructive for her. They seemed to have interpreted the text as an informal history. One reader said that she did not know that Sweden was “on our side” in the Second World War, so that was something she learned from the text.<sup>64</sup> Others concluded that “they [the Swedes] had quite a problem with Nazis there.”<sup>65</sup> I observed that the establishment of the autobiographical nature of this book encouraged readers to see the book as a portrayal of Swedish society. For example, they argued that Henrik, one of the central characters, could be based on Larsson’s own grandfather, because he was involved in an anti-Fascist movement, as we learned from the librarian organizing the meeting.

On the humorous side, readers joked about what they perceived to be idiosyncrasies of Scandinavian societies. One highlighted the fact that characters drank a lot of coffee: “It gave *me* a headache reading about those!” Another referred to the relaxed attitude towards sex: “It was very Swedish that he had a lover, who was married, and whose husband knew it and didn’t mind.” Similarly, during the discussion on Roberto Bolaño’s (2008) *2666* in London Library I, someone mentioned the “steamy sex scene” in the book, which, in his opinion could take place not in North Europe but in South America. Readers are perhaps more comfortable with sharing their stereotypical views on other societies in such cultural encounter contexts, by virtue of the moral amnesty arising from group norms (Gabriel 1991). Jokes evade social censorship and the accompanying laughter eliminates tension in a group convening to “enhance their Culture.” Comic stories, as well as tragic ones – like the Bulger case incident discussed before – consolidate social formations (*ibid*).

The reception of the *Girl with the Dragon Tattoo* by London Library II readers can be contrasted to that of the members of the Waterstones South reading group. The key difference was that the Waterstones South group

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<sup>64</sup> Sweden remained officially neutral through a number of political maneuvers in the Second World War. However, this neutrality was breached on several occasions in favour of Germany, which represented “the opposite side” for Britain.

<sup>65</sup> These excerpts are based on my notes as the librarian asked me not to use my voice recorder but to take notes instead.

seemed to have a more literary orientation, whereas the one at London Library II was more socially oriented: I heard more literary terms in the former meeting, whereas more jokes and laughter in the other. The Waterstones South group operated without a leader, in other words, they managed without a cultural intermediary – they had started as a Waterstones reading group, but later the member of staff who led their discussions left the company and the branch could no longer afford sending a bookseller to lead their discussion during business hours. The group convened at a café near the Waterstones shop, where they got a 10% group discount on their drinks. Each member gave each book a score out of 10; therefore, the discussion was framed through aesthetic judgements.

During the discussion, members made an effort to comment on the technical aspects of the novels. Early on, one reader compared the book to the work of Henning Mankell, Jo Nesbø and Arnaldur Indriðason in terms of the pace of narration. Although pace is a technical feature, the way she put it did not sound “literary enough” to her and she added, “not a very literary criticism,” which indicates the ideal direction of comments in this group. Another reader thought the main characters were “very developed and complex.” Furthermore, the Waterstones South readers seemed to know more about the author’s life; one mentioned rumours that he might not have died a natural death. In contrast, one reader in London Library II was ready to admit that she did not know the author was dead; she had not read a review of the book before coming to the meeting either. One reader in the Waterstones South branch said that she read a lot of “Nordic noir;” the name given to Scandinavian crime fiction. Another said she did not want to hear the actual “dénouement” as she had not finished reading the book. The London Library II readers, on the other hand, found the book dense. Several readers at the Waterstones South branch expressed their contempt for Hollywood films when the American remake of the book’s adaptation was mentioned – signalling a preference for high art over mass culture – and one said that she actually liked the Swedish films for the Swedish language. To sum up, the Waterstones South readers manifested their literary capital, cosmopolitan dispositions and textual-linguistic tolerance through their positive and negative evaluations. The discussion in this group was carried out on a more literary level – not necessarily because the Waterstones South

readers possessed more literary capital than the London readers, but because the former group mobilized this kind of capital in their evaluation of the book.

The intercultural communication aspect was not muted for Waterstones South readers; they did learn details of Swedish society from the book and cited this as a source of pleasure. Although the comments on the plot generally ran parallel to those of the London Library II readers, Waterstones South readers tended to be more nuanced and critical compared to London readers. One example from a Waterstones South reader:

My perceptions of the Swedes have been turned absolutely upside down. [laughs] You get these stereotypes and I love it! In all the Swedish writers that I've been reading lately, they've all been saying 'no it can't be a serial killer; we don't have serial killers in Sweden!' [laughs] It's almost as if they, you know they are finding that their culture is being changed by the modern world but I found it fascinating and, I'd certainly – their view of social mores and things are still quite different from ours. I mean I was quite tickled that Michael... – was it Bloomberg? – Blomkvist, because he was a good-looking man he was allowed to go to bed with every woman who passed by.

I understand the reader was referring to globalization – or Americanization – when she mentioned “the modern world” since serial killers are a famously American phenomenon in popular culture. The plot of the book is resolved through the discovery of a serial killer, which refutes the impression she previously formed reading Swedish novels, and confirms for her that Sweden is not a society cut off from the rest of the world. Notice here that she uses the word “perceptions” which means that she is aware that what she knows is her construction, and might not be objectively verifiable. Other members joined at this point, and one brought up how Erika Berger was a married woman but had a long-term relationship with the male character. The same reader said that this “fell in with my perceptions of the Swedish way of life.” The next topic this reader picked up was Lisbeth’s legal status, and her guardian, which she found “horrifying.” However, she was critical of the representation: “Cause you don’t know how things operate in Sweden, how accurate that was. [...] I always think of the Swedish society as being ahead of us in terms of how they treat [people with special needs].” Blomkvist’s attitude towards women was picked up on later again, but the reader attributed his behaviour to his intelligence, and did not imply that it’s a Swedish characteristic.

One reader referred to the statistical information presented at the beginning of each chapter, indicating that “rather a lot of women in Sweden were subjected to all kinds of pressure and sexual advances.” She added that this information surprised her, but that she did not know whether that would equate to British statistics.

In other words, although the South readers attempted to read the novel as a social commentary or an ethnography of sorts, they were careful about generalizations and displayed a certain degree of self-reflexivity. Although there were references to cultural difference, the conversation was constantly steered to the technical, literary aspects of the novel. Immediately after one reader said the book opened up for her a Scandinavian world that operated differently from her own society, another one asked

Did anybody else find that with the amount of detail there is within the writing, it's almost a mirror of the details that Blomkvist has as a journalist and how he really does what everything well it's... describing the way he sees things or the way he sees people, it really is ... exquisite detail.

Others agreed and broke up into small group discussion.

#### **8.4.2 Critical Reception**

At the other end of the spectrum stand critical reception and self-reflexivity. We will discuss these through readers' reception of Alaa al Aswany's (2007) *Yacoubian Building* and Haruki Murakami's (2008) *After Dark*. The former book will be discussed through a contrastive analysis of two book group meetings and one interview. The reception of the latter book will be illustrated with excerpts from one book group meeting where a librarian led the discussion.

Set in Cairo, the novel *Yacoubian Building* contains voluminous descriptive passages ranging from the physical to cultural. Most of the characters in the book are corrupt individuals; drugs, sexual harassment and bribery are common occurrences in the plot. Arguably, the book in general does not present contemporary Egyptian society in a favourable light. Through a character, Aswany voices his discomfort at how former president Gamal Abd el Nasser turned Egyptians into “cowards, opportunists, and hypocrites” (Aswany 2007:167). This is the author's rather fervent way of drawing attention to the degeneration in his society.

In the private Southwest reading group composed of readers with PhD's and an active interest in social matters, what struck me was that readers understood the motive behind Alaa al Aswany's depiction of his home country in *Yacoubian Building*, yet they questioned his representation. At the beginning of the book club meeting, readers were discussing literary production. They exchanged ideas on how authors explore "juicy" and "sensational" themes like forced abortion and child abuse so that their books would be popular. And then one reader burst out on what she found as very annoying:

A: I was extremely angry with the portrayal of homosexuals – also I mean, always referring to "homosexuals," and I was like...

B: But also that, it was clearly an aberration as well.

A: On the one hand he tried to portray as something – I mean he had this very loving relationship with this other man and he tried to portray in a way that it was about general love, but then, in the next sentence, he would always destroy my, like,... "OK, phew, he got it" and then the next sentence was like... "Really?"

[...]

A: And I was just thinking whether it's kind of [...] I mean it's illegal in Egypt, to be homosexual. So, maybe it's also kind of difficult to write in a way that you totally accept that as a way of living or whether that's just like he was already the most positive extreme you can publish in Egypt...

C: But you do get this sense in the book that it's because of – certainly that's the way that the character perceives it – it's because of the homosexual relationship that his son dies, even though, if it hadn't been for the relationship [...] they wouldn't have had probably his good medical care in the hospital even though he ended up dying [...]

B: I think the message that most annoyed me in some ways though is that [...] homosexuality is not natural, that it's caused by terrible child abuse and then you somehow internalize this abuse and then so, so you know, I guess it's the outcome of a horrible thing that's forced upon you and you turn our aberrant because of that, you know...

At this point reader A took out her copy of the book and read a passage out loud:

Homosexuals, it is said, excel in professions that depend on contact with other people, such as public relations, acting, brokering, and the law. Their success in these fields is



attributable to their lack of that sense of shame that costs others opportunities, while their sexual lives, filled as they are with diverse and unusual encounters, give them deeper insight into human nature and make them more capable of influencing others. Homosexuals also excel in professions associated with taste and beauty, such as interior decoration and clothing design; it is well known that the most famous clothes designers in the world are homosexuals, perhaps because their dual sexual nature enables them to design women's clothes that are attractive to men and vice versa (Aswany 2007: 130).

This passage that the reader cited portrays gay people in an essentialist and objectified manner. The reader went on to make a point on how the author depicts the main gay character as being devoid of agency:

A: I was just like, "This is so stereotypical!" yeah, as you said, he was abused, and that's why he could become the passive bottom, because this servant raped him.

C: But it's interesting as well, with the portrayal of women in the book, so, you know really, just commodities to be traded. So you see that in, you know, the person who gets a [second] single wife who he hides and then forces to have an abortion [...] and that was basically he decided this was your object that he wanted and he traded with her family and these were the rules of the ... and then again – I can never remember the names – but the younger woman...

Others: Busayna

C: and, umm, so again, it's kind of this sense of, she finds herself in these situations where men imposing themselves on her but then, the reason she kind of gets this relationship and falls in love is because basically they wanted her to kind of use her feminine wiles to get him to sign something, [...]

B: I mean it was very benevolently sexist, [...] it wasn't actively hostile, but yeah...

A: But, my question is, is that the author, or is that the portrayal of Egyptian society?

D: Whose voice is that? [others agree]

A: Because I was like, if that is his voice, I'm really appalled [others agree] if that's a portrayal of that society, I'm also appalled, and then, well, then, he's kind of drawing that picture to raise awareness of how things might be. I think that was kind of my question. [...]

The author's universal claims about homosexuality, among other "informative" sections of the book, reduced the credibility of the author in the eyes of the readers, so they suspected the descriptions about Egyptian society as well, which they would have little means to confirm or refute from their previous knowledge. Reader C also pointed to the author's treatment of women in the novel, which lead her to apply a gender critique. Then they picked up themes like radicalization, martyrdom, social mobility, and corruption in the plot and went on to discuss the linguistic texture of the novel together with narration. The agency of homosexual and women characters (or lack thereof) came up again.

The above comments and questions signal anxieties regarding identity construction. The readers affirm their cosmopolitan identity, like other groups, but they do not draw from a shared national identity – part of the reason might be that the members of this group are originally from other (Western) countries – but they live in the UK. They seem to be caught in a dilemma between either asserting their progressive, non-essentialist ideals or ascribing homophobia and sexism to the Middle East, which are essentializing interpretations. On the one hand, their enlightened, intellectual position gives them superiority over the author and his unsuspecting Western readers. On the other hand, they risk appearing ethnocentric when talking about homosexuality and sexism in the Middle East or appearing homophobic and sexist if they give in to cultural relativism. After all, patriarchy and homophobia are facts of Egypt, therefore a novel set in this country could not avoid these.

After the discussion on gays and women, the conversation steered into revolutions, counter-revolutions and Middle Eastern regimes. I compared the book to Aravind Adiga's *White Tiger* in the amount of corruption and hypocrisy that went on in the plot, and suggested that Aswany might be trying to justify his descriptions by blaming bad government.

At this point reader B asked my opinion about "such" depictions of the Middle East, as I am from the Middle East myself:

B: I was gonna say, you know, I guess what is your feeling as Westerners, I guess it's very easy to, I guess, read this book and I guess, generalize it to the Middle East, I guess. So [...] it will come up in the other books we read that's maybe a comparison that we can make clearly later on, but, I guess what I'm interested in you know, how do *you* for example, react to this, knowing the whole lot of Westerners will read this book

and “Well, that’s what the Middle East is,” “That’s what Islamic countries are like, they’re corrupt, they’re sexist, they’re this and that”?

Her concern indicates that she is aware of the autoethnographic intentions behind books that depict the Middle East in a certain Oriental colour for Western readers – the *illusio* of the author and the publisher. She displays self-reflexivity on behalf of Western readers, and is critical about their strategies of ethnographic reading. On the other hand, her question serves to affirm the readers’ collective identity – as Western – as well as demonstrating critical awareness and anti-essentialism.

Kraaykamp and Dijkstra (1999) outline the correlations between educational resources and interpretation in book consumption. These readers’ sophisticated arguments about this novel might be attributed to their educational and cultural capital, and the orientation of their book group.

This reading group’s reaction to the novel could be contrasted to that of the Southwest Library Afternoon Reading group, which is composed of women at retirement age, mostly professional but with no specific interest in world affairs. During the meeting, many members of the book club explained that they do not know much about the Middle East, and one reader admitted that she does not follow the news on the politics of the region. Quite a few members expressed that they did not enjoy the book very much, but their problem was to do with accessibility. One did not even start to read the book: “I looked at the list of characters, [at the beginning of the book] I looked at the glossary, I looked at the format with episodes within episodes, I looked at the cover, which suggests it will be a story in little bits [...] I’m sorry, I, I, [...] I do apologize, I should’ve shown more perseverance.” The reason behind the inaccessibility was largely cultural. One reader compared the book with Hilary Mantel’s *Wolf Hall* – the book of the previous month – and said that although it was a long book, she did not struggle with it, but she could not finish the *Yacoubian Building*. Another suggested that it’s because “[*Wolf Hall*]’s familiar; we all sort of vaguely know the history” of Britain, and the reign of King Henry VIII, with Cardinal Thomas Wosley and Thomas Cromwell, who are the central characters in the book. Those who did not find the novel too alien enjoyed it and learned from it. There seemed to be an agreement that the book portrayed Egypt realistically:

“The bit about the jihad, I thought was very convincing [...] and the torture session there, I thought again, seemed realistic.”

“The jihad thing, I found very, very realistic, I could see this happening.”

“I haven’t been to Egypt, to Cairo, and I don’t really know, but I did enjoy the book, it opened up for me [...] perhaps to read more about the life and everything that happens there.”

“I sort of [imagined the book as] a big painting; wherever you looked, sort of, something really interesting happened.”

“I felt that his writing was genuine, because of, really because of the unsensational way he wrote things, so, I’ve taken it as a microcosm of Egyptian society.”

These comments could not be more different from what the previous group thought of the author’s project; the Library readers have total faith in the ethnographic realism of the novel. The reader who compared the book to a painting seems to be imagining herself in an all-surrounding spectacle, which she can browse with her tourist’s gaze. The reader who found the author’s way of writing “unsensational” had previously expressed that she had not found the elements of sex and corruption pleasant in the book; however, she obviously believed that these have been dealt with in a measured and perhaps objective manner.

Among the readers who valued the authenticity of the account was the lady who belonged to both of the reading groups run by the Library – Afternoon and Evening – and who occasionally did proofreading for publishers. I assume she had a long reading history with a lot of books she could compare this one with. It is telling that even she did not approach the plot with a critical perspective. The reception of this novel by these readers took place at a textual level, as opposed to the meta-textual level of discussion at the previous group. Most importantly, none of the readers highlighted the passage stereotyping homosexuality and none displayed signs of self-reflexivity. As I mentioned earlier, the Southwest Library Afternoon Reading Group was composed of elderly readers who took part in the reading group mostly as a social activity and did not possess educational capital comparable to that of the members of the Private Southwest group, who all had PhD’s. Again, age comes across as a strong determining factor in taste. On other occasions, I observed examples of textual-linguistic intolerance towards translated texts in the Library group, which would mean that the plot of a translated novel would stand out as the primary source of pleasure for them. The Private Southwest reading group readers, on

the other hand, had not only educational but also international cultural capital – the art of Marina Abramovic was discussed in this group. They were also much younger than the Library readers. The striking difference between the reception of the Library and the private group readers can be traced down to these factors.

The reading group represented by the South reader responded to this novel in a way that's not very different from the reaction of the Southwest Library readers, although the demographics are not comparable. This group was composed of people of working age, all professional, and I understand them to have considerable literary capital. The group was linked to a bookshop, and the list of books that they had read since 2002 indicates that they had a commitment to highbrow and international literature, which defined their taste as a reading community (see chapter 7 for a selection of titles they read). One reader remembered the discussion on *The Yacoubian Building*:

*Yacoubian Building* was quite popular. Everyone said it's a lightweight novel, but it's quite good. It's one of those ones where you think "I'm glad he wrote that" because [it] addresses all kinds of issues. It wasn't perfect, the ending was terrible, but everyone enjoyed the characterization, the plotting... the sense of life that it had.

The reader seemed to be impressed by the fact that the author addressed issues like corruption and homosexuality, although he classified the book as middlebrow. According to his account of that book group meeting, members looked up to the author for "breaking taboos in society." We do not see the type of critical attitude directed at the author by the Southwest group: "We didn't think it was bad in any way, but the ending was rushed in." Evidently, the South group's evaluation of the book focused on the literary aspects, and a quote from the same reader on *The White Tiger* in chapter 5 already established that this group enjoyed learning about other cultures through books. The Private Southwest group was interested in plot elements as well but they were ready to make evaluative judgements on the depictions. During the interview with the reader from the South group, when I used the word "ethnographic," he confirmed that "certainly with Aswany, it was ethnographic, because none of us had read an Egyptian novel before," which indicates that the group muted the metacritique as the exotic content took precedence.

This comparative analysis involving three book groups confirms that interpretation is the outcome of an interaction between several factors, including the readers' dispositions – shaped by their age, educational and cultural capital, commitment to cosmopolitanism – the group's orientation in the kind of topics they foreground during the discussion, and of course the author and the contents of the work of fiction.

Now we will move on to a discussion of Haruki Murakami's *After Dark*, which took place in London Library I reading group. One reader expressed in no uncertain terms that he found the book uninvolving and therefore he did not enjoy it. There was a librarian (L) leading the discussion, but he did not join the discussion much, he rather asked the questions and compared the views of the members.

B: [...] Hardly any adjectives; very very sparse descriptions, and the whole thing I feel, ... well impersonal. Like the lady who's asleep, this camera is watching that what we were: there's little plot, they didn't seem to be particularly involved with each other, the characters. It didn't involve me.

A: Yeah, but in the space of 12 hours – what I guess, was it 12 hours? – it dealt with a lot of relationships and, and, from siblings...

B: But they didn't seem to relate to me. It didn't relate with any particular energy.

A: It dealt with friendship, and humanity, you know, in terms of, a girl helping somebody she didn't really know, who was in trouble and needed her help. It dealt with sibling rivalry, it dealt with jealousy.

B: But only on an observational, objective sense, no subjectivity. It didn't involve me emotionally in anything, it was just pure observation – to me.

As you see, reader B started out with negative judgements regarding the literary/linguistic aspect of the novel. Later, the conversation steered into the plot:

E: [...] But did you think that it's maybe kind of, very representative of Japanese culture, or Japanese way of thinking?

F: What, music?

E: Not the music, the ... not having the ...

C: The detachment?

E: Yeah, not having lots of adjectives to describe, being just observant and...

B: These inscrutable Orientals, we can't tell what they're believing and what they're thinking [...].

G: Mishima's [another Japanese author] much more descriptive [compared with Haruki Murakami], isn't he, I don't think it's just that cultural thing, I just think Murakami's particularly alienating, I think he does do that, a bit like Brecht, tries to do that [...] but I thought that was pleasant and beautiful in many ways.

D: I haven't been to Japan but I do have Japanese friends, and I've seen a lot of Japanese movies, and I do see contemporary ones as well as historical ones... And I do think this captures Tokyo at night – maybe any city at night – but I think there's something particularly Tokyo about it. And the sort of the overworked salary man, you know, beat up a woman in a hotel and... Characters out at night, the atmosphere out at night...

As Reader B called Japanese people “inscrutable Orientals,” he had a quite serious expression on his face, so it was difficult to decide if he meant what he said, or if he was being ironic. This might have been a strategy to elicit a self-reflexive response on the part of reader E, who offered an Orientalist interpretation – this would make B critical, but his remark was not picked up by anyone in the group, and he did not comment on it later to clarify it. Either case, him making such a comment indicates that he is not concerned about breaching the cosmopolitan norm; perhaps he's allowing himself more flexibility because he's an older gentleman. What strikes me is that he can make such a comment about the Japanese with impunity –the question then arises as to whether an equally stereotyping statement about black people or Jews would not go unchallenged. From the above comments it is clear that readers attributed several of the personality traits of the characters to their Japanese identity. Reader D tries to give legitimacy to her comments on the representativeness of the novel by citing her cosmopolitan cultural capital although she has never been to Tokyo. She implies that the experience of the character who beat up a Chinese prostitute does represent the wider Japanese context. Readers went on to discuss other themes in the novel that might reflect Japanese society.

G: He's certainly commenting on some themes in contemporary Japanese life, isn't he? Alienation,... treatment of women,... salary workers who don't go home,... who don't care about their families,...

F: Do you know that Japan produces more porn than America and Europe put together?

E: [It's to do with their] history... Manga is just...

C: It's about oppression and not showing your feelings.

G: ...like in the *Great Railway Bazaar*. It must be... 30 years [ago]. He [author Paul Theroux], I remember the bit where he's sitting on the Japanese train, next to a kid – Japanese kid – reading a comic mag. And he looks over at it, and it's porn! I don't know how young the kid was, but it's definitely in there ...

Reader F's intervention on porn in Japan seems rather abrupt and random, but she probably found this piece of information relevant in this context as she saw the consumption of porn as an outcome or symptom of extreme stress in society, an idea supported by the responses by readers E and C. Reader G seems to add the detail from *The Great Railway Bazaar* (1975) as ethnographic evidence.

F: I guess it's such a stereotype, isn't it? [...] I remember seeing a few years back, like, these skirts that were in fashion in Japan, and they were beautifully drawn, and they were exactly like you could see the woman's bottom and knickers and her legs, or she was wearing this skirt. It was like, what was it, *tromp de l'oeil*?

L: I mean, it is all, 'cause you know that the Japanese can get up to this, but...

G: Sorry, sorry, I want to correct, it wasn't porn, it was extreme violence that he was looking at and some sexual stuff.

The librarian was getting uneasy as everyone threw in whatever they knew, or heard of Japan and Japanese people. These were comments reconstructing Japanese identity based on, or inspired from, observations of fictional reality. Reader G's memory of Paul Theroux's *The Great Railway Bazaar* turned out to be false, that detail about a Japanese boy reading porn on a train was perhaps refashioned in her head with the seemingly factual, and thus "objective" information that reader F earlier shared about Japan: producing more porn than the USA. Notice that the same reader who stated the porn "fact" – Reader F – acknowledged that her comment was leading to stereotypes. G later corrected her mistake, which gave the Librarian an opportunity to offer the self-reflexive perspective:



L: It is, I mean it's interesting in that we were just about getting going on a sort of a, ... kind of a... Orientalism of how, you know, a table full of mostly Brits, characterizing Japanese people... and their eccentricities. Umm... which is really quite an enjoyable thing to do! [laughs – everyone laughs]

As a cultural intermediary, he was aware of the political implications of reading as a culture-bound collective activity. He recognized the Orientalist pattern and made this self-reflexive comment, perhaps as part of his responsibility as the moderator of the discussion. His admission that he found pleasure in stereotyping actually puts it in line with morally illicit pleasures. The Private Southwest reading group was also aware of the Orientalist pitfalls of the novel they read, but deriving pleasure from such literature was not an option for them, due to their intellectual stance. The London group, on the other hand recognized that it would be wrong, but still acknowledged the temptation. This also hints to the apparent legitimacy of soft Orientalism as elicited by fictional worlds, while the discourse is no longer legitimate in the real world.

To sum up, then, the metacritique displayed by the Private Southwest Reading Group, and the self-reflexivity of the London group illustrate the degree to which literary capital and cultural capital guide the meaning-making process. Furthermore, as the excerpts analyzed indicate, the interaction between fellow readers has a strong influence on the interpretation that takes place between the text and the readers. The social dimension of book groups has a bearing on meaning making as the orientation of the discussion presumably has an implication on individual responses to the text.

#### **8.4.3 Belief Formation in Book Group Discussions**

According to philosopher Gregory Currie, engagement with narratives brings about belief formation, or re-formation (1998: 177). As we read or hear about events and people, we learn new “facts” and our existing ideas may be reinforced or challenged. Memory gain (or loss) eventually brings about changes in identity from the individual to the collective level (Maines, 1993; Bell 2003). Readers are exposed to information and ideas on books from discussions on various scales – from online reviews to conversation with friends and more structured debates in the media. As noted in chapter 3, the cross-contamination between these settings is quite strong. In reading group meetings, which are social events, the discussion itself is an indispensable part

of information gathering and storing. Furthermore, fictional accounts facilitate belief formation as they not only contain “facts” but also “values” and so generate emotions (Gabriel 1991: 427). We have seen with the example of plot elements such as abduction and harem in the *White Castle* and a Japanese boy reading porn on the train in Paul Theroux’s *The Great Railway Bazaar* that readers can restructure their memories of a book retrospectively based on the context.

Swann and Allington point to the local specificity of interpretation, explaining that readers refer to their own and others’ knowledge and experiences (2009: 261). Therefore, they describe book group discussion as “interactional resource” (*ibid*, 262). Reed also believes that readers trust each others’ knowledge and memory (2011: 165). What readers learn from translated books about other cultures, how they reconcile or reinforce this with past reading or experience or input from a discussion with fellow readers are intricately woven.

As mentioned in chapter 2, the book is often the primary source of information; with the plot, the characters and the social setting. When readers find a plot element striking in a translation, attributing it to cultural difference seems like a valid explanation. For example, in the reading group meeting on Haruki Murakami’s *Norwegian Wood*, readers discussed how one of the characters in the book had a nervous breakdown after she was accused of being a lesbian and sexually assaulting her piano student. Apparently, they found this character’s reaction too strong, and later they reasoned that this experience is likely to be more upsetting for a Japanese woman than someone living in a Western society, where homosexuality is a more visible phenomenon. On that score, while discussing Steig Larsson’s *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo*, readers invariably referred to the norms and conventions of Swedish society.

Apart from the plot, the other source of belief formation is the social setting. During the meeting on Roberto Bolaño’s *2666*, readers pointed to the amount of political activism in South America. Fethiye Çetin’s *My Grandmother* (2008) encouraged an overtly educational reading because it’s a biography/memoir. The reading group already had an educational agenda, since it was the Community Centre Book Club, whose primary aim is to learn about other societies and cultures. This book tells the story of an Armenian woman who survived the death march in Turkey in 1915 and was adopted by a

Turkish family, to be raised as a Turk and Muslim by them. The book is narrated by her granddaughter, who is currently a human rights lawyer in Turkey. For the reading group meeting, the discussion leader brought print-outs of articles on Turkish history (from Wikipedia) along with maps of Turkey, with cities mentioned in the book marked. Readers found it difficult to follow the characters' names, and found it surprising that the book did not contain a family tree. As stated in the previous chapter, the discussion leader brought a family tree that she had drawn by hand. This reconstructed genealogy suggests the recreation of a world by readers who are historically and geographically removed from the reality of the book, or it could be considered a contribution to the writing of history – be it on a micro scale. Readers asked me several questions about the Armenian Genocide, both because they knew I was from Turkey, and because it was me who suggested the book.<sup>66</sup> They also studied the material that the leader brought, and the two readers who had not read the book asked even more background questions. The book club discussion, from this point of view, functioned as an informal session of collective learning.

How readers interpret elements of a translated book is deeply influenced by their previous knowledge/beliefs about the author and the society in question. In a Southwest Library Afternoon Reading Group meeting, one reader brought up extratextual information in a way that is coloured by her reading of the book. When we were discussing Alaa al Aswany's *Yacoubian Building*, she mistook the author's name for the word for God in Arabic, Allah. She seemed to be scandalized by this, and imagined an equally scandalous outcome. She said that she enquired about the author's name with an Egyptian student who stayed in her house: "And I said, you cannot go around calling yourself Ala, I said, that's the name of God, either the Christians out there or the Muslims will trim you off for that." She reported to us the correct pronunciation of the author's name and the word Allah as demonstrated by her tenant. Within five minutes, when it was her turn to share her first impressions of the novel, she referred to the character who "ended up going to train as a terrorist." Her hypothesis about religious fanaticism seems to be linked to her perception of "this religious sort of terrorism" in a Middle Eastern country such as Egypt.

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<sup>66</sup> I am aware that this book falls outside the genre focus of this study, but I suggested this biography/memoir to this reading group because the person organizing the book club avoided fiction and preferred history or other non-fictional accounts.

Input from fellow book group members certainly influences interpretation. Readers explicitly rely on other readers' accounts for information and ideas. At the beginning of the meeting at the Waterstones South reading group, when members asked each other who would like to start, one of them said that she read the book "quite a while ago" so would not want to be the first. She did not mind being the second or the third, but she really needed a couple of people to "refresh her mind." Group members' different takes on the novel give others the opportunity to compare and contrast ideas. Actually, this compare and contrast seems to be an exciting feature of a book club meeting as readers enjoy pointing out similarities and differences during discussions. After all, for many readers, the point of participating in this activity is to see how one's interpretation and opinion compares with those of others. In one meeting of the Southwest Library Evening Reading Group, we were discussing Irène Némirovsky's (2008) *All Our Worldly Goods*. When the librarian initiated the discussion by asking if anybody wanted to start, one member took the floor by a comment that set the tone of the whole meeting:

I thought it was really interesting. I thought it was very good, more than anything, it was interesting because it was, it was foreign. I mean it wasn't about France, that's foreign, but you knew it wasn't an English perspective – British perspective. And that made it very very interesting indeed.

At a previous meeting with the same reading group, I had said that marking the Second World War – or "the" War, as it is often referred to in Europe today – as a common point of temporal reference struck me as something "European": in book group meetings we referred to things that happened before the War, or after the War. I explained that I found books about the War not as personally relevant as people from European countries might do, as I was not brought up in a society with an active collective memory of it. The same member who initiated the discussion with the above comment reminded me of what I had said, and asked about what I thought of the novel. I mentioned the "French," "English" and "German" perspectives to the War which were brought up earlier in the discussion, and the reader repeated her question:

F: So when you read this, did you have this feeling that the war is coming? In the way we did? Because we're more aware of it.

Interviewer: Not really. No... I was telling [the librarian] before the meeting that the book gave me this feeling of what we call in Turkish divine justice.<sup>67</sup> And I think the title [*All Our Worldly Goods*] is also a reference to... maybe religion. Like, if you're a good person, if you do good things in your life, good things will come, or you'll have good luck. [...] I remember that Pierre was only saved from the bombing of the village because he was carrying a baby and an old woman in a [wheelbarrow] to the forest. And he did this, ... by risking his life – going to the forest – and that kind of saved his life at the same time. And later, in Paris, when he went to church, he was [...] asking God to take his own life instead of his son's, and then, that's where he died, like, then and there. So, these are good people, in a religious sense, and their prayers are answered. Although I'm not a religious person myself, I think I find the idea of this kind of justice comforting. So I like reading these books...

Librarian: That's natural justice.

Interviewer: Yeah.

In the second scene I referred to, one of the main characters goes to church one Sunday during the Second World War, and prays that the life of his son, who is fighting at the front, be spared. A bomb falls on the church building and the roof collapses, killing the father. The son comes back from the War later safe and sound. I personally see this scene as evidence of the religious undertone in the novel; it has been discussed by reviewers as “a scene of epiphany,” and “an expression of faith” (Hussein 2008, Moore 2008). I did not think that the idea of divine justice would be very removed from the experience of someone from a Christian background, and the librarian confirmed that he recognized the sort of justice that I have discerned in the book. Right after my comment, a reader who had previously identified himself as Irish said:

I: That's a very interesting answer, isn't it? I think it's quite different, quite, different perspective isn't it? I'd, I didn't pick up on it either, but it's interesting, isn't it?

Although I did not actually mention the Muslim religion, and I only referred to religion in a negative identification, the Irish reader's understanding was that my reception was shaped by my religious background. There is an underlying assumption that as a Muslim, I was inclined to see the religious undertones, which escaped him as a Westerner/Christian. His positive response to my comments on the plot might have been motivated by his

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<sup>67</sup> “İlahi adalet” in Turkish, refers to the concept of ‘Adl in Islamic philosophy.

cosmopolitan disposition. It also shows that he sees the book group discussion as a rich source of information and ideas, which must be the case for many reading club members.

## 8.5 Conclusion

This chapter dealt with reading translations as a means of intercultural communication. As the excerpts reveal, just as ethnographers are said to “write” culture (see Clifford and Marcus 1992), ordinary readers can be argued to “read” cultures into existence.<sup>68</sup> For Iser, this comes from the power of the text to mobilize the reader’s imagination:

As the unwritten text shapes the written, the reader’s “formulation” of the unwritten involves a reaction to the positions made manifest in the text, which as a rule represents simulated realities. And as the reader’s “formulation” of the unwritten transforms itself into a reaction to the world represented, it follows that fiction must always in some way transcend the world to which it refers (1980: 182).

In many examples analyzed in this chapter, readers’ attitudes were constructed in the space between the Self and the Other. I used the expression “armchair travelling” earlier; however, “armchair sitting” is not what real cosmopolitans do in their reading experience. They “go to” other cultures and literatures rather than waiting for them to “come” to them. They are ready to take risks and go beyond cultural translations written in the English language. On the other hand, a thoroughly cosmopolitan disposition does not require a sense of transportation, physical or imagined, for its operation. This is what Ulf Hannerz means when he says that real cosmopolitans are never “quite at home again,” in the way locals can be:

Home is taken-for-grantedness, but after their perspectives have been irreversibly affected by the experience of the alien and the distant, cosmopolitans may not view either the seasons of the year or the minor rituals of everyday life as absolutely natural, obvious and necessary (1996: 110).

As we saw with examples from my fieldwork, readers with a genuine cosmopolitan disposition displayed attitudes of criticism and self-reflexivity while

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<sup>68</sup> In his introduction to *The Ethnography of Reading*, Jonathan Boyarin (1993) raises interesting points about the parallels between reading and ethnography.

those with a superficial commitment were likely to bring up stereotypes. Age and educational capital emerged as important determinants in characterizing interpretation.

Another empirical conclusion to be drawn from this chapter (in conjunction with the discussion in the previous chapter) concerns socio-geographical location and reader dispositions. Although London readers might be expected to be more cosmopolitan, I have not observed a significant difference in attitude between those in London and in the Southwest, and actually, some of the comments that could be interpreted as ethnocentric came from London book group members. The “proper English” and “inscrutable Orientals” comments on Haruki Murakami’s *After Dark*, “the steamy sex scene” remark on Roberto Bolaño’s *2666* belong to members of the London Library I reading group, and the comment about extramarital sex in Sweden in Steig Larsson’s *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo* was made by a member of the London Library II reading group. My sample cannot be taken to be representative of London readers, nor can any book group sample be representative of the British population, but this is an important finding as six London focus groups (out of a total of 33) would at least constitute something like *prima facie* evidence.





## **9 Case Study: Turkish Literature<sup>69</sup>**

### **9.1 Introduction**

This chapter aims to provide an illustration of the previous arguments on the production and consumption of translation in the UK, through a case study on Turkish literature. Turkish literature yields interesting insights in a sociological research on literature as Turkish identity represents a multitude of meanings in the UK. As will be discussed below, while Turkish culture used to be limited to a peripheral position, in recent years, Turkish literature has been making progress towards the cosmopolitan canon. Therefore, Turkish novels are a new discovery for many publishers and readers in the UK. Moreover, Turkey is between continental European and Middle Eastern collective identities; in other words, it is a bit of both. The consumption of Turkish literature turned out to be an effective case study as it carries parallelisms with the consumption of other exotic products and services, such as food and tourism. In this chapter, we will start with an overview of modern Turkish literature, followed by the historical and contemporary reception of Turkish literature in this literary culture. Following from Even-Zohar's (1979) argument that literary and cultural systems are iso-morphic, the manifestations of the general tendencies to marginalize non-Western literatures will be applied to Turkish novels, contextualized with the perceived Turkish identity in Britain.

Later in the chapter, several contemporary novels by Orhan Pamuk will be discussed within the context of postcolonial theory. We will also examine the professional profile of Maureen Freely, the best known translator of Turkish literature in the UK today. The case of Pamuk and Freely will be analyzed with Bourdieu's (1993, 1996) framework of field, *habitus* and practice. This section will also include an assessment of the shifts in the patterns of production and representation of Turkish literature, in light of recent developments in the literary field.

### **9.2 Modern Turkish Novel**

Modern Turkish literature is built on the heritage of Ottoman literature, which focused largely on poetry. The novel and short story were introduced into Ottoman literature in the 19<sup>th</sup> literature through translation. Modern Turkish

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<sup>69</sup> In this chapter, I analyze some of the data that were presented in a published report (Tekgül 2011b).

novel could be divided into three periods: late Ottoman (1839-1923), early Republican (1923-1950) and contemporary (1950 onwards). In the late Ottoman period, Turkish authors were experimenting with the new prose genres, trying to harmonize Western techniques with local themes. The national revival was at the heart of early Republican literature. According to literary critic Berna Moran (2004), this period was dominated by questions of East and West, encouraging writers to rethink techniques and themes. Azade Seyhan explains that novelists of this period “portrayed with deep insight the young nation’s struggle to refashion a new westernized Turkish identity and its precarious adoption of secular modernity in the shadow of a suppressed but powerful religious tradition” (2008: 5). Moran (2004) argues that from 1950 onwards, novels tackled issues such as class divisions, exploitation and the resulting injustice. Efforts to find new expressions intensified in the 1960s. In these decades, the so-called Village Literature formed a somewhat separate branch, voicing the struggles of the rural population. These novels were written from the perspective of social realism, which also permeated the works of short story writers of the period. The themes explored in Turkish fiction from 1950s onwards therefore make these books politically interesting for a liberal Western audience. Yaşar Kemal’s work rose to prominence from 1955 onwards. Berna Moran defines his *İnce Memed* (1955 – translated into English in 1961 as *Memed, My Hawk*) as a creative reworking of the noble bandit theme in literature (vol. 2: 101-123). Yaşar Kemal’s books have been widely acclaimed and have captured the imagination of generations of readers in Turkey, he is also the first Turkish novelist of international acclaim. Historian Kemal Karpat reads Village Literature in the 1950s almost as an informal history, adding that the Anatolian individual has been given an injection of agency by the authors of the era. Novels reflected the social distress of the period: authors addressed the struggle between nature and convention, finding the solution in delivering justice through strong-willed characters (Karpat 1960).

Contemporary writers initiated a slow but profound change in Turkish literature when they started incorporating postmodernist elements into their prose in the 1980s. Moran (2004) explains that this meant a new narration style for authors like Orhan Pamuk and Latife Tekin. Modern Turkish literary culture shares the same paradigm as Western literatures as the novel is currently the most widely produced and consumed literary form and realism is the dominant

narrative mode. The adoption of further Western techniques like postmodernist narration brought the works of Turkish novelists closer to their European counterparts, and therefore to European reading audiences. The opening up has also been reflected in the topics Turkish authors pick up. According to Seyhan, contemporary Turkish authors have “explicitly or implicitly expressed a strong unease with the rupture in the Ottoman Turkish cultural legacy that modernization and Mustafa Kemal Atatürk’s reforms brought about” (2008: 6).

### **9.3 Perceptions of Turkish Identity in Britain**

The Turkish identity has traditionally been assigned the role of “the Other” in the European collective psyche. This perception is the result of political rivalries, which caused the foregrounding of cultural difference. Recently, however, the intensification of intercultural relations have led to a multiplication of discourses in the public sphere.

As the Ottoman Empire started to pose a real political threat to Europe from 16<sup>th</sup> century onwards, it embodied the whole Muslim identity as the point of contact to the Muslim peoples. Already by the 15<sup>th</sup> century, the word “Turk” had become synonymous with “Muslim.” Making their way through the Balkans, Turks were now unwillingly considered European in the political realm, but their cultural identity remained strongly non-Western. Later political and economic interactions, and travellers and missionaries taking trips to the Middle East contributed towards a more informed understanding. Also, Christianity was no longer unified under Catholicism, which meant that the absolute contrast between the two cultures no longer existed. The cosmopolitan spirit promoted during the Renaissance increased curiosity about Eastern peoples’ cultures and daily lives (Rodinson 2002: 3-82). According to Edward Said (1979), Turks were included in the popular anti-Arab and anti-Islamic prejudice in the West. Although Turks have never been formally colonized by Western powers, the lands that make present-day Turkey have been the object of imperialist intentions: “The Eastern Question,” as it was called in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, referred to the dividing up of the ailing Ottoman Empire. From Said’s discussion of the Ottoman Empire and the Eastern Question, it is clear that Turks have politically and culturally been Europe’s Other.

The press plays an important role in shaping the popular perception regarding foreign cultures. For centuries, the Ottoman Empire and Turkey have

been an important consideration in European politics, and have found coverage in the British press. Paul Auchterlone (2001) in his research on 19<sup>th</sup> century British press, found the representation of the Middle East in the media to be a continuation of the Orientalist theme. In his study of 10 of the most influential periodicals between 1876-1885, he points out that the concept of racial and cultural superiority was a dominant theme on the coverage of Middle Eastern affairs. The author scanned 353 news articles on the Middle East, North Africa and Islam, and found that 124 of these dealt with the Ottoman state and the Eastern Question. Among the commentaries covering these topics, some of them adopted an Orientalist approach towards Turkish ethnic and cultural identity. Auchterlone's quotations from specific texts exhibit racist views ranging from "originated nothing, improved nothing," "untutored nomad" to "cruel and mischievous" and "animal." Auchterlone concludes that the periodicals "tell us more about Britain in the late nineteenth century than they do about the Middle East or Islam" (Auchterlone 2001: 24).

The media today would like to see themselves as providing multi-dimensional portrayals of events and countries but in the last few decades, there have still been certain themes highlighted in their coverage of Turkey. Christopher Brewin (2000) argues that in the 1990s, issues concerning democracy and human rights in Turkey have attracted considerable amount of attention from the British press. According to Brewin, topics such as corruption, political instability, concentration of newspaper ownership have been emphasized in a Turkish context although it is known that such problems also exist elsewhere (Brewin 2000: 99). The Turkish welfare system is found to be lacking, and Islam figures as a threat to gender equality in Turkish society. Brewin discusses the misunderstandings regarding Turkish interests in the Cyprus problem and discusses images of Turkey as "militaristic, undemocratic, rough on Kurds, with laws that are incompatible with the protection of human rights" (*ibid*, 102). Similarly, in his study on selected Anglo-American travel accounts, novels and films, Kamil Aydın (2003) finds recurrent themes. Aydın surveyed popular texts from late 20<sup>th</sup> century such as Billy Hayes and William Hoffer's *Midnight Express* (novel 1977, film 1978), Paul Theroux's *The Great Railway Bazaar* (1975) and William Dalrymple's travelogue *In Xanadu: A Quest* (1989), and found that the Turkish identity has been associated with negative activities like religious conspiracy, military coups, drug dealing, terrorism,

antiques smuggling, political espionage, genocide and torture. He argues that certain themes and genres are linked; for example, drug dealing and antiques smuggling are prevalent in thrillers. According to the author, images of tyranny, such as the harem eunuch, or the brutal Turkish soldier or policeman still haunt the British imagination, and in works of fiction members of the Greek and Armenian communities are portrayed as victimized subjects. Sensuality, exoticism and homosexuality also help produce popular stereotypes in Western European and North American films, where images of Turkey and of Turkish people have been deliberately or unknowingly distorted. Aydın associates such representations with enduring Orientalism.

In the 1990s and 2000s Turkey's cultural and political identity was questioned and negotiated through discussions on its accession to the EU. In 2004, Turkey was formally accepted as a EU candidate, and a number of criteria were put forward (see Yeşilada 2002). European powers including France, Germany and Austria did not welcome the prospect of Turkey joining the EU. According to David L Phillips, Christian Democrats in Europe oppose Turkey's accession on grounds that it would mean "importing problems from the Middle East" (Phillips 2004: 96). Turkey, under the mildly Islamist AKP government sought to build alliances in the Middle East as well, which lead some commentators to believe that Turkey is being distracted from its European goal. An article in *The Economist* in 2009, for example described Turkey's foreign policy as "juggling different worlds, be they Arab or Jewish, Muslim or European, with ease" (*Economist* 2009a). These discussions on Turkey's political identity have had repercussions on the popular imagination. Apart from the political, economic and military advantages and disadvantages of Turkey's membership, opposing views have also encouraged members of the public to consider whether Turkey should be considered part of the EU, and, by implication, whether Turks should be considered Europeans.

Other factors brought Turkey closer to the European collective identity. For example, Turkey for several decades has been a popular destination for European – particularly British – tourists, who enjoy sun and beach trips to the southwest coast. Similar to the way that European travellers to the Middle East in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries found opportunities for cultural contact, these tourists meet Turkish people in their daily lives. Some encounter a "westernized" Turkish population in holiday resorts, with dressing styles and

daily lives not too different from the average European. However, they also enjoy the exotic forms of entertainment that Turkey has on offer to the Western tourist.

The AKP government under Recep Tayyip Erdoğan has received more media coverage than preceding governments, both with their domestic and international policies. Overall, the AKP government faces much less anxiety than an Islamist government might do. They have attempted to tackle some of Turkey's longstanding problems – the headscarf ban, the recognition of Kurdish identity, etc. Several European newspapers and news magazines have lauded AKP's endeavours as a commitment to democracy. Moreover, with extensive public relations activity, Erdoğan has managed to build an amenable image of an Islamist for himself. He might be argued to represent Islam in its spectacularized form, from his wife's dressing style, his lavish dinner receptions during Ramadan and his keenness to erect more and more mosques in the touristic areas of Istanbul. Alev Çınar (2005) argues that AKP belongs to a not traditional, but modern breed of Islamism that manifests itself in daily practices ranging from dress to ceremony and architecture. This modern Islamism has wider appeal to the rest of the world today, and has been integrated into the marketing of literature from Turkey, as we will discuss below.

These changing social dynamics have challenged the preconceptions surrounding Turkish identity. The position of the Turkish identity vis-à-vis the British Self has been negotiated on various levels for some time, and although not in a continuum, it is probably safe to argue that the image of "the Turk" is generally improving.

#### **9.4 An Overview of Turkish Fiction in English Translation**

According to translation scholar Saliha Paker, translations from Turkish have functioned as mediators of culture for the English-speaking world, through texts and paratexts: "critical/biographical introductions, explanatory notes, glossaries, pronunciation guides, not to mention anthologies, individual collections, contributions to literary magazines, critical reviews, bibliographies, public readings, and last but not least the business of finding publishers" (Paker 2000: 623). The first translation from Turkish to be published in the UK was E. J. W. Gibb's poetry collection titled *Ottoman Poems, Translated into English Verse, In the Original Forms with Introduction, Biographical Notices, and Notes*,

in 1882. Paker (2000) argues that in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, translations were limited to specialist, often Orientalist interest, and were usually done by academics. This reflects the way in which Turkey was discussed in public discourse in the period, as Auchterlone (2001) points out in his study of the British press. The first novel to be translated and published in the UK, Reşat Nuri Güntekin's *The Autobiography of a Turkish Girl* appeared in 1949. Individual authors and poets were translated into English in a haphazard way until the works of poet Nâzım Hikmet and novelist Yaşar Kemal started to dominate the Turkish presence in the UK literary scene.

Turkish novels have been chosen for translation on the basis of their verisimilitude, or authenticity. The translations of Village Literature consequently enjoyed an enthusiastic reception in the English-speaking world, partly because these novels were treated as ethnographies. Mahmut Makal's *A Village in Anatolia*, translated into English in 1954, for example, offered a glimpse of rural Turkey for a reading public that knew very little about Turkish society (Seyhan 2008: 85). Later, Yaşar Kemal's work gained popularity and became the main representative of Turkish literature in the UK. His novels, especially *Memed, My Hawk* (1961) and its sequels, speak to a Western readership that is ready to embark on a reading voyage akin to a geographical/anthropological enterprise. The *Memed, My Hawk* tetralogy are set in the harsh reality of rural Anatolia, and contain beautiful descriptions of the landscape as well as the dire poverty and the accompanying social pressures:

The night was full of the moist scent of pine, heather, moss, wormwood, and sweat. In the sky one or two stars were twinkling (Kemal 2005: 132).

In all of sixteen long years Big Ahmet had never suffered any injury. In sixteen years of brigandage he had killed only one man, the man who had tortured and raped his mother while Ahmet was away from home doing his military service (*ibid*, 56).

One grows up, develops, matures according to one's soil. Memed grew on barren soil. A thousand and one misfortunes prevented him from ever growing to his full height. His shoulders no longer developed, his arms and legs were like dry branches. Hollow cheeks, dark face, charred by the sun... His appearance was that of an oak, short and gnarled (*ibid*, 51).

In such accounts of the rural Middle East, the extremes of the human condition – what people are ready to do to overcome hunger, or to protect their honour – might actually be of more interest for a middle class Western European readership than descriptions of the wilderness. This might be called a rural sort of exoticism for the “anthropological gaze,” accompanied by a nostalgia for “simpler times,” in contrast to Orhan Pamuk’s urban exoticism. Yaşar Kemal is the most translated Turkish author today: between 1961 and 1997, Collins Harvill published 11 of his novels. However, interest in his novels started to wane in 2000s and Harvill discontinued the books.<sup>70</sup>

The main trend in the West has been to translate and publish mainstream works or those that have gained recognition in Turkey. However, Paker (2000) points out that due to changes in the norms governing literary taste in Turkey and abroad, there have been significant omissions, such as Yakup Kadri Karaosmanoğlu, Melih Cevdet Anday, Sabahattin Ali, Oğuz Atay and Yusuf Atılgan. She adds that another factor hindering translations has been the constant evolution of the Turkish language, which has deterred non-native speakers of Turkish from undertaking translation projects (*ibid*, 623).

Between the years 1990 and 2013, 27 novels, six short story collections, one collection of essays, one travel writing collection, four memoirs and 16 poetry collections were translated from Turkish and published in the UK. Moreover, three magazines have dedicated individual issues to Turkish literature (See bibliography in Appendix 5).

### **9.5 Turkish Literature in the UK Today**

It may be argued that, up until the 1990s, British – and other European – publishers’ selection criteria for translation matched the general perception of the Turkish identity. In other words, patriarchy, religious conservatism, and other themes that allowed an Orientalist representation were preferred. However, starting from the last decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the selection focused on novels that portrayed the Turk as “torn between the East and the West.” Therefore, it was the liminality of modern Turkish society and culture that attracted attention. Saliha Paker argues that essentialism still persists, as these

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<sup>70</sup> NYRB Classics, a US based publisher, published two of Yaşar Kemal’s novels in 2005. These books are in distribution in the UK as well.



representations operate on an “either/or level” and leave no room for agency on the part of the Turkish identity (Paker 2004: 6).

Today, translations from Turkish literature are available from a wide range of publishers representing different tastes and position-takings, including Faber & Faber, Serpent’s Tail and Shearsmans. All these publishers display the cosmopolitan dispositions that the publishers of international fiction attach to themselves. From a publishing perspective, Faber’s acquisition of Orhan Pamuk’s (1990) *White Castle* from Carcanet in 2001 can be seen as a turning point for Turkish literature in the UK, since the publication of his eight books in quick succession by an established literary publisher led to greater market penetration and higher visibility. However, due to the small number of translators and publishing professionals who are able to work on Turkish texts, and – except for a few authors – the limited revenue these titles bring, publishing Turkish translations still remains a labour of love for publishers. A relatively marginal literature like Turkish literature relies on the symbolic value produced by editors, translators and reviewers.

The repertoire of modern Turkish literature has been underrepresented in the British literary market. This is due to the fact that there are strong centrifugal forces in place in the UK literary system, and along with other peripheral literatures here, Turkish literature has been marginalized and foreignized. Only a few Turkish authors are widely known, and although novels are more visible than other forms in the market, Turkish literature generally suffers from invisibility in the UK. According to translator Maureen Freely, the biggest obstacle in the way of Turkish literature in the UK is the lack of interest. She is optimistic, however: “The lack of interest had entirely to do with the place of Turkey in the world during most of the twentieth century, most especially during the pre-Özal<sup>71</sup> years. Recent political, social, economic changes, along with the rise of tourism in Turkey have led to a re-awakening interest (Freely 2010).

The popularity of Turkey as a tourist destination has encouraged some publishers to translate and publish books for the armchair traveller, mentioned in chapter 8. Pete Ayrton of Serpent’s Tails finds this a good marketing niche: “I think that this was one of the reasons that we published Mehmet Somer. Obviously it would be some sort of alternative approach to Istanbul and, gay

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<sup>71</sup> Turgut Özal, the liberal eighth president of Turkey between 1989 and 1993, he also served as prime minister between 1983 and 1989.

Istanbul, and we would hope that people going there for a holiday might be interested in buying the book etc” (Ayrton 2009). He also believes that display arrangements that encourage associations between literature and tourism, as discussed previously, are helpful:

You’ve probably seen the Daunt’s shops, these are successful bookshops in London, they classify their books according to countries, so, they have Turkish literature, and guidebooks and so it’s obviously sort of organized on some kind of lifestyle and going to Turkey or whatever country for a holiday (Ayrton 2009).

Well-known Turkish novelists appear in author events in the UK. Most of these are initiated by publishers, as in the case of Faber and Faber and Marion Boyars, whereas some are part of literary festivals. Considering the importance of event-based marketing, such events are crucial for of introducing Turkish authors to the British readership. However, there may be different reasons for readers to attend these events. For example, in the past, when Orhan Pamuk and Elif Shafak were invited to do author signings, most readers attending the events would be Turkish people living in the UK. Strategies to promote contemporary Turkish authors to the British readership include arranging author events with better-known authors writing in the same genres or using similar themes, as discussed earlier.

The UK publishing industry magazine *The Bookseller* featured a special report on Turkish literature and publishing in its September 2008 issue for the forthcoming Frankfurt Book Fair, where Turkey would be the Guest of Honour. This article was titled “Turkish Delight,” accompanied by a photo, presumably from Istanbul, featuring two domes in the foreground, and two minarets and another dome in the background. The article opens with a mention of how the Turkish publishing industry is plagued by censorship issues. The author refers to the “Western preoccupation with Turkey’s troubles,” and goes on discuss piracy in the Turkish book trade. We learn that British readers are now becoming more familiar with Turkey; however, the author believes that “even with increasing familiarity, the comparative lack of political stability, pressure from radical Islamic groups and the spectre of censorship has a negative affect [sic] on Turkish writers abroad” (Tivnan 2008: 21). *The Bookseller* is an important source of information for publishers in the UK, and although the article refers to some Turkish authors, it is more about Turkey than Turkish literature.

The way the problems of the publishing industry are highlighted here could be enough to colour British publishers' expectations when walking through the Guest of Honour aisles in the book fair. Therefore, although more translations appear on the British book market, there is still limited interest to Turkish literature. Furthermore, certain themes that are employed in order to legitimize Turkish literature serve to marginalize it.

### **9.6 New Trend After 2005**

There has been a new and promising trend regarding the promotion of Turkish literature since 2005. In this year the Turkish Ministry of Culture and Tourism initiated the TEDA Translation Subvention Project, aimed at promoting Turkish literature abroad. On the Ministry website, the purpose of the project is explained as “to merge Turkish cultural, artistic and literary spirit with the intellectual circles abroad, and also to orient people to the sources of Turkish culture, art and literature” (TEDA 2006).

The project has had considerable success, although not particularly with British publishers. In Britain, only 28 publishers have received the subsidy by June 2012 (2.3% of all subsidized translation projects), whereas the figure for the USA, another Anglophone literary culture, is 47 – almost double the number. The book market in the USA is also driven by sales and market-orientation; however, compared to the UK, multilingualism is a more essential aspect of the society in the USA, which creates an awareness of linguistic heterogeneity. The highest number of subsidies have been claimed by German publishers – 194 – which is due not only to the strong tradition of literary translation in German-speaking countries but also to the fact that there is a sizeable Turkish community in Germany: some of these subsidies have been claimed by publishing houses run by Turkish-Germans in Germany. However, if we look at France, directly comparable to the UK as a large publishing industry with access to internal publishing subsidies, we find a figure of 43. Nevertheless, this project has created awareness among British publishing houses, and 14 literary translation projects have been funded through TEDA (see Appendix 6). An equally important milestone the following year was Orhan Pamuk's receipt of the Nobel Prize in Literature. This generated wide media coverage worldwide, as numerous newspapers and literary magazines quoted the Nobel Academy announcement that Pamuk “in the quest for the melancholic

soul of his native city, has discovered new symbols for the clash and interlacing of cultures” (Engdahl 2006). This prestigious award had a knock-on effect on Turkish novelists. Since 2006, 25 works of literature have been translated into English and published (in book format) by British publishers, and several more are currently being translated. Moreover, British publishers who represent Turkish fiction have become more varied, and now include Arc, Bitter Lemon Press, Eland, Penguin, Peter Owen, Rockingham, Saqi, Seagull and Telegram.

More recently, in 2008, Turkey was the guest of honour at Frankfurt Book Fair, which is the largest industry event worldwide for publishing. The Turkish Ministry of Culture and the Publishers’ Association organized panels to discuss aspects of Turkish literature, and invited authors to do readings. Booklets giving overviews of modern Turkish literature were distributed, and international publishers met their Turkish counterparts in the Guest of Honour pavilion and the Rights Centre. Müge Sökmen, the organizer of the Turkish Publishers Association’s presence at the Book Fair, explains the benefits of being the Guest of Honour:

When we went over to talk with publishers [...] they would say ‘Oh he’s too modern’ ‘Too Western’ or “I already had a Turk last year’ as if all the Turkish authors were one and the same, as if they all had [a certain message to give]. [...] So FBF was a really a big opportunity for us to be able to show that there was a variety of authors from Turkey, which should be read as Literature and which is not less (Sökmen 2009).

Sökmen went on to explain that previously, the choices of European publishers were guided by what they saw in each other’s lists. FBF 2008 for the first time gave Turkish publishers the opportunity to address European publishers directly. This industry event drew attention to Turkish literature internationally; for the first time Turkey received media coverage more for its literature than its politics (Sökmen 2009). All of these factors helped change European publishers’ approach to Turkey. Turkish literature has been removed from the Orientalist literary ghetto in which it was previously confined.

The way publisher Peter Owen looks at Oya Baydar’s *Lost Word* (2011), which the publishing house recently published, exemplifies this new attitude. According to editor Simon Smith, as well as being aware of the cultural situatedness of the novel, the publisher was interested in the more universal themes explored, rather than pursuing any local colour. They are mainly aiming

at a cosmopolitan reading audience, rather than people with a touristic interest in Turkey:

I think what appealed to us about the Oya Baydar book was [that] it's not exclusively Turkish, in the sense that it takes place in other parts of Europe, as well as in Turkey, it includes large elements of the Turkish-Kurdish situation [...] The whole point of the book, and certainly the book's title is the metaphor for the lack of dialogue between peoples, as well as an individual losing his writer's voice. [...] That seemed to be something we could work on to get people to look at it.

[...] It's a hook that we can hang a book on and something that people might recognize and think they want to learn more about. [...] Oya Baydar seems to be in a tradition [...] of dissident voices from the 70's and 80's perhaps, which is again something that people with a liberal conscience in Western Europe might pick up on. [...] That sort of gives it an added weight, without it perhaps being [...] too specifically Turkish, if you like. [...] It's a way in, for people from the outside (Smith 2009).

Notice here that Smith seems to pitch the book to a market segment he defines as "liberal" readers, instead of those who have enjoyed touristic visits to Turkey. His approach to the book is the opposite of taking Turkish novels as symbolic expressions of Turkish identity.

This new trend found has been reflected in media coverage and reception as well. Before the UK edition of Pamuk's latest novel, *Museum of Innocence*, was published, *The Economist* featured a review of the USA edition. The review, which bears the disappointingly old-fashioned title "Turkish Delight," draws attention to its local themes:

Pamuk [...] has conjured up a circle of characters who are driven by anxieties about Turkishness and modernity, authenticity and imitation. The people in his book aspire to Western mores in a place they feel to be peripheral and second-rate. These tensions, both secret and destructive, govern sexual passion and convention, and the possibility of happiness.

Although the Istanbul bourgeoisie holds engagement parties in the Hilton hotel, and old money sniffs at "parvenus from the provinces" with their headscarved wives, the sexual revolution has not yet arrived. In a society that is obsessed with women preserving their virginity until a marriage is at least in prospect, it is notable that both women yield to Kemal, though at some cost to themselves (*Economist* 2009b: 103).

One can here notice the emphasis on the liminality of the Turkish identity, torn between the East and West. The latter section also suggests a fascination with Islam and the Orient. The discussion on the work of Pamuk will below will make it clear how the novelist plays to the expectations articulated in this review. The tone and outlook of this piece can be best explained by the fact that *The Economist* has a wide target audience, and is not a specialist literary magazine.

We might contrast this piece with one that appeared in *the Financial Times* (Gurria-Quintara 2006). The article, titled “Literary Licence,” is penned by Angel Gurria-Quintara, who is a well-established literary reviewer. Here Gurria-Quintara juxtaposes translations of Dante and Virgil, Anthony Briggs’s new retranslation of Tolstoy’s (2005) *War and Peace*, and Maureen Freely’s retranslation of Orhan Pamuk’s (2006) *Black Book*. He quotes from Freely’s afterword to her translation and tries to give a nuanced picture of how Freely differs from Güneli Gün, the translator who translated the book before Freely, in her preferences on syntax. Although *the Financial Times* is comparable to *The Economist* in its contents and outreach, we find that the former does more service to the author than the anonymous review in the latter. Therefore, a book review is the result of the interaction between several agents, including the author, and the book in question, and how these are positioned in the receiving literary culture, the target audience of the magazine or journal the background of the reviewer, and their position-takings.

The patterns of reception regarding modern Turkish literature are now fragmented and varied, since Turkish literature is more visible worldwide. It is yet too soon to investigate the implications of this shift of attitude on popular reception; however, hoping that the new trend will create a “pull” from the British book trade, we might expect a parallel change in patterns of reception.

### **9.7 Book Covers**

Chapter 6 introduced book covers as paratexts and discussed the Orientalist cover of *2 Girls* (2005) in detail. Given the popular perceptions of Turkishness in Britain, other Turkish novels, from the realist tradition, have often been presented to the readers with covers that convey social and cultural settings in symbolic, and often metonymic representations. The covers designed for the novels of Orhan Pamuk, the most widely known Turkish author

internationally, have had their share of such symbolism. For example, the first cover designed for *The Black Book* (1994) contained the crescent and the star. The later version makes use of Istanbul scenes dotted with mosque silhouettes. On the cover of *Snow* (2004), we can see another mosque in the background. The cover of this book has been changed in 2010, and the new one contains even more explicit cultural symbols. This will be discussed later.

Covers of not only literary fiction titles, but also crime titles from Turkey contain religious motifs, unlike Eurocrime books, which have been mostly packaged according to the mainstream crime-fiction genre conventions in the UK, as noted before. The cover designed by Serpent's Tail for *The Prophet Murders* (2008a) contains the illustrations of the Blue Mosque and Hagia Sophia in Istanbul, painted with red lipstick. This suggests a full application of Orientalism – feminization of the whole culture, combined with mysterious spirituality and eroticism. Penguin has called this trilogy “Turkish Delight Mysteries,” and on the cover of *The Kiss Murder* (2008b), we see the historical peninsula silhouette again, imposed on a dome-shaped frame. Serpent's Tail's *Gigolo Murder* (2009) cover features the same mosque silhouettes as *The Prophet Murders*, but in the background, along with Islamic art patterns. Finally, Penguin has designed a retro cover for the same book, with a water pipe on a coffee table.

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Fig. 9.1. The covers of the *Hop-Ciki-Yaka* Trilogy: *The Prophet Murders* (May 2008 Serpent's Tail), *The Kiss Murder* (Dec 2008 Penguin), *The Gigolo Murder* (Aug 2009 Serpent's Tail, Sept 2009 Penguin).

The mosque pictures that find their way to the covers of translations from Turkey also relate to the touristic interest in the country. There are other book covers, however, designed to go with Turkish novels, that do not refer to Turkey either as a location or a culture. Latife Tekin's books, which belong to the magic

realist tradition, have been packaged with culturally neutral covers. The cover of *Dear Shameless Death* (2001) features an illustration of a girl on a rooftop; the main visual on the cover of *Swords of Ice* (2007) is a photo of crushed old cars. As with other book covers, we can see here that certain images have been used to indicate genre associations: it is no coincidence that *Swords of Ice* has been described as “nihilistic” and that its cover has this imagery that suggests destruction. Actually, judging from the dark complexion of the girl on the cover of *Dear Shameless Death*, and the pull-out that compares the book to the work of Gabriel García Márquez, the cover may be said to have South American connotations. As such, the cover is almost culturally disorienting. This cover design is not only less place-specific than those discussed above, but it also appeals to a different sort of exoticism: that with a left-wing, liberal streak. Therefore, the book cover would have undertones of “the global south” for the politically aware.

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Fig. 9.2. Covers designed for *Dear Shameless Death* (2001), *Swords of Ice* (2007) and *Berji Kristen* (1993) by Latife Tekin.

These books were published by Marion Boyars, an independent publishing house run by a family. Before going out of business in 2009, Marion Boyars produced niche books and the editor, Catheryn Kilgarriff, was personally involved with all book projects. The story behind the cover of *Berji Kristen*, part of the trilogy with *Dear Shameless Death* and *Swords of Ice*, shows the level of involvement: Kilgarriff explained she took photographs of the *kilims* in her house, which she had bought during her honeymoon in Turkey, and their designer used the image to create cut-out figures (Kilgarriff 2009).

The marketing strategies employed by UK publishers demonstrate that Turkish literature is presented to the readers in contexts marked by a variety of



discourses. Parallel to the new trend in the promotion of Turkish literature worldwide, for the first time in 2010<sup>72</sup> a Turkish novel was published with almost the same cover as in the original. *The Museum of Innocence* features the cover designed by Orhan Pamuk for the Turkish edition. This example illustrates how Turkish literature was elevated to the status of “world literature” for British publishers. The only difference between the cover images is that the picture on the Faber and Faber edition has been made to look like an old photograph through a special effect. This vintage look evokes nostalgia, and perhaps melancholy as well.

In 2010, *Snow* was incorporated into a series called “Revolutionary Writing” by Faber. According to the publisher’s website, this series “celebrates provocative political fiction from around the world” (Faber and Faber 2010). This is a loose connection to bring together a variety of novels: *A Fine Balance* by Rohinton Mistry (2010), *The Black Album* by Hanif Kureishi (2010), *The Children of Men* by P. D. James (2010), *Leviathan* by Paul Auster (2010), *GB84* by David Peace (2010), *The Feast of the Goat* by Mario Vargas Llosa (2010) and *The Last King of Scotland* by Giles Foden (2010). This strategy seems to have been motivated by a desire to tap into the appeal of subversive literature in this literary culture. *Snow* has been repackaged with a cover that features domes from a mosque, white crescent and star on red background, and three figures, one of which is clearly wearing a headscarf. The contrast between the white, black and the vivid red on the new cover convey clashing ideologies. Notice here that a few of the other book covers also contain symbols.

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Fig. 9.3. An advertisement for the Revolutionary Writing Series by Faber and Faber, in Waterstones’ book magazine *Books Quarterly* (issue 37, 2010, page 57).

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<sup>72</sup> The US publisher Knopf published the first English edition of the *Museum of Innocence* in 2009, which was available in the UK as well. A year later, Faber and Faber released the UK version that carries almost the same cover as the Turkish edition.

There certainly is a pleasure to be derived from reading material that has been labelled “revolutionary.” If reading novels set in different geographies can be called “armchair travel” reading such books could be seen as “armchair revolutionary activism.” This sort of reading would encourage readers to imagine themselves as doing their bit to help make world a better place.

In chapter 6, we saw how publishers and booksellers use book covers, blurbs and display arrangements to attract prospective readers to their products in ways relevant to the contents of the books. After an examination of covers designed for translations from Turkish, it emerges that the packaging and the wider marketing strategies for books are determined by a combination of several factors. The author’s perceived identity – together with their literary standing – the publisher’s, or the bookseller’s dispositions, and the targeted audience all contribute to the specific marketing mix of a title.

### **9.8 Trends in Literary Production: Orientalism, Autoethnography and Anti-Conquest**

Contemporary Turkish authors who aim for international recognition tap into the trend of consuming novels as exotic or ethnography. Some of them may be said to pay special attention to the discussion of issues like religion, tradition, nationalism, history etc. In this section, we will focus on Orhan Pamuk as an author who has responded to the patterns of reception outlined above.

Pamuk is known as a novelist of the Western literary tradition; he is usually referred to in conjunction with Mann, Faulkner, Borges, Joyce, Dostoyevsky, Proust and Nabokov. However, he chooses to explore local themes and peppers his novels with quotations from the Qur’an and allusions to the *Arabian Nights* (1960). When coupled with the fact that he was educated in an American college in Turkey and attended the Iowa International Writing Program to improve his creative skills, he almost comes across as a Western novelist writing about Turkey. In his book *The New Orientalists*, Ian Almond discusses the work of Orhan Pamuk within the context of Orientalism, mainly through his engagement with religion as a theme in his novel *The Black Book* (1994). He argues that in Pamuk’s text, Islam is synonymous with melancholy and resignation (Almond 2007: 111). He quotes Pamuk (2007a) from one of his essays in *Other Colours*, where he explains that Islam for him is only a literary source and that in his daily life he is guided by the principles of rationalism.

Pamuk admits to two selves: a Western, secular, pro-Enlightenment rationalist, and an alternative self, implicitly Eastern, more closely linked with feelings and pleasure. Pamuk's attitude towards Islam in *The Black Book* will reflect this precarious dualism: on the one hand, the secular Orientalist and cynical non-believer will expose the myths of various Islamic traditions. [...] On the other hand, the vanquishing of such traditions [...] will leave a sadness and sense of regret in Pamuk's more sensitive, unrational (Eastern) self. To a certain extent, these twin-poles of East-West, Feeling-Reason, Spirit-Matter are represented by the figures of Galip and Jelal: Jelal the cynical, clever columnist whose not-quite-opposite is played by the tortured, melancholy figure of his cousin, Galip (Almond 2007: 113-14).

Pamuk's treatment of religion in his novels might be different from how he orients himself in life, yet in *The Black Book*, he does not portray Islam within a power structure. *The White Castle* (2009 [1991]), on the contrary, provides an autoethnographical perspective to the Ottoman society as heavily influenced, and even held back, by religion. Here I am using the concept of autoethnography put forward by Mary Louise Pratt:

instances in which colonized subjects undertake to represent themselves in ways to *engage with* the colonizer's own terms. If ethnographic texts are a means by which Europeans represent to themselves their (usually subjugated) others, autoethnographic texts are those the others construct in response to or in dialogue with those metropolitan representations (Pratt 1992:9, emphasis in original).

*The White Castle* revolves around the relationship between a Venetian slave and his Ottoman master, Hoja. Readers are encouraged to look at Hoja and Ottoman society through the eyes of the Venetian, who represents the West in the novel. He believes in rationality, and aspires to be a scientist and teaches Hoja about Western science and technology:

It was then that I taught him what a table was. When I brought home the piece of furniture I'd had made by a carpenter according to my specification's, [sic] Hoja was not pleased. He likened it to a four-legged funeral bier, said it was inauspicious, but later he grew accustomed both to the chairs and the table; he declared he thought and wrote better this way (Pamuk 2009 [1991]: 25).

Through his dealings with local scientists, the Venetian slave observes the culture of science in the Ottoman Empire, which is yet to gain independence from religion and supernatural beliefs and practices. This passage illustrates the portrayal of religion in the novel:

From whence, did the magnet derive its power, other than from God? What significance was there in the hither and thither of the stars? Could anything be found in the customs of infidels but infidelity, anything that was worth knowing? (Pamuk 2009 [1991]: 88).

At the end of the book, the Venetian scientist and Hoja make a sophisticated machine to be used on the battlefield, but the soldiers in the Ottoman army shy away from using the “war machine” because they are worried it will bring them bad luck.

In *The White Castle*, another concept that presents itself is anti-conquest, again from Pratt:

strategies of representation whereby European bourgeois subjects seek to secure their innocence in the same moment as they assert European hegemony. [...] The main protagonist of the anti-conquest is a figure I sometimes call the “seeing man,” an admittedly unfriendly label for the white male subject of European landscape discourse – he whose imperial eyes passively look out and possess (Pratt 1992: 9).

In *The White Castle*, readers are lead to sympathize with the Venetian slave, since he strives to bring practical novelties to the use of the Ottomans. However, with his accumulation of knowledge from the Italian scientific tradition, he is deemed superior to his Ottoman counterparts. Hoja looks up to him, and the protagonist derives a certain satisfaction from his political power.

In an interview published in *The Paris Review*, Pamuk explains why he wanted to explore this theme in the novel:

[The] theme of impersonation is reflected in the fragility Turkey feels when faced with Western culture. After writing *The White Castle*, I realized that this jealousy – the anxiety about being influenced by someone else – resembles Turkey’s position when it looks west. You know, aspiring to become Westernised and then being accused of not being authentic enough (*The Paris Review* 2005: 131).

The *Museum of Innocence* (2009) also offers interesting perspectives that could be interpreted as autoethnography (cf. Gün 1992: 62). Unlike what

Ian Almond argues in relation to the *Black Book*, Pamuk here clearly asserts a Turkish identity (albeit a Westernized one), endeavours to explain Turkey and make it accessible for international readers. According to his translator Maureen Freely, “No writer could be more rooted in his culture than Pamuk” (Freely 2006). Pamuk does not try to divorce himself from his Middle Eastern background, and actually this is what gives this book authenticity and the status of an insider’s insights. In an interview with Mark Lawson for *Books Quarterly*, he states that “[t]his is not a historical novel. I saw the events in it: I lived it, experienced it. In fact, of all my novels, this is the one most full of details that I experienced” (Lawson 2010: 83). In the novel, Kemal the protagonist assumes the role of a traditional anthropologist:

Eventually, I thought about how I might describe what Füsün meant to me to someone who knew nothing about Istanbul, Nişantaşı or Çukurcuma. I was coming to see myself as someone who had travelled to distant countries and remained there for many years: say, an anthropologist who had fallen in love with a native girl while living among indigenous folk of New Zealand, to study and catalog their habits and rituals, how they worked and relaxed, and had fun (and chatted away even while watching television, I must hasten to add). My observations and the love I had lived had become intertwined (Pamuk 2009: 496).

Pamuk’s observations on modern Turkey from the voice of his protagonist are intended as unmediated expressions of authenticity. The novelist has even named a chapter of this book “Anthropological Truths.” This chapter is organized into six subcategories, explaining what happened when couples engaged in pre-marital sex in 1970s Turkey. Here, the topic is presented in a highly structured and objectified manner. Moreover, the norm in Westernized circles is idealized in an evolutionist perspective:

In wealthy Westernized circles, just in the case of Sibel and me, there was a general tolerance of young unmarried people who were sleeping together if they had proven themselves to be “serious,” either by formal engagement or another demonstration that they were “destined for marriage” (Pamuk 2009: 61-62).

Pamuk has opened an actual eponymous museum to display the objects mentioned in the novel (see Batuman 2012). Museums have been regarded as the institutionalized forms of cultural translation, presumably also what Pamuk is

aiming at with this book project. The English translations of the novel contain a map of Çukurcuma in Istanbul, with the exact location of the museum marked. The Museum of Innocence, which is the culmination of almost three decades of work, provides a glimpse of life in the 1970s to contemporary Turks and international tourists, which reinforces the aspect of autoethnography. This novel suggests anti-conquest as well. Although Kemal represents the local identity, he plays the role of the anthropologist who presents a view of Turkey from the perspective of the West, which is one source of legitimate innocence on his part. At the same time, he claims his innocence by suggesting at times that his Westernized Self is victimized by the rigid Middle Eastern social structure, especially regarding his relationship with Füsün. European superiority looms in the background: “In Europe the rich are refined enough to act as if they’re not wealthy. That is how civilized people behave” (Pamuk 2009, 219).

Pamuk’s novels involve interesting inflections of identity, and East and West. The thrill of reading a novel comes from a willing suspension of disbelief (Coleridge 1907: 6) for the consumer of the fictional world in the book. However, when it is the element of foreignness in a work of literature that the reader enjoys, if they cross that imaginary threshold to actually become that character, the plot will no longer seem interesting. Pamuk’s careful construction of identities enables readers to still assume their Western self as a negative identification involving the East (“not the East”) and take subject positions in relation to the plot elements – key to understanding the appeal of his work. Most Pamuk novels feature a Westernized figure that the Western reader can identify with, which helps them toy with the question of how they would act if they were transposed into an Oriental context. This is certainly most obvious in the *White Castle*, which has a Westerner as protagonist.

*Snow* (2004) presents a different case than the rest of the books discussed here. Apart from an asymmetrical power relation between Europe and Turkey, one can speak of an internal Orientalism in this novel by virtue of the novel’s representation of the east of Turkey. Here, the West is embodied in the character of Ka, the secular, rational and Westernized Turkish poet who has been living in Germany. The northeastern province of Kars is depicted as a remote and cut-off place, where secular Kemalists<sup>73</sup> stage a coup in theatre,

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<sup>73</sup> In a nutshell, Kemalism represents the secular, republican, nationalist ideology of the founder of the Republic of Turkey, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk (1881-1938).

almost in an anachronistic way. Jordi Tejel Gorgas (2009) writes of a territorial and cultural space in the East of Turkey, constructed by Kemalist Turkey and characterized by otherness and backwardness. Similarly, *Snow* locks Kars in a political and cultural pocket.

We have discussed Pamuk's treatment of identity in his novels, and now I would like to point out another element that calls for an Orientalist reading. Pamuk describes himself as a visual writer. In a panel in 2007 Hay Festival, he makes this distinction between visual and dramatic novels: "There are dramatical novels, like Dostoevsky, and there are visual writers: Homer, Proust, Nabokov, and I consider myself a visual writer" (Pamuk 2007b). He adds that for him, a literary scene is not a clash of dramatical wills, but a composition of atmospheric descriptions, which makes the reader feel that they are inside the scene. Therefore, he pays special attention to describing minute details: "To set the mood, to see the characters, we have to see the objects, the colours, and the atmosphere that they're surrounded with" (*ibid*). In his novels, Pamuk uses elaborate physical descriptions, which are conducive to an Othering visualization, since description presupposes unfamiliarity. Moreover, his narrative is highly atmospheric and sensual, which can be firmly established with a study of *My Name is Red*. For example: "The smell of offal coming from these places had wafted over the valley, which extended to the vaguely discernible domes of the Eyüp Mosque and its cypress-lined cemetery" (Pamuk 2002: 113).

Moreover, the author makes a point of drawing the reader's attention to these descriptions with such introductions as "Allow me the amusement of describing the sounds I'd heard in Enishte's house" (Pamuk 2002: 139) and "Let me describe for you how our embrace might've been depicted by the master miniaturists of Herat [...]" (*ibid*, 179). This way, Pamuk gives his readers a wide spectrum of sensual experiences, and since his novel is set in the past, these experiences serve to stimulate the readers to go on an imaginative voyage to exotic Istanbul (see Iser 1980: 135-159).

The novel contains quite a few depictions in the Orientalist tradition. This whole paragraph, which takes up more than one page in the book, describes the protagonist visualizing what he sees in a miniature book. The passage gives a true sense of a "spectacle":

There before me I saw people scrambling for hundreds of bowls of pilaf that were placed in the Hippodrome; I saw the live rabbits and birds emerge out of the roast ox and startle the crowd that descended upon it. [...] I saw glaziers embellishing glass with carnations and cypresses as they paraded before our Sultan in a wagon; confectioners reciting sweet poems as they drove camels laden with sacks of sugar and displayed cages holding sugar – parrots; and aged locksmiths who showed off a variety of hanging locks, padlocks, dead bolts and gearlocks as they complained of the evils of new times and new doors. [...] In one wagon I saw precisely how Sea-Captain Kılıç Ali Pasha had forced the infidels he'd captured at sea to make an "infidels' mountain" out of clay; he'd then loaded all the slaves into the cart, and when he was right before the Sultan, he exploded the powder within the "mountain" to demonstrate how he'd made infidel lands wail and moan with cannon fire. I saw clean-shaven butchers wielding cleavers, wearing rose- and purple-colored uniforms and smiling at the pink carcasses of skinned sheep hanging from hooks. The spectators applauded lion tamers who'd brought a chained lion before our Sultan, provoking and enraging it until its eyes shone blood-red with rage; and on the next page, I saw the lion, representing Islam, chase away a gray-and pink pig, symbolising the cunning Christian infidel" (Pamuk 2002: 69).

These descriptions are reminiscent of 19<sup>th</sup> century Orientalist paintings, as discussed in chapter 6. This is a popular aspect of the book that readers enjoy and reviews on this novel also praise *My Name is Red* for its exotic qualities. According to Amazon.co.uk, this novel was the best-selling Turkish novel in the UK in 2011. A quick glance at the blurb reveals the UK publisher's motive in selecting this title for publication. The novel is described as "a thrilling murder mystery," "also a stunning meditation on love, artistic devotion and the tensions between East and West." A quote from Philip Hensher's (2001) review in the *Spectator* reads "It is a wonderful novel, dreamy, passionate and august, exotic in the most original and exciting way."

To conclude, there are signs of Orientalism, autoethnography and anti-conquest in the novels of Orhan Pamuk. If his Nobel Prize for Literature in 2006 secured a place for him in the cosmopolitan world canon, he's countering this status by asserting Orientalist autoethnography. His symbolic egalitarian acts – his criticism regarding the treatment of ethnic minorities in Turkey, his Nobel speech in Turkish – are defied by strategies of "staged marginality" (see Huggan 2011: 83-104) that he employs in his novels. By all means, he displays what Bourdieu (1996) calls *illusio*, or a "feel for the game" and a belief in the value of its stakes. His novels circulate internationally as cultural products for cosmopolitan consumption, speaking to sentiments of anti-conquest on the part



of the readers, who embrace egalitarianism but are at the same time conscious of the status that such cosmopolitan consumption brings them.

### **9.9 Media Coverage and Popular Reception**

By looking at the images and statements representing Turkish literature, produced in an effort to reach consumers in a market-oriented literary culture, one might still think it's a literature of Turkish delights and domes and silhouettes. These motifs recur in reviews and other representations. According to Alev Adil, certain cultural and political issues remain popular among reviewers of Turkish literature, which leads her to conclude that the literary élite in Britain force a burden of political signification upon Turkish writers (Adil 2006: 120). The freedom of expression has been picked up by some, as Orhan Pamuk, Elif Shafak and Perihan Mağden have been tried under Article 301 of the Penal Code. The charges against Pamuk were later dropped, and Shafak and Mağden were acquitted. This theme is more pronounced in reviews of Orhan Pamuk's novels and it seems to be one of the factors that have raised his visibility by giving him "journalistic capital" (English 2002). In *Snow* (2004), he alludes to the mass killing of Armenian civilians by the Ottoman army in 1915. He has also, with his various public acts and statements, expressed criticism of the Kemalist project in Turkey and the official interpretation of Turkish history. In 2005, in an interview for a Swiss magazine, Pamuk said "Thirty thousand Kurds have been killed here, and a million Armenians. And almost nobody dares to mention that. So I do" (*Das Magazin* 2005). He was subsequently prosecuted under Article 301, which dictates that anyone who explicitly insults the Turkish nation, the Republic of Turkey or its main institutions shall be punishable by imprisonment. Other interviews with provocative statements have gained him further prestige, or in Bourdieu's terms, symbolic capital. Such an image does not escape reviewers, who like to mention the fact that Pamuk now lives in New York after receiving death threats. For some time, he found more coverage in the UK media for his political stance than his literature. Today, he occasionally gives interviews on social matters in Turkey, and contributes to international periodicals on these topics.

Another, and actually more prominent element is ethnographic representation. Reviews tend to emphasize how the works of contemporary Turkish novelists depict Turkey and Turkish society and culture, and capture

Turkish identity. Reviews of Orhan Pamuk's books praise the physical descriptions, with an emphasis on exoticism. Adam Shatz, in his review of Pamuk's work in the *London Review of Books*, explains that Pamuk's depictions of Istanbul – "as a palimpsest, a maze of signs that can never be fully deciphered – accounts for much of the West's fascination with Pamuk" (Shatz 2010: 15). Shatz's comment indicates that there is still an exotic interest in Turkish literature, maybe more reminiscent of Maxime Rodinson's work on the mystique of Islam (2002) than Edward Said's *Orientalism* (1979). Almost invariably, reviews treat Pamuk's novels as social commentaries. For example, Sarah Smith, in her review of *The Museum of Innocence* for the *Literary Review*, writes: "This is a cornucopia of a work, as rich in its details of the life of his home city as the memoir *Istanbul*, which it in some ways mirrors; as deep in literary conceit as the bestselling *My Name is Red*, and as caustic in social commentary as the extraordinary *Snow*" (Smith 2010: 69). Liminality is also a popular theme. Adam Schatz in his review comments on the characters in Pamuk's novels: "Galip [the protagonist of *The Black Book*] is one of the luckier characters in Pamuk, transported to the shores of a stable identity [...]; most are left hanging, swinging between East and West, between the mosque and the mall" (Shatz 2010: 16).

Although successful Turkish authors are compared with the masters of world literature – Orhan Pamuk with Mann and Dostoevsky, and Latife Tekin with Marquez and Beckett – Turkish literature has mostly been received with reference to a "local" context, as opposed to the supposedly universal French and Russian classics, for example, as exploring "universal themes." In an interview for the *Paris Review*, Orhan Pamuk describes this situation as: "When Proust writes about love, he is seen as someone talking about universal love. Especially at the beginning, when I wrote about love, people would say that I was writing about Turkish love" (*Paris Review* 2005: 140). The subject of Pamuk's resentment in this interview seems to form an important aspect of the novel he published four years later: as explained above, *The Museum of Innocence* tells of Turkish love, with a specific claim to authenticity. The reason why Western readers cannot acknowledge Pamuk like Mann and Dostoevsky might be that, as the Shatz quote above suggests, he does not allow his characters much agency. Unlike Yaşar Kemal, who deliberately portrays his protagonists as wilful and strong characters, Pamuk avoids this, which

condemns his literature to subalternity. The lack of agency is probably the most significant mark of the autoethnographic quality of Pamuk's writing, along with the themes of Orientalism.

The popular reception of modern Turkish fiction more or less follows the same lines as media reception. Readers profess cosmopolitan dispositions in relation to the reading of Turkish books, but the cultural encounter experienced during the reading process activates various discourses depending on the readers' background and orientation. As the various examples in the previous chapter illustrate, patterns of reading Turkish novels include treating it as ethnography, social commentary or informal history. Literary difference is again brought up in relation to difficulties following the plot or enjoying the book. Although many readers enjoy descriptions of Turkey and Turkish society, not all of them find the treatment of such themes engaging. One reader thought that the *White Castle* was tedious: "No, please, I don't want to read any more of those vague descriptions of vague mental torments." Similarly, another reader found *Snow* disappointing, because there was not much gripping action in the plot. She complained: "It was a book about snow, snow, snow and snow and snow" [...] I think that's the only book I've left unfinished because it was so dull." Although the plot in this novel is complicated enough to keep readers engaged, the pace of narration is slow, mirroring the slow passage of time in this small, remote city covered in accumulating snow. Moreover, the white emptiness is described time and again to evoke a sense of melancholy, as can be sensed in the following passages from the book:

How beautiful, this falling snow. How large the snowflakes were and how *decisive*. It was as if they knew their silent procession would continue until the end of time. The wide avenue was buried knee-deep; white and mysterious, it climbed up a slope and disappeared into the night. There wasn't a soul in the beautiful three-storey Armenian building that now housed the city council. [...] Ka passed an empty, one-storey Armenian house, its windows boarded up (Pamuk 2004: 166-167, emphasis in the original).

With the black dog following close behind, Ka walked back to the hotel, savouring again the empty beauty of the snow-covered streets. [...] As he waited, he thought first of his mother, but soon his thoughts turned to İpek, who had still not arrived. [...] More time passed and still there was no sign of İpek (*ibid*, 216).

There was a long silence. Kadife took out a handkerchief and wiped her eyes. [...] High in the sky, a plane was passing. They all raised their eyes to the upper panes of the window, staring at the sky, and listening.

“Planes never fly over here” said Kadife (*ibid*, 240).

As the snow resumed, Turgut Bey grew nervous – part of him wanted to go to the Hotel Asia and part of him didn’t (*ibid*, 248).

Another reader found the *Museum of Innocence* long and repetitive: “endless copulation.” He admitted that he left it unfinished as well.<sup>74</sup> To sum up, the reception of Turkish novels by my sample did not show many differences from the way readers read and interpreted novels from other national literatures. The discourse of Orientalism often emerges as the manifestation of local specificity theme for Turkish culture. The foregrounding of heterogeneous language use and the literary difference in negative evaluations regarding the textual-linguistic dimensions of the novels is common to book group meetings on translations from all source languages if members do not have a literary orientation and display conservative aesthetic attitudes.

### **9.10 Translator Profile: Maureen Freely**

After examining the work of an acclaimed Turkish author in detail, we will now turn our attention to the role of the literary translator. Literary translators mediate professionally not only between the author and the target language publisher, but also between the source text and the target language audience. The discussion in this section will reveal how the mediation has a cultural and a linguistic dimension, which complement each other.

Maureen Freely is the translator of *Snow* (2004), *The Black Book* (2006) and *The Museum of Innocence* (2009), all written by Orhan Pamuk and published by Faber and Faber in the UK. She has also translated a collection of essays and a memoir by Pamuk, and a memoir by Fethiye Çetin, for Verso. Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar’s *The Time Regulation Institute*, which she co-translated with Alex Dawe, will be published by Penguin in 2013. Freely is a journalist and novelist herself, and has published six books up to now. However, in literary circles, she is as well-known – if not more – as the Nobel laureate’s

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<sup>74</sup> It should be noted, however, that some Turkish readers also find the *Museum of Innocence* long and repetitive (see Server 2009).

translator as she is known as an author and journalist. According to Gouanvic, “[t]he translator benefits from the symbolic capital invested in the original work, published in the source society” (2005: 161-162). In the case of Freely, the translations of Pamuk novels have added to her fame and prestige. Her main publisher, Faber and Faber, buys titles together with Knopf in the USA, which means that her translations of Pamuk are published at the same time in the USA by Knopf. These books are copy-edited by the editorial team at Knopf.

Freely’s ideas on translation are informed by her work as a novelist, journalist and literary critic (Freely 2006: 145-146). As a writer, she attaches great importance to voice and rhythm. Consequently, these are the elements that she is careful about in her translations. She describes herself as someone “translating by ear” (*ibid*, 148). Her *habitus* as a novelist in the Anglo-American literary field has led to her preference for target-orientation, which may explain given the success her translations enjoy today. Adam Shatz, in his comprehensive review of Pamuk’s work in English for *The London Review of Books*, explains how Freely’s translations have rendered Pamuk’s fiction accessible for the English-speaking readership:

Pamuk writes long, ornate sentences [...] In English, especially in Maureen Freely’s translations (she is herself a novelist), Pamuk’s prose is pared down and simplified, given a pleasingly legible surface that makes it look at home in the *New Yorker*. There are difficulties to contend with in the English translations, but they are seldom at the level of the sentence (Shatz 2010: 15).

The 2010 paperback edition of *The Museum of Innocence* bears quotes highlighting the fluency of Freely’s work: “Her work has been praised as ‘fluent and lucid’ (John Updike in *the New Yorker*) ‘seamless’ (*Observer*) and ‘so fluent that you have to keep reminding yourself that it is a translation at all’ (*Independent*)” (Pamuk 2010). In this respect, Freely’s strategy is in line with the primacy of fluency in the evaluative judgements of readers, as we explored in chapter 7. However, the flip side of her endorsement of target orientation has been that Orhan Pamuk has felt the need to put a note of acknowledgement in the book<sup>75</sup>, thanking a Turkish translator “for ensuring fidelity to the Turkish text” (Pamuk 2009). This strategy is an example of how authors try to

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<sup>75</sup> The note is included in the acknowledgements page of the 2010 edition as well as the 2009 edition.

counterbalance readers' perception that translations lose from the original if they comply with the target language.

Because Turkish literature and Turkish culture are not widely known in the UK and US, Maureen Freely has had to assume the role of an intercultural intermediary, explaining elements of Turkish culture to editors, correcting misunderstandings and providing guidance. In her article "Cultural Translation," she defines her role as that of a "cultural envoy" (Freely 2006). She was particularly sought after by her UK publisher when Orhan Pamuk was tried for denigrating Turkishness and was under the spotlight both in the Turkish and international media. Faber and Faber received numerous questions about their author, and they did not know exactly how to react to this attention, let alone explain it as such laws do not exist in the UK. During this difficult period, Freely advised the editors at Faber and endeavoured to avoid any misunderstandings (Freely 2010).

In an interview broadcast on BBC Turkish, Freely made clarifications about the plot of Pamuk's *Museum of Innocence* (Abakan 2009). In general, the novel tells of a Middle Eastern society that is in the process of Westernization. In the interview, she cautioned that English speaking readers might take what is depicted in the beginning of the novel to be a Western society, whereas she believes that 1980s Turkey is not Western – or not yet Westernized. Here she also recounted a conversation she had with the American editor of *the Museum of Innocence*. In one scene early in the book Kemal, the protagonist, returns a ladies' handbag to the shop where he'd bought it – Şanzelize (Champs-Élysées). There, he complains that the bag he bought for his fiancé is fake. The shop assistant, Füsün, is a distant cousin of his, he met her a few days ago for the first time in years, and has feelings for her. After her customer's angry remarks, Füsün bursts into tears in front of him and the shop owner. Freely explained that the editor at Knopf found this scene to be contrived and shared his opinion with her. Later at a personal interview Freely told how she had to explain how it would be "terribly humiliating for her because it was the family connection and they were the poor relatives" (Freely 2010). In Freely's experience, such cases have had implications for translation strategies as well, since the extent of domestication or foreignization (see Venuti 2008: 1-34) had to be determined based on (perceived) cultural difference. In this instance, Freely and the editor worked together to create a tone in the English text that

would convey this distance: “It couldn’t sound completely English or completely American, you had to be correct. But there would be this slightly unfamiliar feel to it” (Freely 2010). As we saw with the example of the reader who did not find the English translation of Murakami’s *Norwegian Wood* sufficiently “Asian” in chapter 7, readers expect a congruency between cultural difference and literary/linguistic difference. Chapter 7 also discussed British readers’ resistance to American English in translated novels. On the other hand, the discomfort that readers expressed with word choice, narration and footnotes in translated novels clearly shows that foreignizing strategies can provoke textual-linguistic intolerance. Therefore, Freely seems to be trying to find a middle ground, in line with readers’ expectations.

Freely stated that her editor did not see linguistic difference as a problem for *Snow*, which was set in the eastern province of Kars. “It was easy with *Snow* because it’s remote. People make a lot of allowances for something taking place so far away from the Western world, but here are these people [in *The Museum of Innocence*]: they’re drinking whiskey, they’re having their engagement parties at the Hilton, they’re driving Chevrolets, and they’re going to Paris to shop, and going skiing... So looks like they’re living like us, so then the expectations are going to be that they are. But they aren’t, so how are we going to do that?” (*ibid*) The “us” here indicates the upper class perspective that is assumed to come from (a homogeneous) West. This mediation role seems to give the translator power, as she has the privilege of access to the source culture.

She remembered a misunderstanding regarding a passage in *Snow* and pointed to the gap of knowledge on the part of the copy-editor: “The fireman’s telling the story about the coup, I translated ‘to the sad strains of the saz’<sup>76</sup> and [the editor] corrected that ‘to the sad strains of the sax.’” Another example from *My Grandmother* (2008), the biography/memoir by Fethiye Çetin, again translated by Freely: “The *anneanne*<sup>77</sup> is telling the sad stories, at the saddest point of the conversation, she’s lost for words and Fethiye goes to make her a frothy [Turkish] coffee. She likes the way she makes and brings it. And the editor changed that to cappuccino. You know, this is in Ankara, in 1979... I just wrote back ‘There are no cappuccinos in this grandmother’s life.’ That gives you

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<sup>76</sup> Saz is a long-necked plucked string instrument, somewhat similar to the lute, played in Middle Eastern folk music.

<sup>77</sup> Means “grandmother” in Turkish.

such an idea of the problem” (*ibid*). Espresso-based coffees have been consumed in large cities in Turkey for a decade now, but as Freely suggests, making this character drink cappuccino would be both anachronistic and incompatible with her provincial background. Gouanvic holds that translators have a “bi-cultural” *habitus* owing to the intermediary nature of their profession (2005: 147). Freely’s *habitus*, however, is not only of a bi-cultural language professional, but also one that involves a great deal of asymmetry between the two cultures, which results in an imbalance of power between the relative amounts of “cultural” knowledge between the parties, i.e. the translator and the editor.

The translator went on to explain that there was a more profound misunderstanding on the part of the editor when she was working on this memoir. The sensitive topic of the Armenian Genocide has been dealt with in a manipulative way in official Turkish histories, including history textbooks. The mass killing is not covered in a mainstream Western account like Bernard Lewis’s (1961) *The Emergence of Modern Turkey* either. The events of 1915 have only recently been opened to public discussion in Turkey. Freely quotes the editor at Verso: “Fethiye Çetin is a human rights lawyer and she’s involved in all these things. She grew up in Maden, but, is she stupid or what? All of these things happened just there and she doesn’t know that they happened.’ And that really alarmed me, really really alarmed me, the easiness of the assumption that Fethiye would be stupid. In fact, how can you understand the book or what it’s about if you don’t have that understanding. In that case, I talked them into doing an introduction but then I did the introduction in consultation with Metis [the original publisher]” (*ibid*). Chapter 8 illustrated readers’ desire to learn about foreign cultures while reading translated novels. Freely’s position of explaining cultural details therefore, fits in with readers’ preference for the reading mode, although the gatekeepers – publishers – have concerns about her paratextual visibility.

As a result, we can see how this translator’s *habitus* has motivated her practice, or her decisions as a translator, and how the dynamics of the literary field have in turn shaped her *habitus*. As the crucial link in the communications circuit (Darnton 1982) of a translated book, the translator mediates between the meaning structures of the source and target cultures. Freely’s communication with her editors signals the idea that all world literature is provincial, which



would increase the importance of location and local background knowledge. Locality is highlighted in translations from other national literatures as well, as we saw with the examples of Russian – LBF market focus in 2011 – and German – the popularity of Hans Fallada’s (2010) *Alone in Berlin*. However, the foregrounding of locality in a national literature like Turkish creates asymmetry because Turkish/Ottoman history is seen to be peripheral while Russia and Germany are locations where “world history” took place.

### **9.11 Conclusion**

This chapter traced the production and reception of modern Turkish fiction in the UK, from late 19<sup>th</sup> century to today. The selection criteria for Turkish novels was in line with the perceptions of the Turkish identity for much of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and the reception of this literature has also been defined by this pattern. However, recent international developments, especially the increasing popularity of Orhan Pamuk novels have initiated important shifts. With his autoethnographic work, Pamuk has resisted the centrifugal power by playing the game by its rules. Paradoxically, he has exhibited agency as a writer from a marginal literature while, at the same time, denying his fictional characters agency. Moreover, he has invested in his symbolic capital to initiate a centripetal force for his work. Other developments, originating from the UK or from Turkey, have meant that other works of Turkish literature are following trajectories that are more defined by agency. In the various discussions above, we saw that the patterns of production and consumption have fragmented and multiplied.

Within the wider context of the research, this case study illustrates how literary and cultural representations of Other identities are influenced by popular perceptions. In fact, perceptions of the source culture are reflected in many stages of the communications circuit (Darnton 1982), from title selection to packaging and promotion, reviews, and last but not least, consumption. Moreover, patterns of reception and representation are also inflected by the *habitués* of the producers of meanings and values. This follows Appadurai’s (1990) argument on how intercultural exchange in the age of globalization takes places in a multi-layered fashion, and is also in line with Latour’s (1987, 2005) framework on the collectivity of agents in a social network.

What this case study also demonstrates is that the cycle of understanding translated literature as expressions of cultural specificity, as a result of the value orientation of the literary market in the UK, encourages autoethnographic literary production. Production, promotion and consumption feed into each other through a convergence of interests. Although an egalitarian cosmopolitanism is idealized in literary production and consumption, translation often brings about metonymic constructions of cultures. This is the case with the experiences of authors from other national literatures, including those writing in English.

## 10 Conclusion

This study analyzed the discourses on identity in the production and consumption of translated literature in contemporary Britain, highlighting the points of convergence. Based on data gathered through ethnographic methods, the thesis looked at how translated novels are presented to prospective consumers and how they are then read and interpreted by middle class, engaged readers.

Reading is and has been an integral part of cultural consumption in Britain. It has been an effective means of identity formation, both on the individual and collective level. Looking at how readers and publishers display taste preferences in reading and title selection, book consumption and book production also come across as distinguishing practices. Reading has both pleasure and status implications, and we saw with the discussions in chapters 2 and 4 that these two aspects may collide or overlap in various ways. The pleasure and status implications of books are exploited by producers, promoters and readers to varying degrees. The findings indicate that with translated fiction, exoticism and Orientalism are a major source of pleasure whereas status is generated by cosmopolitanism. However, readers with less literary capital and with a conservative literary taste may push the aesthetic dimension of the textual-linguistic features of translated novels to the background. Some readers even display resistance and intolerance towards texts that have gone through linguistic transference if they do not understand the literary translator's need to find a compromise between adequacy and acceptability. This is partly so because the literary culture in Britain relegates translations to second-order writing (Venuti 2008) while reviews and popular discussions on translated novels are dominated by a rhetoric of fluency and transparency.

Translated novels emerge as rarefied cultural products in Britain, which are invested with considerable symbolic power by producers, promoters and consumers. They are often placed in a context of cosmopolitanism; nevertheless, authors, publishers, reviewers, retailers and readers who marginalize cultural difference defy the egalitarian ethos, in that they, as seen in chapters 6, 8, and 9, showcase the exotic details of translated literature or enjoy these texts as imaginary spectacles that involve cultural stereotypes. Also clashing with cosmopolitanism is intolerance towards the textual-linguistic aspects of translated novels, as discussed above. The cultural encounter that

reading translated fiction enables may activate a range of discourses, including exotic interest, stereotyping, critical reception or self-reflexivity. Among the agents of production and consumption, discourses of cultural difference and linguistic heterogeneity often reveal positioning and orientation. Publishers and readers negotiate these two elements in line with their dispositions and interests. Examples from book group meetings and interviews with publishing industry professionals indicate that the tension that arises between the pleasure and distinction dimensions of literary products translates into a dilemma between exoticism and cosmopolitan egalitarianism in translated fiction. In the context of consumption, therefore, this dilemma crystallizes the anxieties of middle class, engaged readers regarding taste and identity, bringing to light one of the paradoxes of contemporary liberal middle class culture. These distinctive qualities in the production and consumption of translated fiction add salience to the professional view that translations symbolically constitute a separate genre.

Book consumption reinforces identity in many ways; on the individual level, through selective practices of taste, and positions adopted on social issues; on the collective level, through positive and negative identifications facilitated by cultural difference. In contemporary British book market, agents' strategies concerning cultural difference and linguistic transference prescribe the practice of other agents. The interaction between authors, publishers, translators, retailers, reviewers and readers is actually so strong that the contexts of production and consumption are fused. Therefore, in pointing out the complexities regarding the production and consumption of cultural products, the findings of the thesis resonate with the arguments of Arjun Appadurai (1990) and Ulf Hannerz (1992:26-36), who maintain that cultural exchange takes place in multidimensional ways in a globalized world. Analyses in chapter 5 and the case study in chapter 9 reveal that cultures that have traditionally been seen as peripheral provide a supply of exotic cultural products for Western consumers (Huggan 2001), who incorporate them into their cosmopolitan and omnivorous patterns of consumption (Savage *et al* 2010).

The thesis makes a number of methodological and thematic contributions to the existing literature on the production and consumption of books. One of them is establishing a strong relationship between readers' perspectives and those of the producers with a multidisciplinary approach. As we saw in chapter 6, marketing and promotion emerge as the link between the two sets of agents,

transmitting the meaning structures of producers to consumers, and relaying the consumption preferences of readers to publishers and authors. This framework brings together cultural sociology, media studies and literary studies in an integrated methodology envisaged by Griswold (1981), as mentioned in chapter 2. The study also points to the interaction between the various scales of public spheres (Habermas 1989). Notions of identity – as expressed in self-representations and constructions of the Other – and taste play out in differentiated discourses in line with the social norms of these various scales, for example, about reviewers anxious to demonstrate their cultural refinement in the press by finding fault with literary translations, and readers who make cultural stereotypes the subjects of their jokes in book group discussions. It has already been established by scholars of literary studies (Fuller 2008, Fuller and Procter 2009) that reading groups are a fertile ground to study the intersections of voluntary affiliations, and individual and collective identities constructed or affirmed through book consumption, but what this study proves is that, as micro public spheres, these reading communities also offer an opportunity to exchange ideas and alter beliefs. As illustrated in chapter 8, the interaction between members of book groups determines the orientation of the discussion, which in turn influences interpretation at the individual level by prompting readers to activate selected impressions, or memories from the text in question and bring up information previously obtained from the public sphere at large.

The strongest dimension of this thesis as far as the sociology of literature is concerned is its focus on the reading of translated fiction as a form of cultural engagement. It contributes to the development of prior literature by introducing a new line of inquiry. Sociological studies of literature have concentrated on the contextual and internal dimensions of texts, whereas this study sheds light on understandings of literary translation as an artistic process and as an aesthetic product. Readers' perception of linguistic transference has been explored based on ethnographic data; the concept of textual-linguistic intolerance has been identified, and linked to identity construction through taste, expanding the literature on exclusivity (see Bryson 1996) in cultural sociology. Moreover, the thesis applied Bourdieu's (1993, 1996) model on literary production to the production of fiction in translation, by taking into consideration the peculiar conditions of the literary translation industry.

As I have pointed out early on in the study, the novel as a literary form has been intimately linked with modernity (Watt 1957, Lukács 1962, 1971, Goldmann 1975). This modernity used to be embodied in a Western canon dominated by European literature; however, there have been significant shifts, although European and North American fiction still seem to hold higher legitimacy today. The analysis here reveals that the production and consumption of translated novels are characterized by many qualities of post-globalization modernity. Therefore, the thesis discusses modes of intercultural communication in the context of cultural consumption, bringing together two areas of cultural research.

Research in literary studies has conventionally idealized canonical texts at the expense of popular genres. This study, on the other hand, approaches the consumption of all genres with an equally analytical perspective. In this discipline as well, scholars have been more interested in the content of literary texts. The thesis extends existing research in this area by identifying a hitherto unexplored topic: understandings of linguistic transference. While previous studies of reading and reception have mainly focused on one discourse of intercultural communication, such as cosmopolitanism or Orientalism, I have endeavoured to present a nuanced picture of responses elicited by the cultural encounter of reading fiction in translation.

The study also contributes to translation studies by concentrating on readers' translatorial action. Holz-Mänttari's (1984) influential model of translatorial action mainly sees translation as professional text production (by translators and other language experts); however, by pointing out the productive outcome of readers' agency in structuring the practices of other agents in the life cycle of translated novels, this study highlights the importance of incorporating readers within the holistic framework of translatorial action. In translation studies, the reception of translated fiction has traditionally been understood as the aesthetic judgements of elite readers. This research represents a change of focus in this sense, which necessitated the use of ethnographic methods. Moreover, the research area known as the sociology of translation mainly deals with conditions of production but with this thesis, I took a step towards a sociology of reading translations.

In media studies, the present project furthered the literature on the consumption and production of books as media. On the production side, it took

into account issues such as financial and symbolic capital. On the consumption side, it extended the discussions on the possible uses and gratifications (see International Publishing Corporation 1975) of print material. Previous analyses on the products of the media have approached the subject area from the perspective of a single function, but my study was aimed at incorporating the information and entertainment benefits of books. As such, this research squarely fits in with the flourishing discipline of publishing studies and makes an important contribution to it on the production and consumption of translated literature.

Despite the persisting problems of exoticism and Orientalism, translating literary works is to be seen as generally desirable, particularly as it entails cultural translation as much as linguistic translation, as we have seen in the case of Maureen Freely. Then one of the policy implications of the research is that more funding should be made available to smaller independent publishers and imprints so that they can allocate the required amounts for the translation fee and marketing budget. Moreover, it seems that raising the profile of literary translation and encouraging more foreign language learning might decrease readers' mistrust of translated texts. The 20<sup>th</sup> century has witnessed the rise of global languages, but translation theorist Michael Cronin aptly observes that translation "has as much vested interest in distinctness as in connectedness," because "without separateness there is nothing to connect" (2006: 121). Consequently, Cronin invites translation scholars – not only those working on linguistic transference, but those addressing wider intercultural communication as well, I believe – to campaign to protect and promote linguistic diversity. Literary culture in Britain is sophisticated; publishers have strong brand identity and engaged readers are knowledgeable on genres and influential literary movements. If readers could build recognition for literary translators in the same way as they have their favourite authors, the symbolic boundaries for avoidance could be reduced to unknown translators. This could be achieved through more reviews discussing the work of literary translators, more translator interviews published in the popular media, and more events with translators alongside authors.

As noted before, research on literary consumption is a relatively unexplored area in cultural sociology. Further empirical research could build on the outcomes of this study by investigating other aspects of reading. The

research design behind this project did not foreground demographic factors such as gender, age, ethnicity and geographical location; therefore, issues of textual-linguistic intolerance and intercultural communication could be explored through quantitative methods in relation to these. One possible line of future research is investigating the same topics in the consumption of other media, such as dubbed and subtitled films, subtitled plays, or international music. Issues of taste could be then analyzed in the context of the perceived positioning of these cultural products in the aesthetic scale. The case study on Steig Larsson's (2008) *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo* could be expanded to connect the various agents in the production and consumption sides of the analysis, encompassing both the translated novel and the film. The present survey could be fine-tuned to attend to the differences in the policies of large/conglomerate publishers and small/independent houses and imprints. Moreover, the professional relationships between publishers/editors and literary translators could be analyzed using Bourdieu's (1993, 1996) model. Finally, this study could be replicated in other social contexts, for example in literary cultures with a stronger tradition of translation, in multilingual societies or in countries with less complex transnational connections. Such contrastive analyses could provide insights on the influence of linguistic heterogeneity on aesthetic positions in literature and on issues of political tolerance. Moreover, other industries could be examined in terms of publishers' role of cultural mediation, e.g. Turkish-German publishers in Germany or manga publishers in France.

To sum up, this research looked at the book culture of contemporary Britain, focusing on translated fiction. It analyzed issues of identity in the practices of publishing and consuming novels translated from other languages. Hopefully, it shed some light on this aspect of the book market in Britain and provided insights into what Todorov called an "unknown" activity (Todorov 1980:67).



## Appendix 1 – Consent form for focus groups and interviews

### GUIDE INFORMATION/CONSENT FORM FOR FOCUS GROUPS / INTERVIEWS

#### Title of Research Project

The Production and Consumption of Translated Novels in Britain

#### Details of Project

This project is about novels translated from other languages into English. I am trying to find out if there are any patterns in the ways these books are produced by publishers and read by British people. I am a PhD student at Exeter University's Department of Sociology, so my project can be seen as a research on the sociology of translation. The data that you provide will be used solely for this project. I do not have any commercial interests in doing this research. The results of my research may be published later as a book or as articles in academic journals.

#### Contact Details

For further information about the research or your interview data, please contact:

Perihan Duygu Tekgul, Department of Sociology, Exeter University, Devon UK,  
[P.D.Tekgul@exeter.ac.uk](mailto:P.D.Tekgul@exeter.ac.uk).

If you have concerns/questions about the research you would like to discuss with someone else at the University, please contact:

Dr Matthias Varul (Department of Sociology, Amory Building, Rennes Drive,  
Exeter, Devon, EX4 4RJ, 01392 263283, [M.Z.Varul@ex.ac.uk](mailto:M.Z.Varul@ex.ac.uk))

#### Confidentiality

Interview tapes and transcripts will be held in confidence. They will not be used other than for the purposes described above and nobody but my research supervisors will be given access to the recordings and transcripts (except in the case of legal subpoena). However, if you request it, you will be supplied with a copy of *your* interview transcript so that you can comment on and edit it as you see fit (please give your email below). Your data will be held for 10 years on an anonymous basis, and in accordance with the Data Protection Act.

#### Anonymity

Interview data will be held and used on an anonymous basis, with no mention of your name.

#### Consent

I voluntarily agree to participate and to the use of my data for the purposes specified above. I can withdraw consent at any time by contacting the interviewer.

**TICK HERE:**

**DATE**.....

*Name of interviewee*:.....

*Signature*: .....

*Signature of researcher*.....

2 copies to be signed by both interviewee and researcher, one kept by each

**Appendix 2 – Ethics Certificate from the University of Exeter, College of Social Sciences and International Studies (formerly School of Humanities and Social Sciences)**



SCHOOL OF HUMANITIES  
AND SOCIAL SCIENCES  
incorporating the Institute of Arab and Islamic Studies

SCHOOL OFFICE  
Amory Building  
Rennes Drive  
Exeter  
UK EX4 4RJ

Telephone +44 (0)1392 263301  
Fax +44 (0)1392 263305  
Email [huss-schooloffice@exeter.ac.uk](mailto:huss-schooloffice@exeter.ac.uk)  
Web [www.exeter.ac.uk/huss](http://www.exeter.ac.uk/huss)

**CERTIFICATE OF ETHICAL APPROVAL**

School/Academic Unit:

Department of Sociology and Philosophy, School of Humanities and Social Sciences,  
University of Exeter

Title of Project:

Exotic encounters in B format

Name(s)/Title of Project Research Team Member(s):

Perihan Duygu Tekgul

Project Contact Point:

Email: [p.d.tekgul@exeter.ac.uk](mailto:p.d.tekgul@exeter.ac.uk)

Brief Description of Project:

The aim of this proposed research is to investigate how translations enter, are received and represented in the British literary market today. The research will use as an exemplary case novels translated from contemporary Turkish literature.

This project has been approved for the period

From: January 2009

To: August 2012

School Ethics Committee approval reference: 02.12.08/v  
(with amendment approved 11.12.09)

Signature..... *H. Farrimond* ..... Date..... *14<sup>th</sup> Dec '09* .....  
(Hannah Farrimond – Chair HUSS School Ethics Committee)

### Appendix 3 Focus Groups and Interviews

Focus Groups/Participant Observation						
Book (in alphabetical order)	Author	Genre	Source Country*	Source Language	Location (of the meeting)**	Reading Group**
2666	Roberto Bolaño	Novel	Mexico	Spanish	London	library reading group
<i>After Dark</i>	Haruki Murakami	Novel	Japan	Japanese	London	library reading group
<i>All Our Worldly Goods</i>	Irène Némirovsky	Novel	France	French	Southwest	library reading group
<i>Death of Ivan Ilyich and Other Stories, The</i>	Leo Tolstoy	Novellas	Russia	Russian	London	Waterstones reading group
<i>Glass Bead Game, The †</i>	Herman Hesse	Novel	Europe	German	London	Waterstones reading group
<i>Garden of the Finzi-Continis, The</i>	Giorgio Bassani	Novel	Italy	Italian	Midlands	Waterstones reading group
<i>Girl with the Dragon Tattoo, The</i>	Steig Larsson	Novel	Sweden	Swedish	London	library reading group
<i>Girl with the Dragon Tattoo, The</i>	Steig Larsson	Novel	Sweden	Swedish	South	Waterstones reading group
<i>My Grandmother</i>	Fethiye Çetin	memoir/ biography	Turkey	Turkish	Southwest	public reading group
<i>My Name is Red</i>	Orhan Pamuk	Novel	Turkey	Turkish	London	BBC event with readers
<i>Night Train to Lisbon</i>	Pascal Mercier	Novel	Switzerland/ Portugal	German	Midlands	Waterstones reading group
<i>Norwegian Wood</i>	Haruki Murakami	Novel	Japan	Japanese	Midlands	Waterstones reading group
<i>One Hundred Years of Solitude †</i>	Gabriel García Márquez	Novel	South America	Spanish	Southwest	library reading group
<i>Rainy Season</i>	José Eduardo Agualusa	Novel	Angola	Portuguese	Southwest	private reading group
<i>Sky Burial</i>	Xinran	memoir /travel	China/Tibet	Chinese	Southwest	library reading group
<i>Swords of Ice</i>	Latife Tekin	Novel	Turkey	Turkish	Southwest	private reading group
<i>Yacoubian Building</i>	Alaa al Aswany	Novel	Egypt	Arabic	Southwest	private reading group
<i>Yacoubian Building</i>	Alaa al Aswany	Novel	Egypt	Arabic	Southwest	library reading group
<b>Interviews</b>						
<i>Bête Humaine, La</i>	Emile Zola	Novel	France	French	Southwest	

<i>Dear Shameless Death</i>	Latife Tekin	Novel	Turkey	Turkish	Southwest	
<i>Girl with the Dragon Tattoo, The</i>	Steig Larsson	Novel	Sweden	Swedish	London + Southwest x2	
<i>Informants, The</i>	Juan Gabriel Vásquez	Novel	Colombia	Spanish	Southwest	
<i>Out Stealing Horses</i>	Per Petterson	Novel	Norway	Norwegian	Southwest	
<i>Palace of Desire, The</i>	Naguib Mahfouz	Novel	Egypt	Arabic	Southwest-London train	
<i>Snow</i>	Orhan Pamuk	Novel	Turkey	Turkish	Southwest x4	
<i>Suite Française</i>	Irène Némirovsky	novel	France	French	Southwest	
<i>Swallows of Kabul, The</i>	Yasmina Khadra	Novel	Afghanistan	French	Southwest	
semi-structured general interviews					Southwest, London, Midlands, Scotland	
<p>* This category refers to the country where the plot is set, rather than where the author is based – which is often the same as the former. Novels set in imaginary countries are marked with a †.</p> <p>** For reasons of ethics, book groups have been anonymized; therefore the “Location” and “Reading Group” categories give general information only.</p> <p>† Set in an imaginary place.</p>						

## Appendix 4 - Questionnaires

### Guess from Where?

#### The Book Cover Puzzle

This puzzle is part of a research project titled **The Production and Consumption of Translated Novels in Britain**, which focuses on ways novels translated into English from other languages are produced and read. This research is carried out by a PhD student at Exeter University's Department of Sociology, and the data that you provide will be used solely for this project.

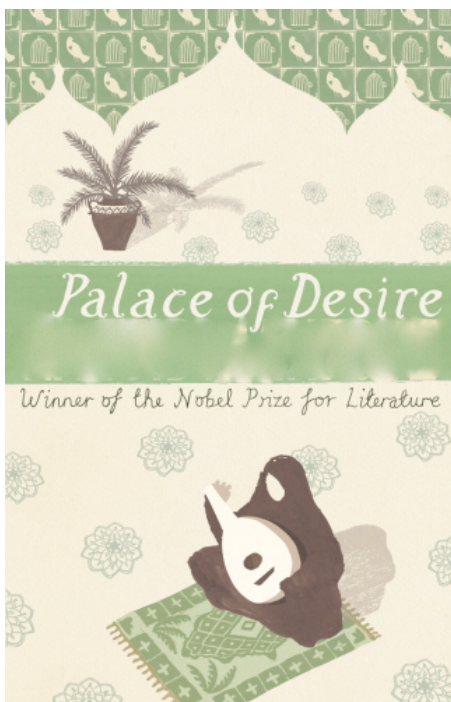
In this booklet, you will find 6 pictures of covers belonging to **books translated from various languages**. The names of authors and any national indicators have been deleted. For each book cover, you will be asked four questions:

- 1). Where do you think the book is from, and Why? Please write the name of the **first country or region that comes to your mind**.
- 2). What feelings and ideas does the cover arouse in you? You might say the book cover makes you think of "love" for example, or "poverty," "a new beginning," "death" etc.
- 3). What do you think the book is about? Using your imagination, please write a few sentences about the main characters, events etc; e.g. "this book could be about a boy who is searching for his lost parents ..."
- 4). Would you pick this book up in a bookshop?

If you have no idea where the book might be from, or what it might be about, feel free to leave the question sections blank.

[First Version]

1.



I think this book is from \_\_\_\_\_

because the cover features \_\_\_\_\_.

This book cover makes me think of

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This book could be about

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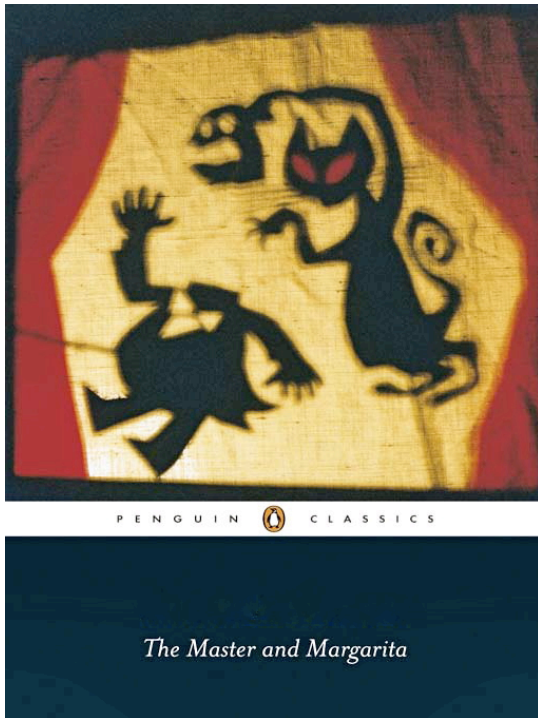
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Would you pick up this book in a bookshop?

2.



I think this book is from \_\_\_\_\_  
 because the cover features \_\_\_\_\_.

This book cover makes me think of

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This book could be about

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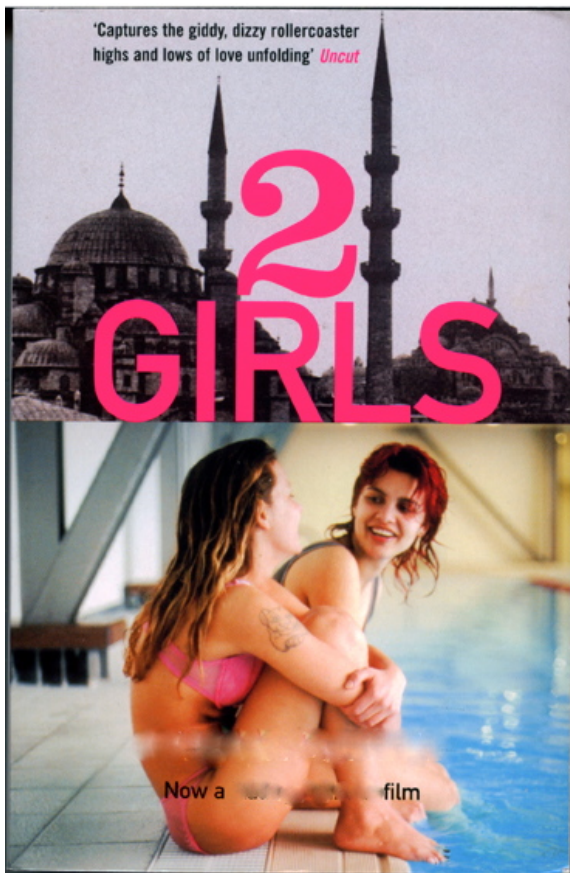
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Would you pick up this book in a bookshop?

3.



I think this book is from \_\_\_\_\_  
 because the cover features \_\_\_\_\_.

This book cover makes me think of

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This book could be about

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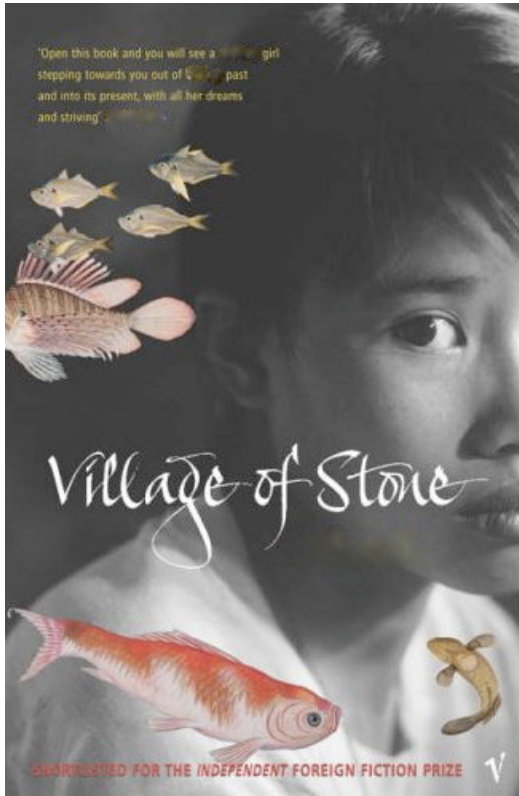
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Would you pick up this book in a bookshop?

4.



I think this book is from \_\_\_\_\_

because the cover features \_\_\_\_\_.

This book cover makes me think of

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This book could be about

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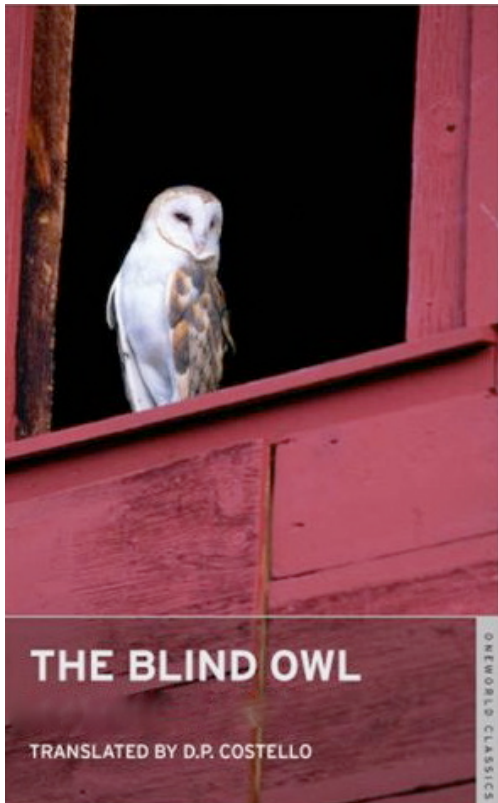
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Would you pick up this book in a bookshop?

5.



I think this book is from \_\_\_\_\_

because the cover features \_\_\_\_\_.

This book cover makes me think of

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This book could be about

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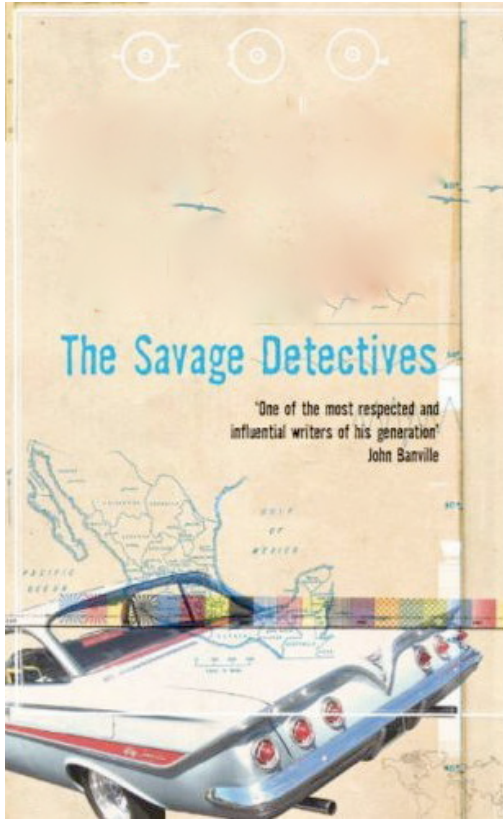
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Would you pick up this book in a bookshop?

6.



I think this book is from \_\_\_\_\_

because the cover features \_\_\_\_\_.

This book cover makes me think of

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This book could be about

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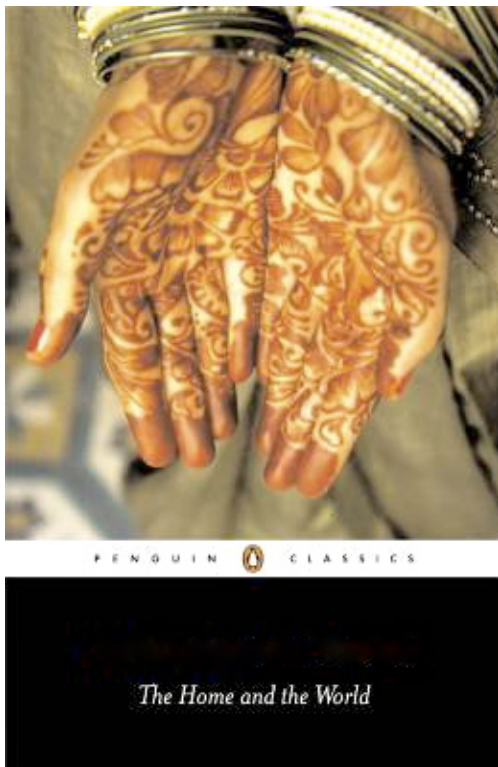


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Would you pick up this book in a bookshop?

[Second version]

1.



I think this book is from \_\_\_\_\_

because the cover features \_\_\_\_\_.

This book cover makes me think of

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This book could be about

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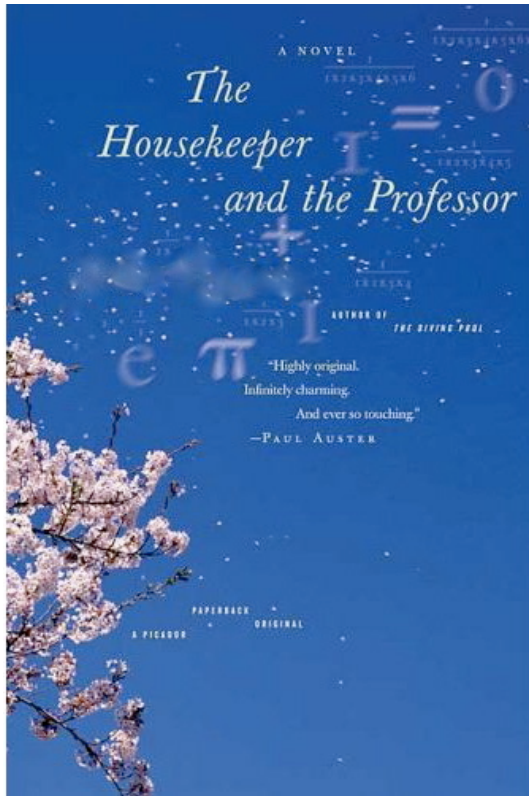


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Would you pick up this book in a bookshop?



2.



I think this book is from \_\_\_\_\_  
 because the cover features \_\_\_\_\_.

This book cover makes me think of

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

This book could be about

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

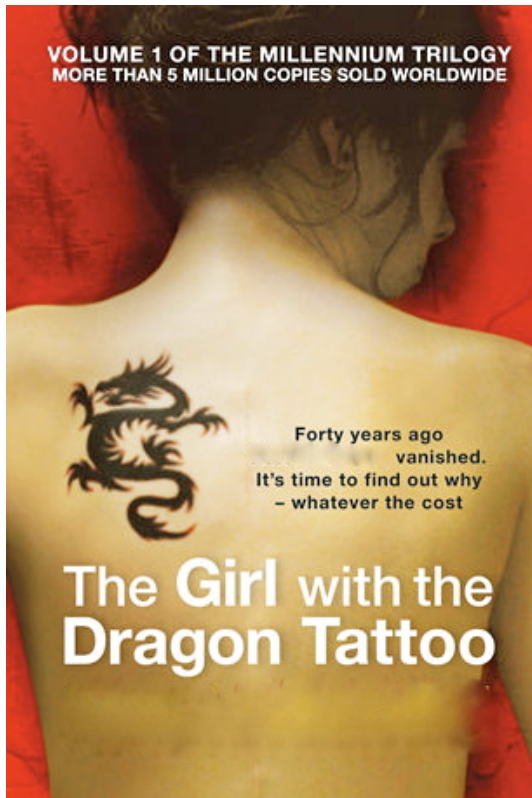
\_\_\_\_\_

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\_\_\_\_\_

Would you pick up this book in a bookshop?

3.



I think this book is from \_\_\_\_\_  
 because the cover features \_\_\_\_\_.

This book cover makes me think of

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

This book could be about

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

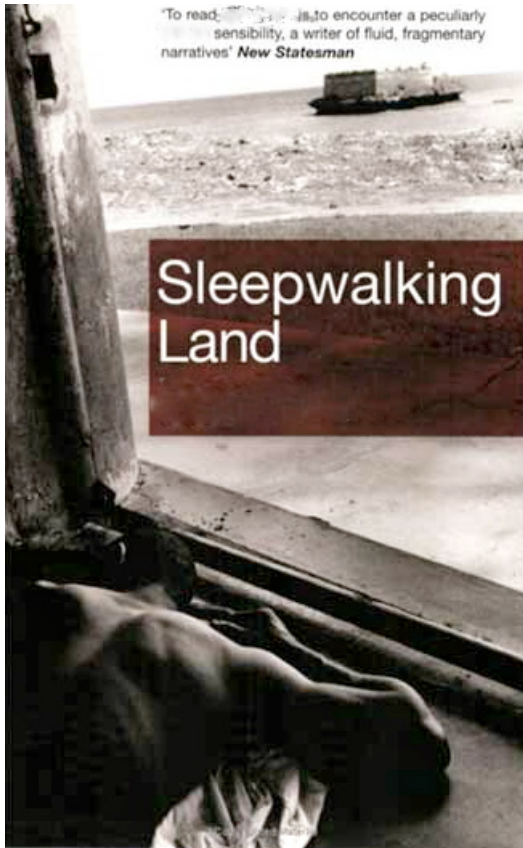
\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Would you pick up this book in a bookshop?

4.



I think this book is from \_\_\_\_\_

because the cover features \_\_\_\_\_.

This book cover makes me think of

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

This book could be about

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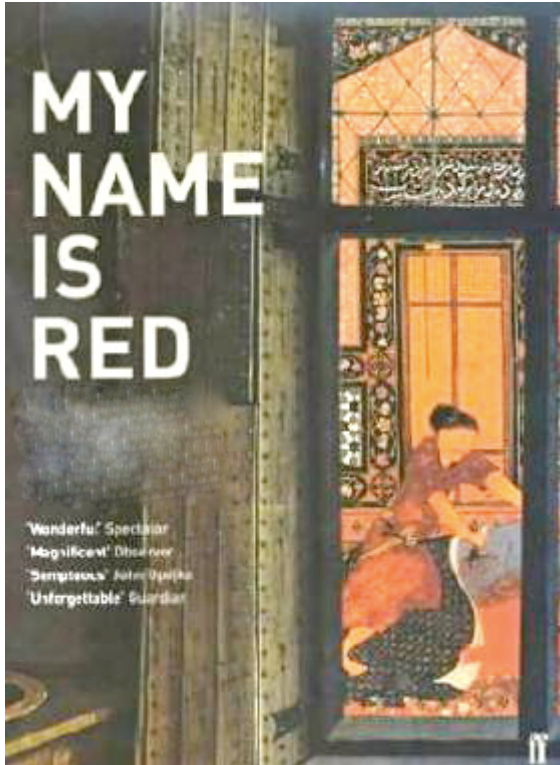
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Would you pick up this book in a bookshop?

5.



I think this book is from \_\_\_\_\_

because the cover features \_\_\_\_\_.

This book cover makes me think of

\_\_\_\_\_

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This book could be about

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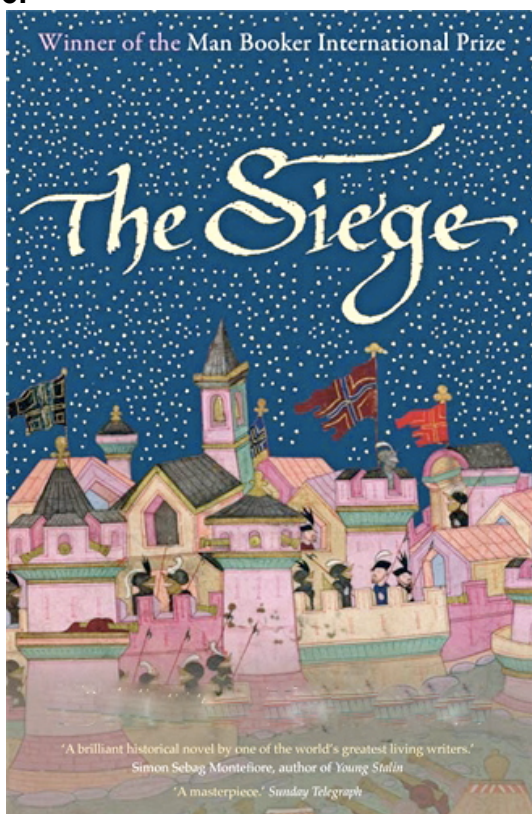
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Would you pick up this book in a bookshop?

6.



I think this book is from \_\_\_\_\_

because the cover features \_\_\_\_\_.

This book cover makes me think of

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This book could be about

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Would you pick up this book in a bookshop?

**Confidentiality**

Focus group material will be held in confidence. It will not be used other than for the purposes described above and nobody but my research supervisors will be given access to the material (except in the case of legal subpoena). Your data will be held for 10 years on an anonymous basis, and in accordance with the Data Protection Act.

**Anonymity**

Focus group data will be held and used on an anonymous basis, with no mention of your name, but we will refer to the group of which you are a member.

**Consent**

I voluntarily agree to participate in the focus group and to the use of my data for the purposes specified above. I can withdraw consent at any time by contacting the interviewers.

**TICK HERE:**

**DATE**.....

Name of interviewee:.....

Member of which group:.....

Signature: .....

Signature of researcher.....

## Appendix 5– Bibliography of works translated from Turkish into English in the UK, 1990 – 2012

Category	Author	Translation Title	Original Title	Translator	Editor	Location	Year	First edition or re-edition
Novel	Pamuk, Orhan	<i>The White Castle</i>	<i>Beyaz Kale</i>	Victoria Holbrook		London	1990	1990: Carcanet, hardback 2001, 2009: Faber and Faber, paperback
Novel	Kemal, Yaşar	<i>To Crush the Serpent</i>	<i>Yılanı Öldürseler</i>	Thilda Kemal		London	1991	Collins Harvill
Poetry	Collective	<i>Modern Turkish Poetry</i>		Collective	Feyyaz Kayacan	Ware	1992	The Rockingham Press
Poetry	Rifat, Oktay	<i>Voices of Memory: Selected Poems of Oktay Rifat</i>		Ruth Christie and Richard McKane		Ware	1993	Rockingham Press & Yapı Kredi Yayınları
Novel	Tekin, Latife	<i>Berji Kristin: Tales from the Garbage Hills</i>	<i>Berci Kristin: Çöp Masalları</i>	Ruth Christie and Saliha Paker		London	1993	1993: Marion Boyars hardback, 1996: Marion Boyars paperback
Novel	Pamuk, Orhan	<i>The Black Book</i>	<i>Kara Kitap</i>	Güneli Gün		London	1994	1994: Faber and Faber, paperback 2006: Faber and Faber (retranslation by Maureen Freely) paperback
Novel	Kemal, Yaşar	<i>Salman the Solitary</i>	<i>Yağmurluk Kuşu</i>	Thilda Kemal		London	1997	Collins Harvill
Novel	Pamuk, Orhan	<i>The New Life</i>	<i>Yeni Hayat</i>	Güneli Gün		London	1997	1997: Faber and Faber, hardback 1998: Faber and Faber, paperback
Poetry	Aktunç, Hulki	<i>Twelfth Song</i>		Collective		Dublin	1998	Poetry Ireland
Poetry	Müldür, Lale	<i>Water Music</i>		Collective		Dublin	1998	Poetry Ireland
Novel	Atasü, Erendiz	<i>The Other Side of the Mountain</i>	<i>Dağın Öteki Yüzü</i>	Elizabeth Maslen and Erendiz Atasü		London	2000	Milet Publishing Ltd
Poetry	Çapan, Cevat	<i>Where Are You, Susie Petschek? The Poems of Cevat Çapan</i>		Michael Hulse and Cevat Çapan		Todmorden	2001	Arc Publications
Short stories	Füruzan	<i>A Summer Full of Love</i>	<i>Sevda Dolu Bir Yaz</i>	Damian Croft		London	2001	Milet Publishing Ltd
Short stories	Ilgaz, Rifat	<i>Fourth Company</i>	<i>Dördüncü Bölük</i>	Damian Croft		London	2001	Milet Publishing Ltd
Novel	İzgülü, Muzaffer	<i>Radical Niyazi Bey</i>	<i>Radikal Niyazi Bey</i> (bilingual)	Damian Croft		London	2001	Milet Publishing Ltd
Short stories	Uzuner, Buket	<i>A Cup of Turkish Coffee</i>	<i>Bir Fincan Kahve</i> (bilingual)	Pelin Arner		London	2001	Milet Publishing Ltd

Novel	Tekin, Latife	<i>Dear Shameless Death</i>	<i>Sevgili Arsız Ölüm</i>	Saliha Paker and Mel Kenne		London	2001	Marion Boyars
Poetry	Yashin, Mehmet	<i>Don't Go Back to Kyrenia</i>		Taner Baybars		London	2001	Middlesex University Press
Poetry	Collective	<i>Agenda: Modern Turkish Poetry</i> (vol. 38, no. 3-4)		Collective	William Cookson, Patricia McCarthy	Sussex	2001-2002	
Poetry	Hikmet, Nâzım	<i>Beyond the Walls: Selected Poems</i>		Ruth Christie, Richard McKane and Talat Sait Halman		London	2002	Anvil Press Poetry
Short Stories	Nesin, Aziz	<i>Out of the Way! Socialism's Coming</i>	<i>Sosyalizm Geliyor Savulun</i>	Damian Croft		London	2002	Milet Publishing Ltd
Novel	Pamuk, Orhan	<i>My Name is Red</i>	<i>Benim Adım Kırmızı</i>	Erdağ Göknar		London	2002	2002: Faber and Faber, paperback 2008: Faber and Faber, audiobook
Novel	Mağden, Perihan	<i>The Messenger Boy Murders</i>	<i>Haberci Çocuk Cinayetleri</i>	Richard Hamer		London	2003	Milet Publishing Ltd
Memoir	Zeybek Güzel, Asiye	<i>Asiye's Story</i>	<i>Asiye İşkencede: Bir Tecavüz Öyküsü</i>	Richard McKane		London	2003	Saqi Books
Poetry	Matur, Bejan	<i>In the Temple of a Patient God</i>		Ruth Christie		Todmorden	2004	Arc Publications
Novel	Pamuk, Orhan	<i>Snow</i>	<i>Kar</i>	Maureen Freely		London	2004	2004: Faber and Faber, hardback 2005: Faber and Faber, paperback 2010: Faber and Faber, paperback
Novel	Shafak, Elif	<i>The Flea Palace</i>	<i>Bit Palas</i>	Müge Göçek		London	2004	Marion Boyars
Novel	Mağden, Perihan	<i>2 Girls</i>	<i>İki Genç Kızın Romanı</i>	Brendan Freely		London	2005	Serpent's Tail
Memoir	Pamuk, Orhan	<i>Istanbul: Memories of a City</i>	<i>Istanbul: Hatıralar ve Şehir</i>	Maureen Freely		London	2005	2005: Faber and Faber, hardback 2006: Faber and Faber, paperback
Poetry	Berk, İlhan	<i>A Leaf About to Fall. Selected Poems</i>		George Messo		Cambridge	2006	Salt Publishing
Novel	Shafak, Elif	<i>The Gaze</i>	<i>Mahrem</i>	Brendan Freely		London	2006	2006: Marion Boyars, paperback 2010: Viking, paperback
Misc.	Collective	<i>The Warwick Review: New Writing from</i>		Collective	Michael Hulse	Warwick	2007	

		Turkey Vol. 1, March 2007						
Short stories	Fergar, Feyyaz Kayacan	Mrs. Valley's War – The Shelter Stories of Feyyaz Kayacan Fergar	Sığınak Hikâyeleri	Ruth Christie and Selçuk Berilgen		Ware	2007	Rockingham Press
Essays	Pamuk, Orhan	Other Colours	Öteki Renkler	Maureen Freely		London	2007	2007: Faber and Faber, hardback, 2008: Faber and Faber, paperback
Poetry	Rifat, Oktay	Poems of Oktay Rifat		Ruth Christie and Richard McKane		London	2007	Anvil Press Poetry
Novel	Tekin, Latife	Swords of Ice	Buzdan Kılıçlar	Saliha Paker and Mel Kenne		London	2007	Marion Boyars
Novel	Altun, Selçuk	Songs My Mother Never Taught Me	Annemin Öğretmediği Şarkılar	Ruth Christie and Selçuk Berilgen		London	2008	Telegram
Poetry	Berk, İlhan	Madrigals	Kuşların Doğum Gününde Olacağım	George Messo		Exeter	2008	Shearsmans Books
Memoir	Çetin, Fethiye	My Grandmother	Anneanem	Maureen Freely		London	2008	Verso
Novel	Kemal, Orhan	The Idle Years & My Father's House	Avare Yıllar	Cengiz Lugal		London	2008	Peter Owen
Novel	Somer, Mehmet Murat	The Prophet Murders	Peygamber Cinayetleri	Kenneth Dakan		London	2008	Serpent's Tail
Novel	Somer, Mehmet Murat	The Kiss Murder	Buse Cinayeti	Kenneth Dakan		London	2008	Serpent's Tail & Penguin
Misc.	Collective	Edinburgh Review 125: Turkey		Collective	Brian McCabe	Edinburgh	2009	
Novel	Altun, Selçuk	Many and Many a Year Ago	Senelerce, Senelerce Evveldi	Clifford and Selhan Endres		London	2009	Telegram
Poetry	Ayhan, Ece; Berk, İlhan; Cansever, Edip; Süreya,	İkinci Yeni: The Turkish Avant-Garde		George Messo		Exeter	2009	Shearsmans Books

	Cemal and Uyar, Turgut							
Poetry	Berk, İlhan	<i>The Book of Things</i>	<i>Şeyler Kitabı</i>	George Messo		Cambridge	2009	Salt Publishing
Novel	Pamuk, Orhan	<i>The Museum of Innocence</i>	<i>Masumiyet Müzesi</i>	Maureen Freely		London	2009	2009: Faber and Faber, hardback, 2010: Faber and Faber, paperback
Novel	Somer, Mehmet Murat	<i>The Gigolo Murder</i>	<i>Jigolo Cinayeti</i>	Kenneth Dakan		London	2009	Serpent's Tail & Penguin
Poetry	Collective	<i>From This Bridge: Contemporary Turkish Women Poets</i>		George Messo	George Messo		2010	The Conversation Paperpress
Memoir	Kemal, Orhan	<i>In Jail with Nazım Hikmet</i>	<i>Nâzım Hikmet'le Üç Buçuk Yıl</i>	Bengisu Rona		London	2010	Saqi Books
Short stories	Collective	<i>The Book of Istanbul</i>		Aron Aji et al	Jim Hinks and Gul Turner	Manchester	2010	Comma Press
Novel	Oya Baydar	<i>The Lost Word</i>	<i>Kayıp Söz</i>	Stephanie Ateş		London	2011	Peter Owen
Travel writing	Evliya Çelebi	<i>An Ottoman Traveller: Selections from the Book of Travels of Evliya Çelebi</i>	<i>Seyahatnâme</i>	Robert Dankoff		London	2011	Eland Publishing
Novel	Nedim Gürsel	<i>The Last Tram</i>	<i>Son Tramvay</i>	Ruth Whitehouse		Manchester	2011	Comma Press
Novel	Esmahan Aykol	<i>Hotel Bosphorus</i>	<i>Kitapçı Dükkanı</i>	Ruth Whitehouse		London	2011	Bitter Lemon Press
Poetry	Bejan Matur	<i>How Abraham Abandoned Me</i>	<i>İbrahim'in Beni Terketmesi</i>	Ruth Christie		Todmorden	2012	Arc Publications
Poetry	Birhan Keskin	<i>And Silk and Love and Flame</i>		George Messo		Todmorden	2012	Arc Publications
Novel	Orhan Pamuk	<i>Silent House</i>	<i>Sessiz Ev</i>	Robert Finn		London	2012	Faber and Faber

table adapted from Pakar and Yılmaz 2007

**Appendix 6 – Literary translations funded by TEDA, published by UK publishing houses, listed in chronological order**

- Mağden, Perihan (2005) *2 Girls* (trans. Brendan Freely) London: Serpent's Tail.
- Shafak, Elif (2006) *The Gaze* (trans. Brendan Freely) London: Marion Boyars.
- Tekin, Latife (2007) *Swords of Ice* (trans. Saliha Paker and Mel Kenne) London: Marion Boyars.
- Kayacan Fergar, Feyyaz (2007) *Mrs. Valley's War* (trans. Ruth Christie and Selçuk Berilgen) Rockingham Press.
- Kemal Orhan (2008) *The Idle Years & My Father's House* (trans. Cengiz Lugal) London, Peter Owen.
- Berk, İlhan (2008) *The Book of Things* (trans. George Messo) Cambridge: Salt Publishing.
- Hinks, Jim and Turner, Gul (eds.) (2010) *The Book of Istanbul: A City in Short Fiction*, Manchester: Comma Press.
- Kemal, Orhan (2010) *In Jail with Nazım Hikmet* (trans. Bengisu Rona) London: Saqi Books.
- Baydar, Oya (2011) *The Lost Word* (trans. Stephanie Ateş) London: Peter Owen.
- Elviya Çelebi (2011) *An Ottoman Traveller: Selections from the Book of Travels of Evliya Çelebi* (trans. Robert Dankoff) London: Eland Publishing.
- Gürsel, Nedim (2011) *The Last Tram* (trans. Ruth Whitehouse) Manchester: Comma Press.
- Aykol, Esmahan (2011) *Hotel Bosphorus* (trans. Ruth Whitehouse) London: Bitter Lemon Press.
- Matur, Bejan (2012) *How Abraham Abandoned Me* (trans. Ruth Christie) Todmorden: Arc Publications.
- Keskin, Birhan (2012) *And Silk and Love and Flame* (trans. George Messo) Todmorden: Arc Publications.



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