

# Publishing Translations

Flows, Patterns, and Power-Dynamics  
in the Swedish Book Market after 1970

Jana Rüegg



UPPSALA  
UNIVERSITET

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### **Abstract**

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The doctoral thesis investigates the role of translations in the Swedish book market between 1970 and 2016 in two sub-studies. The sub-studies are based on statistical and bibliometric methodology via two different datasets covering print editions. Via the publishing statistics, general patterns in the Swedish book market have been analysed, such as the significance of individual cultural transmitters for specific source languages, the growing number of small publishing houses specialised in translations, the decreasing number of translations published by larger publishing houses, and the overall importance of the state subsidy for translated literature. Theoretical approaches have been inspired by Pierre Bourdieu, Pascale Casanova, David Damrosch, and Johan Heilbron.

Study I investigates the publishing trajectories of 45 translated Nobel laureates between 1970 and 2016. Small publishing houses have become increasingly more important for translated high-prestige literature, and the importance of medium-size publishers has diminished. Large publishing houses have been significant for the introduction and overall publishing of the laureates, although their publishing decisions appear to be more connected to guarantees of attention and prestige in the later decades of the study than the earlier. The Nobel Prize in many cases reintroduces authors that otherwise may have been forgotten by the Swedish market.

Study II investigates the publishing of prose fiction translations from French, German, and Spanish between 1970 and 2016. In the period, translations from German and French have generally migrated from large to small publishing houses, and smaller publishing houses have become more important for the three languages over time. Translations from Spanish are to a greater extent published by larger publishing houses in the late decades of the study. The number of editions has decreased over time, and medium-size publishing houses have lost their importance. Small publishing houses have been essential for the publishing of female authors, especially after 2005.

*Keywords:* Translation, book market, publishing studies, book trade, sociology of literature, sociology of translation, the Nobel Prize in Literature

*Jana Rüegg, Department of Literature, Sociology of Literature, Box 632, Uppsala University, SE-75126 Uppsala, Sweden.*

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*To Tommie and Severin*



# List of Sub-studies

This thesis is based on the following sub-studies, which are referred to in the text by their Roman numerals. They have been published separately and therefore are not included as appendices here.

- I. Rüegg, Jana, *Nobelbanor: Svenska förlags utgivning av översatta Nobelpristagare i litteratur sedan 1970*, Skrifter utgivna vid Avdelningen för litteratursociologi vid Litteraturvetenskapliga institutionen i Uppsala, 80, Uppsala: Avdelningen för litteratursociologi 2021 (281 pp.).
- II. Rüegg, Jana, *Förmedla och förlägga: Utgivningen av översättningar från franska, tyska och spanska på svenska förlag 1970–2016*, Skrifter utgivna vid Avdelningen för litteratursociologi vid Litteraturvetenskapliga institutionen i Uppsala, 83, Uppsala: Avdelningen för litteratursociologi 2023 (433 pp.).

This thesis is also a further development of my licentiate thesis.

Rüegg, Jana, 'Utgivningen av översättningar på den svenska bokmarknaden 1970–2016'. Licentiate thesis, Department of Literature, Uppsala University, 2020.



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Uppsala, October 2023  
Jana Rüegg



# Introduction

Translations have historically played an important, integral role in the Swedish literary sphere.<sup>1</sup> The Swedish language has been assessed as semi-peripheral in the world system of translations, so there are many translations produced in Sweden, but also many translations from Swedish as a source language.<sup>2</sup> Its semi-peripheral position is particularly interesting to analyse compared to translations in the Swedish book market. Translations are essential to the Swedish book market: though English originals are rising in popularity, translations from English are still standing strong.<sup>3</sup> English has been assessed as hypercentral, meaning that no other source language is as dominant in the world system.<sup>4</sup> Other source languages that dominate worldwide – French, German, and (to a lesser extent) Spanish – do not hold strong positions as source languages in the Swedish book market.<sup>5</sup> The main question that has guided the present study is the circumstances under which translations into Swedish have been published after 1970.

In this doctoral thesis, I consider the position of translations in the Swedish book market between 1970 and 2016.<sup>6</sup> By focusing on important actors – publishing houses, publishers, and translators – I have examined translation networks. Such networks change over time, since their actors are not permanent. In this period, just shy of 50 years, translation flows and publishing patterns varied. In the two sub-studies which comprise the thesis, I analyse publishing statistics, set out the changes that have occurred, and discuss the reasons.

The two sub-studies are *Nobelbanor* (2021) and *Förmedla och förlägga* (2023).<sup>7</sup> Both investigate the position of translations into Swedish after 1970

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<sup>1</sup> See Rinman 1951, p. 247; Furuland & Johansson 1972, p. 223; Torgerson 1982, pp. 39 ff.; Svedjedal 1993, pp. 190–191; Wollin 1994; Svedjedal 2012, pp. 38–45; Steiner 2019, pp. 118–119.

<sup>2</sup> For the world system of translations, see van Es & Heilbron 2015, p. 297.

<sup>3</sup> See *Bokförsäljningsstatistiken 2022*, pp. 21 ff.; see Study II, ch. 2.

<sup>4</sup> van Es & Heilbron 2015, p. 297.

<sup>5</sup> See Furuland & Johansson 1972, pp. 243, 247; Svedjedal 2012, p. 43; van Es & Heilbron 2015, p. 297.

<sup>6</sup> The time frame differs slightly between the two sub-studies. In Study I, I have chosen to include the 2016 Nobel Prize laureate Bob Dylan, which is why I have included editions from 2017 in the dataset. The dataset in Study II only includes editions published between 1970 and 2016.

<sup>7</sup> For an abbreviated English version of Study I, see Rüegg 2021.

using publishing statistics, but from slightly different points of view. Study I focuses on Swedish high-prestige translations of works by the Nobel laureates in literature between 1970 and 2016; Study II highlights prose fiction translations from French, German, and Spanish into Swedish between 1970 and 2016.

The sub-studies relate to each other in several ways, the obvious one being that they both focus on publishing statistics about the same period of time. Although the Study I dataset comprises all the published print editions of the Nobel laureates for 1970 to 2016, including those published before 1970, the majority have been published after 1970. Some laureates are also included in the Study II dataset, since they were published between 1970 and 2016.<sup>8</sup> Study II offers a broader background, with which the publishing practices of Nobel laureates' work can be compared and understood.

Although the materials differ, the methods used in the sub-studies are the same. Detailed publishing statistics have been collected to create datasets, with which each author's publishing trajectory in the Swedish book market can be analysed at both a macro and meso level. I follow Edfeldt et al. in defining the macro level as the level of literary markets and cultures, while the meso level is that of publishers and translators.<sup>9</sup>

The sub-studies also complement each other. In Study I, all the translated laureates are investigated, so several additional languages such as English, Italian, Russian, Chinese, Turkish, and Yiddish are included, and, unlike Study II, the analysis of high-prestige publishing is not limited to translations from French, German, and Spanish. Although the results give a broader view of high-prestige translations in the Swedish book market, there is a sharper focus on specific source languages in Study II. Study II's fourth chapter is dedicated to translations from French, German, and Spanish, and focuses on the actors central to the transmission of the translations. Another aspect that distinguishes the sub-studies from each other is that only high-prestige literature is investigated in Study I, while Study II covers all types of prose fiction, from popular fiction to high-prestige literature. Together, the two sub-studies give an extensive insight into the publication of translations in the Swedish book market after 1970.

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<sup>8</sup> The laureates are Heinrich Böll, Elias Canetti, Camilo José Cela, Gabriel García Márquez, Günter Grass, Elfriede Jelinek, J. M. G. Le Clézio, Herta Müller, Patrick Modiano, Octavio Paz, and Mario Vargas Llosa. Laureates who received the Prize before 1970 or after 2016 and were published from 1970 on are Miguel Ángel Asturias, Samuel Beckett, Albert Camus, Annie Ernaux, Anatole France, André Gide, Peter Handke, Hermann Hesse, Thomas Mann, François Mauriac, and Jean-Paul Sartre.

<sup>9</sup> Edfeldt et al. 2022, p. 19.

## The Swedish book market after 1970

I have chosen 1970 as my starting point because of the dramatic changes in the Swedish book market that year. The market was deregulated, which meant that book prices were no longer fixed. This changed the circumstances under which books could be sold. Under the old system, books over a certain price could only be sold in bookshops.<sup>10</sup> This created what using Robert Escarpit's terminology could be described as different circuits of distribution: the cultured circuit and the popular circuits.<sup>11</sup> In Sweden, there were two distributors, with Seelig & Co for bookshops and Svenska Pressbyrån (Presam) distributing to newsstands (*kiosker*).<sup>12</sup> After 1970, books could be sold by supermarkets and book clubs, and the latter emerged as an important new actor in the Swedish literary field.<sup>13</sup> The different circuits have merged since 1970 in the absence of price limitations on where books could be sold.

There was a general worry in the late 1960s and early 1970s that commercial literature would take over the market, so the government introduced a financial subsidy for 'translated and valuable fiction' in 1975.<sup>14</sup> The public subsidy has been especially important for small publishing houses, many of which were founded as a direct result, while others could expand their businesses because of it.<sup>15</sup> These changes affected the publishing of translations in Swedish. One of the main findings in this thesis is the growing importance of small publishing houses for translated literature.<sup>16</sup> In the case of the translated Nobel laureates, 10 out of 45 laureates between 1970 and 2016 were introduced by a publishing house founded after 1975.<sup>17</sup> Many smaller publishing houses have said they could not do their work without subsidies.<sup>18</sup>

In the period investigated in this thesis, the number of published books has increased enormously. In 1973/1974, members of the Swedish Publishers Association published 1,893 editions; by 2015 that number had increased to 5,336. Print runs fell from 6,600 to 3,300 in the same period.<sup>19</sup> Modern technology – desktop publishing, offset printing, word processing software – has simplified publishing, enabling new actors to enter the book publishing business.<sup>20</sup> The digitalisation of all parts of the book market, from production to distribution and sales, also brought many changes. Online booksellers have helped lower book prices and made access to literature easier, because backlist

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<sup>10</sup> SOU 1972:80 *En bok om böcker*, p. 75; Steiner 2006, p. 54; Svedjedal 2018b, p. 441.

<sup>11</sup> See Escarpit 1973 [1970], pp. 86 ff.

<sup>12</sup> See H. O. Johansson 1972, p. 276.

<sup>13</sup> See Steiner 2006.

<sup>14</sup> Svedjedal 2018b, p. 459.

<sup>15</sup> Steiner 2006, p. 64; Peurell 2018, pp. 525 ff.

<sup>16</sup> Study I, pp. 104–109, 154–155, 157; Study II, pp. 107–121, 138–148, 168–185, 266 ff.

<sup>17</sup> Study I, p. 67.

<sup>18</sup> See Nilsson 2005; Kalmteg 2010.

<sup>19</sup> Svedjedal 2018a, p. 44.

<sup>20</sup> See Warnqvist 2007, pp. 123–124; Berglund 2012, pp. 24, 31, 42–50; Steiner 2018a, pp. 150, 154 ff.; Svedjedal 2018a, pp. 43, 90–91; see also Study I, p. 26.

titles are always available online, yet they have also reduced immediate access to literature for many people, because many small bookshops could not survive the competition from online retailers.<sup>21</sup>

The evolution of the e-book and especially the audiobook was one of the most significant questions facing the Swedish book market in the 2010s.<sup>22</sup> One key moment was when the audiobook distributor Storytel bought Sweden's oldest publishing house, Norstedts, in 2016.<sup>23</sup> Subscription-based book-streaming services – for example Storytel, Bookbeat, and Nextory – have large market shares, and in 2022 their sales reached SEK 1,433 million.<sup>24</sup> In some respects the book-streaming services signal that the Swedish book market is once again moving towards something reminiscent of the former circuit system, with high-prestige literature and popular fiction separated by how they are distributed and read.<sup>25</sup> The immense popularity of audiobooks has led to books being produced specifically for the format, so the current market trend is impacting how books and stories are being created today. The audiobook has been called 'the new mass-market format', underscoring what type of literature is popular on the book-streaming services.<sup>26</sup> Popular fiction dominates the main book-streaming services, and high-prestige literature such as Nobel laureates or Augustpriset laureates have difficulties in reaching large audiences.<sup>27</sup> The former Bonnier CEO Håkan Rudels has said that when it comes to digital services, Nobel laureates are underachievers.<sup>28</sup>

There is also the great impact of international trends on the Swedish book market. Since the 1970s, publishing houses have merged into publishing groups and transnational media conglomerates (TMCs). This tendency can be explained by falling profits among large and medium-size publishing houses and a business management trend in the publishing world that looked to rationalise costs.<sup>29</sup> It has led to what Hans Hertel has called the *polarisation* of the book market: the differences between the large and small publishing houses are vast.<sup>30</sup> Independent, medium-size publishing houses have a difficult position in the book market, since they lack the financial security of large publishing groups, but are not as flexible as small publishing houses. Being thus especially vulnerable, they are often incorporated into larger publishing groups or undergo extensive reorganisations so they can continue trading as

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<sup>21</sup> See L. Olsson 2018, pp. 231–240, 245–246; Svedjedal 2018a, pp. 94–95.

<sup>22</sup> For the digitalisation of the Swedish book market and e-books, see Steiner 2018a, p. 162–163.

<sup>23</sup> Svedjedal 2018a, p. 25.

<sup>24</sup> *Bokförsäljningsstatistiken 2022*, p. 37; see further Berglund 2021c.

<sup>25</sup> Berglund 2022.

<sup>26</sup> Lenas & Cederskog 2018; Määttä 2021, p. 307.

<sup>27</sup> See Berglund 2021c; Määttä 2021.

<sup>28</sup> Lenas & Cederskog 2018.

<sup>29</sup> See Steiner 2018a, pp. 145–146.

<sup>30</sup> For polarisation, see Hertel 1995, p. 30; Thompson 2012 [2010], pp. 147–187; Murray 2018, pp. 57, 87–88; Steiner 2018a, pp. 146, 158–159.

small publishing houses instead. In the period 1970 to 2016, most Swedish medium-size publishing houses either shut down, were bought by large publishing groups, or changed their brand and started publishing other types of literature.<sup>31</sup> No medium-size publishing house has lasted long in the Swedish book market.<sup>32</sup> The trend is even more pronounced in the global book market, especially in an Anglo-American context. The polarisation of the book market can also be connected to overproduction in a saturated market, dwindling print runs, and the growing focus on ‘big books’ (potential bestsellers which are promoted as such). Large publishing houses prefer to focus on a few titles in order to sell more books.<sup>33</sup>

The supply of literary fiction has never been as large as it was in the 2000s. The stiff competition resulting from overproduction has created a need for ways to guide book-buyers to the publishing house’s books. As the number of book reviews have shrunk in Swedish newspapers, other attention-creating factors have become more important, for example bestseller lists, literary prizes, book fairs, literary festivals, and more recently digital content on social media.<sup>34</sup> The mechanisms at work in the publishing houses’ marketing practices amount to an attention economy.

Where once the most valuable asset in the Western world was money, now arguably it is time – and there is a permanent shortage of it. Attention creates more attention, and has itself become a currency that can generate economic capital.<sup>35</sup> In this logic, it is worth paying attention to a work of fiction that has already attracted attention, if only because it has beaten all other forms of cultural expression (television series, films, music) competing for our attention and time. In today’s digitally connected world, attention can be measured in likes, shares, and clicks. In publishing, blurbs such as ‘Translated to 15 languages’, ‘300,000 copies sold’, or ‘Read the book everybody’s talking about’ are often used on book covers. It is not new in the book market or marketing, but is vital for understanding how the book market interacts with what is a relatively new social media culture. Elements that create attention are especially important for translated fiction, since the author is not automatically part of the Swedish cultural context, but has to be introduced.

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<sup>31</sup> Some examples are Aldus, Berghs, Rabén & Sjögren, and Tiden; see also Study I, 235, n. 235.

<sup>32</sup> Steiner 2018a, p. 178.

<sup>33</sup> Thompson 2012 [2010], pp. 192–193; see further Steiner 2018a, p. 163; Bax 2021, pp. 217–218.

<sup>34</sup> For literary criticism, see Djurberg 2012a; Samuelsson 2013, pp. 105–106, 161; Svedjedal 2018a, pp. 96–97; Steiner 2019, pp. 244 ff., 263–264. For Augustpriset, see Määttä 2018; for the mechanisms of the Nobel Prize, see Study I, pp. 79, 158; for the importance of bestseller lists, see Thompson 2012 [2010], pp. 292–312; see also Bax 2021, p. 218; for the Frankfurt Book Fair, see Driscoll & Squires 2020; for the importance of literary festivals in the literary field and for the concept of world literature, see Sapiro 2018; for the intraconversion of capital at literary festivals and book fairs, see Murray 2018, p. 87; see also English 2005.

<sup>35</sup> Franck 1998, pp. 50–1; see further Franck 2009.

Some expenses cannot be avoided when publishing translations, which makes it a high-risk endeavour from a book market perspective. Historically, translations were cheap to publish, because they were not copyright protected. This changed when Sweden signed up to the Berne Convention in 1904.<sup>36</sup> Today, Swedish publishing houses pay for translation rights and royalties to the translated author in question. Then there is the initial cost of the translation. These costs mean that translated literature is a greater financial risk than Swedish originals are. The marketing aspect is also more difficult with a translated author. An important way of creating attention for a book is to use its author, ensuring they are visible in the traditional and social media.<sup>37</sup> Simone Murray goes so far as to say the primary role of the author today is to engage in outreach and to create a community with readers.<sup>38</sup> All these factors make it harder for a Swedish publishing house to create attention for a translated author's work, since the author is not necessarily a part of the Swedish cultural context. It is easier to engage Swedish authors in book tours because they are in Sweden, writing in Swedish; travel expenses are lower and logistics are easier.

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<sup>36</sup> Svedjedal 1993, pp. 46–47.

<sup>37</sup> See Moran 2000, pp. 6, 35–36; Johannsen 2013, pp. 63–75; Schneider 2013, pp. 243 ff.; Murray 2018, pp. 15–16, 24–25, 37; Bax 2021, p. 220.

<sup>38</sup> Murray 2018, p. 12.

# Materials and method

The thesis in its entirety uses statistical methods to analyse translations in the Swedish book market. For both sub-studies, I constructed datasets covering print editions by using the Swedish National Bibliography. In this I have followed the long Swedish tradition of quantitative research on the sociology of literature.<sup>39</sup> The method consists of collecting data on book publishing and analysing what patterns can be detected using the number of books published in that market. One can analyse trends and changes over time, but also specific networks connected to a source language in a target language context, offering macro and meso perspectives on the material.<sup>40</sup> To investigate the specifics of an author's publishing trajectory, the material needs a certain level of detail – if not, the accounts can be unspecific and inaccurate. So it has been essential to collect all the editions published in the period in question. If one only collects first editions, the 'Nobel effect' of the Prize cannot be investigated, and the many reprints of classic literature would not be included. By studying all the editions, the inner workings of the book market in relation to (re)publishing translations can be analysed.

In both sub-studies, I also use other types of material, such as interviews with publishers, bestseller lists, and marketing material. By combining qualitative and quantitative methods, one can create the most all-encompassing view of the conditions for publishing translations in a Swedish context.

For Study I, I manually collected all print editions by the 45 translated Nobel laureates between 1970 and 2016, including all editions published before 1970.<sup>41</sup> This comprehensiveness means two relevant aspects can be studied. First, the publishing houses' estimations of the demand for the laureates' books can be assessed and how high the demand was after the Nobel Prize (and to some extent how long this demand lasted). Second, the authors' publishing trajectories in the Swedish book market can be distinguished, which makes it possible to examine when, and sometimes also why, authors changed publishing house. The dataset consists of close to 1,300 editions (about 550 first editions), published between 1947 and 2017.<sup>42</sup> The majority

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<sup>39</sup> See Warnqvist 2007, pp. 42 ff.

<sup>40</sup> Edfeldt et al. 2022, p. 19.

<sup>41</sup> The Swedish laureates in the period – Harry Martinson, Eyvind Johnson, and Tomas Tranströmer – are not included in the study.

<sup>42</sup> The exact number of editions is 1,292; for the method, see Study I, app. A.

were published after 1970 – only 85 were published in the period 1947–1969 – so the comparability is high across the dataset (and in relation to Study II). All print editions have been collected, regardless of genre or target audience. I have not included anthologies or magazine publications, since it would be difficult to compare publishing trajectories between different types of publications. Digital editions have also been excluded because digitalisation is still ongoing, and digital editions are not available for most of the period in question.

An inherent problem in the dataset has to be addressed. For the 45 laureates, the average time from the first print edition in translation to the Nobel Prize was 20 years. Thus the early decades in the dataset include editions of laureates to come, while the later ones do not, since future laureates cannot be predicted. There is a natural decrease in editions in the later decades. The last decade only covers the years 2010 to 2017, so the decade has fewer editions than the previous ones.

In the Study II dataset, many of the editions were digitally excerpted from the Swedish National Bibliography with the help of the librarians at the National Library of Sweden. As the sub-study focuses on prose fiction translations from French, German, and Spanish published between 1970 and 2016, all print editions have been collected, not only first editions. The focus is not on collecting authors' publishing trajectories in their entirety, but to investigate what literature has been translated from these source languages in the period. The dataset consists of almost 4,200 editions.<sup>43</sup> Many editions that were not relevant for the sub-study – for example children's literature and poetry – had to be manually deleted from the dataset after the excerption. As in the case of Study I, no anthologies, magazine contributions or digital editions have been included in the dataset.

## Data from the Swedish National Bibliography

The editions have mainly been collected by searching the Swedish National Bibliography using the national library catalogue Libris.<sup>44</sup> Libris has its limitations, mainly that unchanged reprints are listed in the specific posts and have to be added manually. After adding the reprints in Study I, the number of editions published in the laureates' respective Nobel Prize year increased from 187 to 315. The dataset in Study II also had to be supplemented in different ways. Some missing editions could be explained by the excerption being based on the SAB catalogue, and not Dewey Decimal, so many newer

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<sup>43</sup> The exact number of editions is 4,199; for the method, see Study II, app. A.

<sup>44</sup> In Study I, I have also used online bookshops such as Bokbörsern, to be able to compare how many reprints or new editions were missing from Libris, and 20 editions could be added this way. Since the dataset is much larger in Study II, I have not been able to make the same comparison.

editions without SAB were not included. I thus manually added about 500 editions to the dataset. Another problem with Libris is that it does not include the Swedish National Bibliography before 1976. For both datasets, I have consulted the printed *Svensk Bokkatalog* as a complement, and added the missing editions.

## Publishing houses by size

As my focus is the role of the Swedish publishing houses in relation to translations, it has been important to find ways to study them on a large scale. All the publishing houses in the sub-studies have therefore been divided into groups, organised by size. By doing so, I can say something about the larger picture of the Swedish book market, since the groups of publishers' publishing patterns and how they varied can be discerned. By size, I not only mean how many books they published each year, but also revenue and most importantly how many employees a publishing house had. Generally, I have followed the official reports of the Swedish government and how they have divided publishing houses into groups in the period.<sup>45</sup> From the official reports one can see how publishing houses have merged, shrunk, expanded, and disappeared altogether since the 1970s. A small publishing house might publish a substantial number of books, but has different opportunities in comparison to a larger publishing house. The groups are generally the same for the two sub-studies, but there are minor differences. The groups in Study I are large, medium, small, and other, while in Study II the defined groups are large, medium, small, micro, mass market, and other. Since the dataset in Study II is much larger, there was a need for more categories than in Study I.

In both sub-studies, the group of large publishing houses is the same, and it was also consistent over time: Albert Bonniers (from here on Bonniers), Norstedts, Natur & Kultur, and Wahlström & Widstrand. These are the largest publishing houses and part of Sweden's most important publishing groups. They are the easiest to define, since few publishing houses have such large organisations or number of published books per year.

Medium-size publishing houses are harder to define and it is a less homogenous group than the large publishers. Publishing houses that in both sub-studies are defined as medium size are Aldus, Atlantis, Forum, Gebers, Litteraturfrämjandet, and Tiden. Many of the publishing houses in this group are part of larger publishing groups, and several no longer publish books as they did in the earlier decades in the study. One example is Tiden, which was founded by the Swedish Social Democratic Party. As Tiden has been bought by different publishing groups, its main focus changed to children's books.

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<sup>45</sup> Especially SOU 1972:80 *En bok om böcker*, pp. 59–60; SOU 1997:141 *Boken i tiden*, pp.79 ff.; SOU 2012:65 *Läsandets kultur*, p. 223.

Today, Tiden is a digital imprint in the Norstedts publishing group.<sup>46</sup> The independent medium-size publishing houses are sensitive to market transitions, since they do not have the financial security of a large publishing group or the flexibility of a small publishing house. The term *polarisation* describes this difficult position.<sup>47</sup> The differences between large and small actors have increased, so medium-size publishing houses are often absorbed by larger publishing groups in order to survive.<sup>48</sup> True, there are also examples of publishing houses that have grown from small to medium size in this period, Brombergs being one to which I will return to later.

The group of small publishing houses is also heterogeneous, because it has actors that operate under very different conditions. As in the case of the medium-size publishing houses, some of the small publishing houses had gone out of business in the later decades of this period. Publishing houses in this group in both sub-studies include Cavefors, Elisabeth Grate bokförlag, Ersatz, Tranan, Trevi, and Weyler. This type of publishing house usually has highly motivated publishers, who are specialised in literature from a specific language or geographical area, or a certain kind of literature (for example poetry).<sup>49</sup> Generally, small publishing houses are active for longer, but equally they can close abruptly. Some secure their future by becoming part of a larger publishing group. The small publishing houses are relevant for the large groups in that they often have strong, quality brands noted for their high-prestige literature. As mentioned, the state subsidy has been important for the smaller publishers publishing translated literature.

The group of micro publishing houses is only relevant for Study II, the main difference between this group and the group of small publishing houses being that micro publishers are less professionalised. Their business can be sporadic. Some have only published a single work of fiction; other initiatives started ambitiously but ended quickly. Most small publishing houses start off as micro publishers, and thanks to some success they can then stabilise their businesses. Many micro publishers have other careers and publish literature as a hobby or sideline. Among the micro publishing houses in Study II are Boca Pocky, Gavriolo, OIE editor, Rallarros, and Umbra Solis. Self-publishers are also categorised as micro publishers.

One group that stands out – and is only relevant for Study II – is mass-market publishing houses. It is a historical term for a specific type of book distributed in certain ways. Before 1970, Swedish book prices were fixed, and only books under a certain price could be sold outside of the commission system of bookshops. This meant there were two circuits of distribution, one

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<sup>46</sup> SOU 1997:141 *Boken i tiden*, pp. 71–72; Warnqvist 2007, p. 83; SOU 2012:65 *Läsandets kultur*, p. 239; Tiden, accessed 13 Oct. 2022.

<sup>47</sup> Hertel 1995, p. 30; see also Thompson 2010, pp. 147–187; see further Murray 2018, pp. 57, 87–88; Steiner 2018a, p. 158–159.

<sup>48</sup> See Study I, pp. 106–107.

<sup>49</sup> See Gunder 2011b, pp. 66–67, Hedberg 2016; Study I, pp. 115–133, 157–158.

for bookshops and one for newsstands. Popular mass-market series such as Manhattan, Succéromanen ('The hit novel'), and Elit were thus mostly distributed to newsstands. I have chosen the term mass-market publisher to describe this kind of publishing house because it was in use in the 1960s and 1970s, when the mass-market publishing houses were dominant. Between 1965 and 1970, the mass-market publisher B. Wahlströms had grown immensely so that by 1970 it was publishing more editions than Bonniers.<sup>50</sup> Mass-market publishing was generally linked to publishing translations.<sup>51</sup> In the 1990s the distributor Presam was reorganised, making it harder to distribute books to newsstands such as Pressbyrån.<sup>52</sup> Two prominent mass-market publishing houses, featured in Study II, are B. Wahlströms and Wennerbergs.

The last group, which features in both sub-studies, is other publishing houses. Here, I have publishers which do not fit into the other categories, so the publishing houses in the group have little in common. Compared to the other groups, they are specialised, for example museums or theatres, or they publish specific kind of literature, for example religious or political. A publishing house from this group featured in both sub-studies is the Royal Dramatic Theatre (Kungliga Dramatiska Teatern).

A few publishing houses have been categorised differently depending on the sub-study, the most important being Brombergs. It is a difficult case, as it was founded by Adam Bromberg and his daughter Dorotea Bromberg as a small, family-owned business, but it grew thanks to several successes publishing Prize-related books. Since its progress was directly linked to the Nobel Prize, I decided that, for the purposes of Study I, Brombergs was a small publishing house until 1990 and from 1991 should be categorised as medium size. In that year, Brombergs was bought by the Swedish media corporation MTG.<sup>53</sup> By categorising it in two ways, the impact of the Prize on the publishing house is easier to study. In Study II Brombergs is only categorised as medium-size.

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<sup>50</sup> SOU 1974:5 *Boken*, pp. 110–111.

<sup>51</sup> H. O. Johansson 1972, pp. 299 ff.

<sup>52</sup> G. Furuland 2018, p. 320; Svedjedal 2018a, p. 74.

<sup>53</sup> Warnqvist 2007, p. 85; Sundin 2012, p. 289.

# Theoretical approaches

A range of theoretical concepts have been important for this thesis. The two sub-studies to a large extent share the same theoretical framework, although the emphasis varies between the two. Study II covers the key theoretical terms and other concepts relevant for studies of book markets and publishing, which are summarised briefly here, as is the relationship between the Nobel Prize, world literature, and canonisation, as discussed in Study I.

## Consecration and canonisation

The starting point for the thesis is Pierre Bourdieu's field theory. The concepts of *consecration*, *canonisation*, and *capital* are central for any understanding of cultural transfer, of which translation – and the publishing of translation – is one. These terms are central to Study I, but also play a role in Study II, if only because the Nobel laureates also are represented in the Study II dataset.

Consecration means that a literary work or an author is deemed valuable by important actors in the field, for example by critics and scholars, or by winning prestigious literary prizes.<sup>54</sup> Consecration establishes the position of a literary work or an author in the field. Consecrated literature can also be called high-prestige literature, which I define as literature judged to be prestigious by literary arbiters in the field – a definition inspired by canonical interpretations of world literature.<sup>55</sup>

A consecrated literary work is considered valuable. Capital is the currency with which all actors enter the field – the actor's capital defines which position they have in the field.<sup>56</sup> The act of consecration is deeply intertwined with a high literary capital: when a new novel by a Nobel laureate is released, the interest from newspaper critics and readers is usually large, because the laureate's position has been consecrated in the literary field, thanks in part to the Nobel Prize.<sup>57</sup> The consecration process can take years, and prestigious

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<sup>54</sup> Bourdieu 1993, p. 121; Bourdieu 2000, pp. 326–327; see Study I, p. 24; see also Lindqvist 2021, pp. 137–138; see further English 2005. I use the term actor instead of agent to avoid any confusion with literary agents.

<sup>55</sup> See Helgesson 2006, pp. 308–318; Rosendahl Thomsen 2008, pp. 1–32 *et passim*.

<sup>56</sup> See Bourdieu 1997, pp. 67–73, 128–129, 214–215, 285 *et passim*.

<sup>57</sup> As Study I, p. 54 shows, most laureates had been published in Swedish translation long before they received the Prize, the average elapse between their introduction and the Nobel Prize was

literary prizes have been found to be especially important.<sup>58</sup> Following Bourdieu, James English argues there are no clear-cut lines separating different forms of capital (for example, economic capital from cultural capital), which is important for understanding how literary prizes work. Prizes are ‘the single best instrument for negotiating transactions between cultural and economic, cultural and social, or cultural and political capital – which is to say that they are our most effective institutional agents of *capital intra-conversion*’.<sup>59</sup> This explains why Nobel laureates’ backlist titles are reprinted when they are awarded Prize: a capital intraconversion has taken place from which actors in the book market can profit.<sup>60</sup>

The Nobel Prize in Literature not only consecrates authors, but can also *canonise* them.<sup>61</sup> One way to separate consecration from canonisation is that consecration is short term and canonisation long term.<sup>62</sup> A canonised literary work or author is a part of a literary canon, which evolves to be representative of a specific period, geographical or cultural area, language, or genre. Then there is also a canon of world literature.<sup>63</sup> In the canon of world literature, authors are transnationally consecrated from their national literature, having been deemed important for the collected literature of the world. David Damrosch has presented a three-level system of *hypercanon*, *countercanon*, and *shadow canon*.<sup>64</sup> Nobel laureates may be consecrated into what Damrosch describes as an international hypercanon, which is the highest level with the greatest reach in world literature. Not all laureates automatically become part of the hypercanon, though, and some writers might already be part of it before they are awarded the Nobel Prize. What all laureates have in common is that they will remain laureates and thus consecrated. This is a crucial point in understanding the mechanisms of the Nobel Prize in the world literary space. Damrosch’s system might be thought of as a simplified way of investigating the canon of world literature – where to draw the line between countercanon and shadow canon, for example – but the notion of the hypercanon can be a tool for defining what type of literature has the highest prestige in the world.

A term that is hard to define is *classic*. Classics play an important part in the book market. Defined as literature which is kept alive by readers down the generations, it is assessed as highly aesthetically valuable. Canonised literary works are often classics, but not always.<sup>65</sup> Classics normally have high literary

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20 years. Thus their position in the field had been negotiated over a long time, and they were certainly highly esteemed before the Prize or else they would not have been in the running.

<sup>58</sup> See Casanova 2004 [1999], pp. 146–147; Määttä 2010, pp. 232, 236 ff.; Steiner 2019, pp. 80–81.

<sup>59</sup> English 2005, p. 10 original emphasis.

<sup>60</sup> See English 2005, pp. 10–11.

<sup>61</sup> See Steiner 2019, p. 80.

<sup>62</sup> Svedjedal 1999, p. 10; Steiner 2019, pp. 79–80, 261.

<sup>63</sup> Williams 2020, pp. 19–20.

<sup>64</sup> Damrosch 2006, pp. 43–53.

<sup>65</sup> Williams 2020, 20.

capital, since they have been consecrated over a long period. To some degree, readers take a more active part in defining what literature becomes a classic. Commercial actors – meaning publishing houses – often use the term classic when launching a book series. In book marketing, the phrase ‘a modern classic’ is frequently used. This is a way to signal specific values to the presumptive book buyer. The publishing of classics is also a way for publishing houses to increase their literary capital.

## Midlist, bestsellers, and popular fiction

Other concepts in the book market that are relevant for this thesis are *midlist*, *bestsellers*, and *popular fiction*. Bestseller as a term is used and analysed in both sub-studies, whereas midlist and popular fiction feature in Study II. Just as high-prestige literature is often presented in the book market as mere ‘fiction’, these categories are hard to define. High-prestige literature is often defined by what it is not, to wit popular fiction. Historically, popular fiction (*populärlitteratur*) has had a bad reputation in the Swedish literary sphere, being considered vulgar, immoral, and devoid of aesthetic qualities.<sup>66</sup> There are many ways to define popular fiction, some more useful than others.<sup>67</sup> I follow Ulf Boëthius and Jerry Määttä, for whom popular literature is a category of literature with a large group of readers, but the literature is in the same time *perceived* as immoral and/or as having low aesthetic qualities.<sup>68</sup> In this definition, popular fiction is a category which can change over time and can comprise many kinds of literature. Like high-prestige literature, popular fiction is a certain kind of literature which functions in a certain way in the Swedish book market.

In Study II, I have used a historical term, *mass-market fiction*, to describe a certain type of publishing. As seen, until 1970 books were distributed by two companies, Seelig & Co and Svenska Pressbyrå (Presam) – in Robert Escarpit’s terms, forming the cultured circuit and the popular circuits.<sup>69</sup> In 1970 Presam served 10,000 retailers whereas Seelig distributed books to 300 bookshops.<sup>70</sup> Mass-market publishing houses such as B. Wahlströms largely sold their books through newsstands, but also in traditional bookshops. They concentrated on cheap editions in large print runs, but could encompass all kinds of literature, from category books to classics such as Erich Maria

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<sup>66</sup> See Torgerson 1982, p. 70; Boëthius 1989; Svedjedal 1993, pp. 86 ff., 399–409; Määttä 2006, pp. 65 ff.; G. Furuland 2018, p. 277. The Swedish term *populärlitteratur* has slightly different connotations than its English equivalents, but I have chosen to follow Helgason, Kärrholm & Steiner 2014 in using ‘popular fiction’; see further Berglund 2021a; Berglund 2021b. The term ‘popular fiction’ is also used by scholars such as Bloom 2002.

<sup>67</sup> See Määttä 2020, pp. 48–54; see further H. O. Johansson 1972, pp. 278 ff.

<sup>68</sup> Boëthius 2015, p. 21; Määttä 2020, p. 54.

<sup>69</sup> See Escarpit 1973 [1970], pp. 86 ff.

<sup>70</sup> H. O. Johansson 1972, p. 276.

Remarque's *På västfronten intet nytt* (1929, *All Quiet on the Western Front*). Low prices were central to the mass-market publishing model, since it meant books could be sold in other places than in bookshops.<sup>71</sup> Cheap editions (*billigböcker*) figured across the Swedish book market and could be defined in terms of production: they were usually, but not always, reprints; cheap in relation to full-price books; designed in a certain way; often serialised; and sold in specific ways.<sup>72</sup> This description also fits the *category books* that were so important to Sweden's mass-market publishing houses. Boëthius defined category books as the 'solid core' of mass-market publishing, serialised at the lowest possible price.<sup>73</sup> In Study II, it is found that category books were sold in the 1970s and 1980s as mass-market paperback series, in genres such as crime fiction or romance. The main selling point was not the author but the series name, for example Manhattan, OSS 117, or Succéromanen ('The hit novel'). The mass-market publishing houses' lists can be divided into two groups, both equally important, where one was made up of category books, the other of known authors. Thus 'mass-market' may be an outdated term, but it encapsulates the specific historic circumstances of a certain type of translation considered in Study II, popular in the Swedish book market in the 1970s and 1980s.

Popular fiction inevitably calls for a discussion of *bestsellers*. One of the most famous definitions of the bestseller is 'the work of fiction sold in the most units (books in a given price range) to the most people over a set period of time'.<sup>74</sup> Immediately, the definition raises several questions. Which edition of the work of fiction? What is the definition of work of fiction? How long is the set period of time?<sup>75</sup> All the different aspects of bestsellers make them hard to pinpoint. Further, there are other definitions to describe types of bestseller, among them Robert Escarpit's *fastseller*, *steadyseller*, and *bestseller*. Fast sellers reach high peaks, but are quickly forgotten; steadysellers sell continually but only reach higher levels because of specific events (such as holidays); bestseller combines both.<sup>76</sup> John Sutherland has critiqued such definitions, since fast sellers usually are short-lived in the book market.<sup>77</sup> Bloom has also pointed out that the bestseller 'is the fiction that most becomes its period and which is most caught in its own age'.<sup>78</sup> Nonetheless, there are several examples of long-lived bestsellers in the Swedish book market.

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<sup>71</sup> G. Furuland 2018, p. 278.

<sup>72</sup> G. Furuland 2018, p. 279.

<sup>73</sup> Boëthius 2015, pp. 23–24; see further Hemmungs Wirtén 1998, pp. 87–105.

<sup>74</sup> Bloom 2002, p. 6; for an overview of the different definitions, see Helgason, Kärrholm & Steiner 2014, pp. 9–16.

<sup>75</sup> Bloom 2002, p. 6.

<sup>76</sup> Escarpit 1966, pp. 116–117.

<sup>77</sup> Sutherland 1981, p. 8; see also Helgason, Kärrholm & Steiner 2014, p. 10.

<sup>78</sup> Bloom 2002, p. 15.

A bestseller is in many cases popular fiction, but they are not synonymous.<sup>79</sup> Not every work of popular fiction will be a top bestseller. But, as Bloom states, popular literature defines ‘a perceptual arena, a field out of which the bestseller emerges’.<sup>80</sup> It is where books strive to become bestsellers by imitating a popular culture aesthetic.<sup>81</sup> In a Swedish context, the strongest bestselling genre is crime fiction.<sup>82</sup>

Special events can create attention for (translated) books, which transforms them into bestsellers. Whether the Nobel Prize in Literature or the Swedish Augustpriset, an award can direct attention towards a title or an author and so enhance sales. In my investigation of Nobel laureates, I found they could compete with other books on the bestseller lists in specific months, but they seldom featured in annual bestseller lists.<sup>83</sup> The laureates tend to generate higher sales than other high-prestige literature, but do not sell as well as many of the popular fiction bestsellers.

A term truly hard to define is *midlist*, since books of this kind migrate between the different fields outlined above. Midlist authors produce books that sell well enough – the expenses of the publishing house are covered – but they seldom reach bestseller levels. The term has negative implications, to some extent.<sup>84</sup> The authors of this segment continue to write new books, and are usually well received by critics and are awarded prizes and scholarships, but the larger public does not necessarily know of them.<sup>85</sup>

## Cultural transfer

This thesis investigates *cultural transfer* or *transmission*, here defined as the translation of fiction from one language to another. Translations are vital in the transmission of literary works from one cultural context to another. The term is crucial to both sub-studies in this thesis. Petra Broomans and Ester Jiresch have defined cultural transmission as a process of six phases: *discovery and introduction*, *quarantine*, *translation*, *publication*, *reception*, and *post-publication reception*.<sup>86</sup> The translation is described as a ‘point of no return’, but the reception is a crucial part of its successful transmission.<sup>87</sup> If all six phases are achieved, the transmission is complete. The process can be critiqued for simplifying a complex issue, but the quarantine phase can occur between any and every other phase, thus preventing complete transmission. It

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<sup>79</sup> See Helgason, Kärholm & Steiner 2014, pp. 22 ff.

<sup>80</sup> Bloom 2002, p. 17.

<sup>81</sup> Bloom 2002, p. 17.

<sup>82</sup> Berglund 2012, pp. 105–106.

<sup>83</sup> Study I, p. 92.

<sup>84</sup> Steiner 2019, pp. 42–43; see Thompson 2012 [2010], p. 184.

<sup>85</sup> See Steiner 2019, p. 43.

<sup>86</sup> Broomans & Jiresch 2011, pp. 10 ff.

<sup>87</sup> Broomans & Jiresch 2011, p. 12.

should also be noted that even when a literary work does not reach all six phases, some cultural transfer has taken place.<sup>88</sup>

Who, then, is the *culture transmitter*? It is a person, actively working to transmit literature from one cultural context to another, for example a publisher or a translator. In Broomans's definition,

A cultural transmitter basically works within a particular language and cultural area. She/he often takes on various roles in the field of cultural transmission: translator, reviewer, critic, journalist, literary historian, scholar, teacher, librarian, bookseller, collector, literary agent, scout, publisher, editor of a journal, writer, travel writer, or counsellor. Transmitting another national literature and its cultural context to one's own national literature and cultural context is the central issue in the work of a cultural transmitter. Transmission often reflects a bilateral situation. Even the transmission of one's own literature takes place. The motivation can be aesthetically, ideologically, politically and/or economically based.<sup>89</sup>

However professional the actor, they can act as a culture transmitter, but this thesis focuses on publishers and translators. Because of the extensive statistical materials on which the thesis is based on, it is important to focus on a select few actors that are comparable. Cultural transfer is analysed here from the macro and meso perspectives.<sup>90</sup> In the analysis of an author's publishing trajectory, the more detailed the information the better.<sup>91</sup>

My understanding of cultural transfer draws on the theories of the 'world republic of letters' as set out by Pascale Casanova. She holds the world literary field to be characterised by its centres – Paris, London, and New York – which define the field.<sup>92</sup> National literature is dominated or dominant, and each country's national literature impacts the possibility of being consecrated into the world republic of letters – the world literary field.<sup>93</sup> There is an ongoing fight over literary capital. Every author who enters the field carries their national literary capital with them, and that capital defines the author's position in the field. Literary capital is a prerequisite for entering the field, but also what every author aspires to by entering it.<sup>94</sup> Translation is an important tool for achieving literary capital, since it helps strengthen the nation's literary heritage.<sup>95</sup>

Translation is also consecration, because it is a form of literary recognition. Casanova argues that 'Translation is the major prize and weapon in

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<sup>88</sup> Broomans & Jiresch 2011, p. 12.

<sup>89</sup> Broomans 2009, p. 2.

<sup>90</sup> See Edfeldt et al. 2022, p. 19.

<sup>91</sup> See the publishing trajectories in Study I and II.

<sup>92</sup> Casanova 2004 [1999], pp. 11, 43, 117–125, 165.

<sup>93</sup> Casanova 2004 [1999], p. 83.

<sup>94</sup> Casanova 2004 [1999], p. 4, 12, 17–18, 40.

<sup>95</sup> Casanova 2004 [1999], p. 23.

international literary competition'.<sup>96</sup> Power relations between languages are not defined by how many native speakers there are, but by the number of polyglots who speak the language.<sup>97</sup> According to Casanova, all languages have different degrees of literariness – meaning literary capital – and authors who write in dominant languages have the possibility to be consecrated. Authors who write in languages that are not as prestigious face a longer consecration process before they can hope to be part of world literature. Translation is itself *littérisation* – the work of fiction has a strong literary capital.<sup>98</sup>

Casanova's theories have a bearing on canonised literature, which makes it relevant to ask how popular fiction fits in. Although it might not be for the reason of gaining literary capital that a work of popular fiction is translated, the very fact that it has been selected for translation can depend on the source language. English has historically been a source language associated with popular fiction in Sweden.<sup>99</sup> A translation into Swedish means that the source language is consecrated in the Swedish book market, no matter the genre. I would argue that these theories can also be used for understanding the cultural transfer of popular fiction.

In the world system of translations, the power dynamics between source languages has been investigated. At time of writing, source languages are categorised as hypercentral (English), central (French and German), semi-peripheral (Italian, Russian, Spanish, and Swedish), and peripheral (all others) based on how many translations from those languages have been disseminated.<sup>100</sup> The power structures were somewhat different in the 1980s, when English, French, German, and Russian were the central source languages. The dominant have become more dominant, and English has since become the most dominant source language. It should be noted that Swedish was already a semi-peripheral language in 1980.<sup>101</sup>

The different power dynamics impact how translations are transmitted between cultures and create different conditions for how well the translation is received in the target culture. Dominant languages are more often source languages; dominated ones are more often target languages.<sup>102</sup>

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<sup>96</sup> Casanova 2004 [1999], p. 133.

<sup>97</sup> De Swaan 1993, p. 219; Casanova 2004 [1999], 20; van Es & Heilbron 2015, p. 297.

<sup>98</sup> Casanova 2004 [1999], p. 135.

<sup>99</sup> See Furuland & Johansson 1972, p. 247; Lindung 1993, p. 19; Wollin 1994, p. 20.

<sup>100</sup> Van Es & Heilbron 2015, p. 297.

<sup>101</sup> Heilbron 2000, p. 14.

<sup>102</sup> See Casanova 2002, pp. 9–10; Lindqvist 2012, pp. 225–226.

## Publishing trajectory

I use the concept of *publishing trajectory* to describe how authors migrate between different publishing houses over their careers. I set out the term in Study I as a fruitful way of investigating the translated Nobel laureates' presence in the Swedish book market.<sup>103</sup> The term is especially useful for analysing an author's career from a publishing studies perspective, since the migration is focused. Authors change publishing houses for a variety of reasons, whether financial, personal, or business, which can include their publishing house being bought by another or their favourite publisher switching workplace. One example of the latter was when Adam Helms and Solveig Nellinge founded a small publishing house, Trevi, and Doris Lessing went with them, leaving the well-established publishing house Forum.<sup>104</sup> It should be noted, of course, that some authors never change publishing house.

## Attention economy

In the *attention economy* there are some important events that help create attention for a book or an author in the book market. The logic is that attention creates attention, and has itself become a currency that can generate economic capital.<sup>105</sup> According to Simone Murray, much traditional book marketing has migrated to the digital world.<sup>106</sup> Sander Bax states that the 'success myth' plays an important role in today's book market, where things such as literary awards, sales, and number of translations quantifies success, which is essential in our media culture.<sup>107</sup>

One way of creating attention in the book market is literary festivals and book fairs.<sup>108</sup> Murray has stated that literary festivals 'promote themselves as living incarnations of the book world', where the literary life is 'curated and choreographed for consumption'.<sup>109</sup> Book fairs and festivals are fields where an intraconversion of cultural capital takes place; indeed, they are the most important places for the intraconversion to economic capital.<sup>110</sup>

Book fairs and literary festivals became more important in the 1980s.<sup>111</sup> Trends in the international book market helped boost their success, which also

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<sup>103</sup> Study I, pp. 116–133 *et passim*.

<sup>104</sup> Study I, pp. 122–127.

<sup>105</sup> Franck 1998, pp. 50–51; see also Franck 2009.

<sup>106</sup> Murray 2018, p. 63.

<sup>107</sup> Bax 2021, p. 235.

<sup>108</sup> For the Frankfurt book fair, see Driscoll & Squires 2020; for the importance of literary festivals for the literary field and the concept of world literature, see Sapiro 2018.

<sup>109</sup> Murray 2018, p. 84.

<sup>110</sup> Murray 2018, p. 87; see further English 2005.

<sup>111</sup> Sapiro 2016b, p. 12; Sapiro 2018, p. 304. Sapiro 2018, 304 argues that literary festivals have been important for the creation of an 'Anglophone literary space'.

strengthened the same trends Murray mentions, such as the importance of marketing, authorial celebrity, the polarisation of the book market into ‘lead’ titles and the midlist, and a general economical rationalisation.<sup>112</sup> International book fairs and literary festivals are important actors in the literary field.<sup>113</sup> Gisèle Sapiro argues they ‘act as authorities contributing to the selection and valuation of books on the international literary scene’, which helps them gain the status of world literature.<sup>114</sup>

National book fairs and literary festivals are important occasions for publishing houses to bring their authors and books to public attention, particularly because of the author’s presence at the event. Other aspects that publishing houses can use to create attention for a book or an author are anniversaries, author’s birthdays, recurring holidays and literary awards.<sup>115</sup> I argue that the attention economy is especially useful when studying the position of translated literature in the Swedish book market, and why the publishing of translations is a high-risk endeavour.<sup>116</sup>

## Polarisation

Hans Hertel has described the *polarisation* of the book market, where differences between large and small actors are increasing.<sup>117</sup> The term is useful for understanding why it is difficult for independent publishing houses to survive in the book market. Polarisation usually affects the medium-size publishing houses, since they are less flexible than small publishing houses and have higher expenses. Large publishing houses survive in hard times because they have the financial security that comes with size, and they have become less vulnerable by organising themselves into publishing groups. The Swedish publishing crisis in the 1970s accelerated this trend.<sup>118</sup> Medium-size publishing houses that could not handle their straitened financial circumstances (including LT, Prisma, and Tiden) were bought by the large groups, because there was no longer room for them in the book market.<sup>119</sup> Polarisation also means market voids are created, which leads to opportunities

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<sup>112</sup> Murray 2018, pp. 87–88; see also Hertel 1995, pp. 28 ff.; Schiffrin 2001 [2000]; Thompson 2012 [2010]; Johannsen 2013; Schneider 2013.

<sup>113</sup> Murray 2018, p. 83; see also Lenemark 2017.

<sup>114</sup> Sapiro 2018, p. 304.

<sup>115</sup> The possibility of using literary awards to create interest in high-prestige literature in translation is discussed at length in Study I.

<sup>116</sup> See Study II, ch. 2.

<sup>117</sup> Hertel 1995, pp. 28 ff.; see also Thompson 2012 [2010], pp. 147–187; see further Murray 2018, pp. 57, 87–88; Steiner 2006, pp. 77 ff.; Steiner 2018a, pp. 158–159.

<sup>118</sup> See Steiner 2018a, pp. 145, 146–151.

<sup>119</sup> Gedin 1997, p. 117.

for smaller publishing houses to take on first-time authors or those who have not been published for some time.<sup>120</sup>

Polarisation can also describe global trends in the publishing world, where publishing houses are largely organised into TMCs – the opposite of small, often family-owned publishing houses. It started in the 1960s, according to Eva Hemmungs Wirtén.<sup>121</sup> In recent decades the pace at which conglomerates have merged has increased, the most prominent example being the Big Six (Random House, Penguin, Hachette, HarperCollins, Simon & Schuster, and Macmillan) which became the Big Five when Random House and Penguin merged in 2013. From then on, Penguin Random House has been the world's largest publishing house.<sup>122</sup> In 2020, Penguin Random House wanted to buy Simon & Schuster, but the deal fell through in 2022, when US federal judges concluded the deal would be 'bad for competition and harmful to authors'. This has been understood as a shift in the trend towards consolidation in the publishing business.<sup>123</sup>

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<sup>120</sup> This is one of the main findings of Study I.

<sup>121</sup> Hemmungs Wirtén 2007, p. 396; see Steiner 2018b, p. 119; Steiner 2019, p. 123.

<sup>122</sup> Jönsson, 'Penguin Random House godkänns', accessed 14 Feb. 2023. See also Steiner 2018b, p. 119; Stevenson 2019.

<sup>123</sup> Harris, Alter & Mullin, 'A Huge Merger's Collapse', accessed 14 Feb. 2023.

## Previous research

Several research fields have been important for this thesis, among which I have identified four key areas: publishing studies, the sociology of translation, cultural transfer, and research on literary prizes. All four intertwine in various ways, much as the literature can tap into several areas and fields. The most relevant contributions are discussed in the two sub-studies. Here, I will briefly summarise the key contributions in their respective fields.

There are many relevant publications relating to *publishing studies*, both in an international and a Swedish context. Concerning the Swedish book market after 1945, studies for example by Ann Steiner on the history of the book club Månadens Bok ('Book of the month') and the 1970s book market have been important, as has the edited volume *Böckernas tid* (2018, 'The book age').<sup>124</sup>

This thesis is a continuation of Sweden's influential tradition of bibliometric research in the sociology of literature.<sup>125</sup> Many researchers have presented studies in this tradition, among them Karl Berglund, Gunnel Furuland, Lars Furuland, Hans-Olof Johansson, Yngve Lindung, Jerry Määttä, Johan Svedjedal, Sten Torgerson, Malin Nauwerck, and Åsa Warnqvist.<sup>126</sup> Relevant research on the Swedish book market can also be found in official reports issued by the Swedish government, such as SOU 1972:80 *En bok om böcker* ('A book about books', SOU 1984:30 *Läs mera!* ('Read more!'), and SOU 2012:65 *Läsandets kultur* ('The culture of reading').<sup>127</sup>

Monographs on specific Swedish publishing houses should also be mentioned, such as Mats Larsson on Bonniers, Bo Peterson on Norstedts, and Ragni Svensson on Cavefors.<sup>128</sup>

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<sup>124</sup> Steiner 2006. The relevant contributions in the anthology are G. Furuland 2018; Peurell 2018; Steiner 2018a; Svedjedal 2018a; Svedjedal 2018b; Svedjedal 2018c; Warnqvist 2018.

<sup>125</sup> For a historical overview of the tradition in a Swedish context, see Warnqvist 2007, pp. 42–48; see also Warnqvist 2018. An early contribution to the field of bibliometric research in the sociology of literature was Erland Munch-Pedersen's *Romanens århundrede* (1978).

<sup>126</sup> Key studies include Svedjedal 1982; Torgerson 1982; Svedjedal 1987; Torgerson 1990; Lindung 1993; Lindung 1994; Määttä 2006; G. Furuland 2007; Torgerson 2007; Svedjedal 2012; Berglund 2017; Nauwerck 2018.

<sup>127</sup> Other official reports are SOU 1952:23 *Bokutredningen*; SOU 1974:5 *Boken*; SOU 1997:141 *Boken i tiden*; SOU 2012:10 *Läsarnas marknad, marknadens läsare*.

<sup>128</sup> Peterson 1998; Larsson 2001; Svensson 2018; see also Österberg 1987; Rabén, Sjögren och alla vi andra 1992; Jubileumsklippbok 1996; Natur & Kultur 100 år 2022; Norstedts 200 nedslag 2023.

Studies of other book markets, for example the American or British, and international trends have been investigated by scholars such as Chris Anderson, Miha Kovač, Simone Murray, Claire Squires, and John Thompson.<sup>129</sup>

In the second area, the *sociology of translation*, scholars such as Gideon Toury, Andrew Chesterman, and Anthony Pym have had a large impact.<sup>130</sup> Other important researchers are Gisèle Sapiro and Johan Heilbron.<sup>131</sup> In a Swedish context, there are important studies by Cecilia Alvstad, Mickaëlle Cedergren, Inger Enkvist, Nils Håkanson, Hanna Kiviniemi Kögäs, Per Landin, Yvonne Lindqvist, Cecilia Schwartz, Elin Svahn, and Lars Wollin.<sup>132</sup>

The third area, *cultural transfer*, is often investigated by scholars in the field of the sociology of literature and the sociology of translation, but cultural transfer is also a vital part of the research about world literature. Cultural transfer to and from Sweden has been investigated by the likes of Elisabeth Böker, Petra Broomans, Andreas Hedberg, and Oscar Jansson, by the project Swedish Women's Writing on Export, and particularly the authors of the edited volume *Svensk litteratur som världslitteratur* (2012, 'Swedish literature as world literature').<sup>133</sup>

Several scholars have proposed influential theories about world literature, above all Pascale Casanova, David Damrosch, and Franco Moretti.<sup>134</sup> Swedish research on questions of world literature have been discussed by Stefan Helgesson, for example, and in the monograph *Northern Crossings* (2022).<sup>135</sup>

The fourth and final area is mostly related to Study I, where research about *literary prizes* is key. Some studies by scholars such as Kjell Espmark, Anna Gunder, Tetz Rooke, Per Rydén, and Jenny Westerström specifically address the Nobel Prize in Literature.<sup>136</sup> On a more fundamental level, James English's influential *The Economy of Prestige* (2005) must be mentioned. In the Swedish context, Jerry Määttä has made several important contributions.<sup>137</sup>

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<sup>129</sup> See, for example, Kovač 2008; Squires 2009; Murray 2011; Thompson 2012 [2010]; Anderson 2014; Murray 2018; Thompson 2021.

<sup>130</sup> Chesterman 2009; Pym 2009; Toury 2012.

<sup>131</sup> For example, Heilbron 2000; Sapiro 2014; van Es & Heilbron 2015.

<sup>132</sup> For example, Landin 1990; Enkvist 1991; Wollin 1994; Lindqvist 2002; Sapiro 2010; Alvstad 2012; Håkanson 2012; Lindqvist 2012; *Médiations interculturelles entre la France et la Suède* 2015; Lindqvist 2016; Schwartz 2016; Schwartz 2017; Schwartz 2018; *Translation and World Literature* 2019; Cedergren 2019; Kiviniemi Kögäs 2019; Håkanson 2021; Svahn 2022a; Svahn 2022b; Svahn 2023a; Svahn 2023b.

<sup>133</sup> Broomans 2009; Broomans & Jiresch 2011; Hedberg 2016; Böker 2018; Leffler et al. 2019; Hedberg 2019; Jansson 2021; Hedberg 2022.

<sup>134</sup> Moretti 2000; Damrosch 2003; Casanova 2004 [1999].

<sup>135</sup> Helgesson 2006; Helgesson 2018; Helgesson & Rosendahl Thomsen 2020; Edfeldt et al. 2022.

<sup>136</sup> Espmark 1986; Espmark 2001; Gunder 2011a; Gunder 2011b; Gunder 2011c; Rooke 2011; Rydén & Westerström 2018; see also Svedjedal 2011. Espmark's *Nobelpriset i litteratur* (2021) was published after Study I, as was Paulus Tiozzo's *Der Nobelpreis und die deutschsprachige Literatur* (2023).

<sup>137</sup> English 2005; Määttä 2010; Määttä 2018; see further Fahlgren 1995; Jonsson 2013.

# Summary of sub-studies

## Study I

In Study I, the publishing practices associated with high-prestige literature in Swedish translation are investigated through the lens of the Nobel Prize in Literature.

The Nobel Prize is a selection criterion for high-prestige literature. There is no simple way to define what high-prestige literature is, but the Nobel Prize is one option. Other possibilities would have been to investigate other prestigious prizes (for example the Booker, Büchner, Goncourt, or Pulitzer), or by examining curated lists of book recommendations (for example *Dagens Nyheter*'s critics' list).<sup>138</sup> The advantages of using the Nobel Prize is that it can be awarded to writers from all languages and has a worldwide impact. The aim of the study is to investigate the publishing practices of high-prestige literature in a Swedish contemporary context. What happens to the laureates' Swedish publishing trajectories before, during, and after the Prize? What publishing houses have been important for translated high-prestige literature in the period and which translators have done the most translations?<sup>139</sup>

To compare the laureates' publishing trajectories, I have identified different periods in relation to the Nobel Prize: ten years before, three years before, the year of the Prize, three years after, and ten years after. For the more recent laureates for whom ten years have yet to elapse since they received the Prize, I have separately analysed all their published editions after the year of the Prize.

There are vast differences in the Swedish publishing trajectories of the 45 laureates between 1970 and 2016. Generally, more editions were published after the Prize than before: an average of 0.4 editions per laureate per year were published in the ten years leading up to their Prize, as against 0.9 in the ten following. Each laureate's Nobel year marks the absolute high point, with an average of seven editions per year.<sup>140</sup> The number of published editions significantly increased after an author has been awarded the Nobel Prize, and several laureates have the most editions in their Nobel Prize year. Compared to the ten years before the Prize, more than double the number of editions were

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<sup>138</sup> Study I, pp. 16–17.

<sup>139</sup> Study I, pp. 18–19.

<sup>140</sup> Study I, p. 152.

published in the ten years after the Prize.<sup>141</sup> This follows the logic of the attention economy, where attention creates more attention and persuades publishing houses to produce new editions.<sup>142</sup> The average of 20 years it takes from an author's first translation in Swedish to be published until they are awarded the Prize means that they have been part of the Swedish book market for a long time, and the Prize in many cases reintroduces the author to Swedish readers. This is also borne out by a smaller analysis of how many laureates' titles have been republished in paperback: 49 per cent were reprinted before their Nobel Prize year, which suggests that they were widely disseminated in the Swedish book market.<sup>143</sup>

The most published laureates to have received the Nobel Prize between 1970 and 2017 are Doris Lessing (120 editions), Isaac Bashevis Singer (90 editions), Heinrich Böll (75 editions), Alexander Solzhenitsyn (75 editions), and Gabriel García Márquez (58 editions).<sup>144</sup> The least published laureates are Vicente Aleixandre (three editions), Harold Pinter (three editions), Odysseus Elytis (five editions), and Eugenio Montale (five editions).<sup>145</sup> The average time from first publication to Prize differed between male and female authors: for male authors, the average was 19 years, but for female authors it was 27 years.<sup>146</sup> Although the data is limited, this indicates that it took longer for women to be considered to merit the Prize, which can be linked to patriarchal structures in the literary world.<sup>147</sup>

The publishing houses that have published the most editions of the laureates are Wahlström & Widstrand (219 editions), Bonniers (190 editions), Norstedts (114 editions), Brombergs (107 editions), Forum (101 editions), and Trevi (75 editions).<sup>148</sup> Almost half the laureates have at some point been published by Bonniers (20 laureates).<sup>149</sup> The large publishing houses' reasons for publishing laureates seems to have waned over time, which is shown by how few have published anything by the laureates who have received the Prize since 2008.<sup>150</sup> Another interesting finding concerns the 2010s for the period ten years before each Prize: no large publishing house has published anything in this period.<sup>151</sup> The large publishing houses' interest in publishing high-prestige literature seems to be directly linked to guaranteed sales and attention – their willingness to publish the laureates is bound up with the Nobel Prize.

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<sup>141</sup> Study I, p. 44.

<sup>142</sup> See Franck 2009, p. 17.

<sup>143</sup> Study I, pp. 111 ff.

<sup>144</sup> Study I, p. 46.

<sup>145</sup> Study I, p. 47.

<sup>146</sup> Study I, pp. 54 ff.

<sup>147</sup> Study I, p. 55–56.

<sup>148</sup> Study I, p. 42.

<sup>149</sup> Study I, p. 41.

<sup>150</sup> Study I, pp. 105 ff.

<sup>151</sup> Study I, p. 72.

I argue that the fact the large publishing houses have published fewer and fewer editions can be linked to Bonniers' and Norstedts' crises in the late 2000s and early 2010s.<sup>152</sup> Some have argued that earlier publishing crises affected how much high-prestige translated literature was being published, and it seems as though the crises also affected the number of translated editions more recently.<sup>153</sup> In 2008, the number of editions published by members of the Swedish Publishing Association fell, and continued to do so in the two subsequent years, but the total published in Sweden increased in the same period. This suggests that although the large publishing houses were cutting their lists, the titles were being published by other, smaller publishing houses instead.<sup>154</sup> There is also a global trend towards translations from source languages other than English migrating from larger to smaller publishing houses.<sup>155</sup>

One result is the importance of smaller publishing houses for translated high-prestige literature in the Swedish book market. Although many were founded after 1975, in the 1980s it was small publishing houses that introduced the largest number of soon-to-be laureates.<sup>156</sup> It was not long before these publishers were important actors for translated high-prestige literature in Sweden. Small publishing houses had strong publishing periods in the 1980s and 2010s.<sup>157</sup> The strength of their position in the 1980s can be explained by improved finances because of the state subsidy, and in the 2010s the digital development of the entire publishing world, which made it easier to start a publishing business.<sup>158</sup>

The largest number of laureates wrote in English – 14 laureates in all – while 6 wrote in Spanish, 5 in German, and 3 in French and Russian respectively.<sup>159</sup> Of all editions, 35 per cent were translations from English.<sup>160</sup> There are striking differences when the source languages are analysed compared to publishing houses. Norstedts has published surprisingly few translations from English – there Bonniers is in the lead. Bonniers also dominates in number of editions translated from German, whereas Norstedts has published the most translations from French. Wahlström & Widstrand has been especially important for translations from Spanish, a language where Norstedts has also published a significant number of translations.<sup>161</sup>

An analysis of the publishing trajectories of five laureates – Dario Fo, Doris Lessing, Czesław Miłosz, Patrick Modiano, and Alice Munro – shows the

<sup>152</sup> E. Olsson 2018a; Winkler, 'Slutstädat på Bonnierförlagen', accessed 21 Aug. 2023.

<sup>153</sup> For the publishing crisis of the late 1960s and early 1970s, see Furuland & Johansson, p. 265.

<sup>154</sup> Steiner 2012, p. 39.

<sup>155</sup> Steiner 2018b, p. 130.

<sup>156</sup> Study I, pp. 66–67.

<sup>157</sup> Study I, pp. 72, 74, 78, 86, 97, 102 *et passim*.

<sup>158</sup> Study I, pp. 154–155.

<sup>159</sup> Study I, pp. 50 ff.

<sup>160</sup> Study I, pp. 53–54.

<sup>161</sup> Study I, pp. 136 ff.

importance of independent actors for their Swedish translations. This suggests the significance of individuals for the publishing of high-prestige literature in translation in the Swedish book market.

The other important actors are the translators. The ones who have translated the largest number of titles into Swedish are Eva Liljegren (German, 21 titles), Sonja Bergvall (English, 19 titles), Mårten Edlund (English, 18 titles), Caj Lundgren (English, 16 titles), and Rose-Marie Nielsen (English, 16 titles).<sup>162</sup> Nielsen is especially associated with the Nobel Prize, since she has translated laureates such as Nadine Gordimer, Kazuo Ishiguro, Alice Munro, and V. S. Naipaul. She has strong ties to Wahlström & Widstrand, for which she has translated over 100 titles.<sup>163</sup> Translators may act as cultural transmitters for translated literature. One example is the translator Hans Björkegren and his importance for the introduction of Alexander Solzhenitsyn to Sweden.<sup>164</sup>

## Study II

In Study II I investigate the publication of prose fiction translations into Swedish from French, German, and Spanish between 1970 and 2016. The aim was to study which actors – publishing houses and translators – have been important for the publication of translations. How and under what circumstances have translations from the three source languages to Swedish been published after 1970?

Historically, translations from French and German have been important for the Swedish book market: in 1871 to 1880, 17 per cent of the published editions where translations from German, and 16 per cent were translations from French.<sup>165</sup> Over time, their positions as source languages weakened and English grew in importance.<sup>166</sup> Since the 1850s, English has been the dominant source language for translations into Swedish.<sup>167</sup> Against that, Spanish as a source language has historically had a much weaker position in the Swedish book market. In the later 1920s, it took more than a decade for a translation to be produced from Spanish.<sup>168</sup> In the past, Swedish originals did not dominate the Swedish book market, but there was a shift in hierarchies in the 1970s, when over half the published literature in Sweden was written in Swedish.<sup>169</sup> This coincided with the rise of Swedish crime fiction, which was commercially important, and the publishing of crime novels expanded from

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<sup>162</sup> Study I, pp. 142–143.

<sup>163</sup> Laxgård 2018.

<sup>164</sup> See Gedin 2000 [1999], pp. 297–315; Håkanson 2012, pp. 127–128.

<sup>165</sup> Torgerson 1990, table 1 & 2.

<sup>166</sup> Study II, ch. 2.

<sup>167</sup> Bennich-Björkman 1982, p. 124.

<sup>168</sup> Torgerson 1982, p. 95.

<sup>169</sup> Study II, p. 79, table 11.

the 1970s on, at all types of publishing houses and as self-published novels too.<sup>170</sup>

Over time the number of translations from French and German has decreased, while translations from Spanish have increased (although from low levels, since the number of translations historically was limited). In the 1990s, translations from French and German were at a record low. There are signs Spanish was becoming established as a source language in the 1980s.<sup>171</sup> Factors that boosted interest in Swedish translations of Spanish were the political landscape of Latin America, which saw many migrants arrive in Sweden from Argentina, Chile, and Nicaragua, the international success of *el boom*, and the Nobel Prize in Literature being awarded to authors such as Gabriel García Márquez in 1982.<sup>172</sup>

The dataset comprises 4,199 editions, of which over 52 per cent were translated into Swedish from French (2,161), 35 per cent from German (1,477), and 13 per cent from Spanish (561). French is clearly the dominant source language of the three.<sup>173</sup>

The publishing houses that have published the largest number of translated editions, all three languages included, are Bonniers (14 per cent), B. Wahlströms (10 per cent), Norstedts (7 per cent), Forum (5 per cent), Niloé (3 per cent), and Sekwa (3 per cent). The interesting fact here is that the small publishing house Sekwa has published a significant number of editions.<sup>174</sup> Over time, the small publishing houses gained in importance: in 2010–2016, 60 per cent of all editions were published by a small publishing house.<sup>175</sup> What also happened is that the number of editions published by medium-size publishing houses fell. The large publishing houses had a peak in the 2000s, when they published almost half of all the editions for that decade. By the 2010s, the large publishing houses had lost their dominant position. This shows that the importance of small publishing houses has increased in the period in question and that there has been a migration from larger to smaller publishing houses for translations from especially French, German, and to a lesser degree Spanish.<sup>176</sup> The large publishing houses' lack of interest in translations from these source languages can be linked to the financial difficulties experienced by Bonniers and Norstedts in the 2000s and early 2010s. Sekwa's co-founder Johanna Daehli has said the large publishers let many of their translated authors go in the late 1990s, which made it possible for small publishing houses to take those authors on in the 2000s.<sup>177</sup> The

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<sup>170</sup> Berglund 2012, p. 105.

<sup>171</sup> Study II, pp. 101–107, 193–218.

<sup>172</sup> For interest in political issues in Latin America before 1990, see K. A. Johansson 1990, p. 71.

<sup>173</sup> Study II, pp. 101–102.

<sup>174</sup> Study II, pp. 93 ff.

<sup>175</sup> Study II, pp. 107–114.

<sup>176</sup> Study II, pp. 107–121.

<sup>177</sup> Hedberg 2016, pp. 24–25.

financial crises of the large actors created new opportunities for smaller actors to enter the publishing world.

The small publishing houses are heavily dependent on public subsidies to publish translations. The state subsidy introduced in 1975 has had a large impact on the number of translations produced, and other national subsidies from institutions such as Goethe-Institut or Institut Français have also been important.<sup>178</sup> Many publishers at small publishing houses also work as translators, which helps keep costs low. I have called this particular type of publisher a *cultural transmitter publisher* to highlight their significance for the cultural transfer of literature from these languages to Sweden.<sup>179</sup> Three examples of such publishers are Anna Bengtsson and Ola Wallin at Ersatz, and Jörn Lindskog at Thorén & Lindskog.

The most published authors are a diverse group. Hans Hellmut Kirst, Jules Verne, Franz Kafka, George Simenon, Gabriel García Márquez, Isabel Allende, and Marcel Proust embody different types of literature in the book market, from high-prestige literature (Kafka, García Márquez, and Proust) to bestsellers (Allende, Kirst, and Simenon) and classics (Verne). The male dominance of the list should also be mentioned, and it is even more striking when the dataset in its entirety is analysed. Of all 1,078 authors, 66 per cent are men and 32 per cent are women.<sup>180</sup> The difference is even more pronounced when it comes to the editions: 71 per cent have male authors and only 26 per cent have female authors.<sup>181</sup> Patriarchal structures have long dominated the publishing world, to the point where Eva Hemmungs Wirtén has linked the rise of the media conglomerates to these structures:

It was a trade not only marked by bursts of eccentricity, but also by a distinct gender bias and equally apparent class distinctions that operated to increase rather than reduce the difference between highbrow and lowbrow. But perhaps more than anything, the story of how publishing became part of the media conglomerates is a *male* story. Perpetuating a nostalgic longing for a mythical time when publishing was a profession for gentlemen is a stratagem that increases in strength as the market pressures from consolidation and concentration transform the global media landscape.<sup>182</sup>

Starting in the 1970s, women were part of the publishing industry to a greater degree than before, although it was not until the 1990s that women assumed leadership positions in Swedish publishing houses.<sup>183</sup> The Swedish Publishers Association had its first female president in 2010.<sup>184</sup> In the late 2010s there

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<sup>178</sup> See Lindstedt 2006; Nilsson 2005.

<sup>179</sup> Study II, p. 119. The term in Swedish is *kulturförmedlande småförläggare*.

<sup>180</sup> Of the authors, 2 per cent are pseudonyms or unidentifiable.

<sup>181</sup> Of the editions, 3 per cent are anthologies or were written under a pseudonym.

<sup>182</sup> Hemmungs Wirtén 2007, p. 403 original emphasis.

<sup>183</sup> Hemmungs Wirtén 2007, p. 403; Westlund 2008a; Westlund 2008b; Westlund 2008c; Westlund 2008d.

<sup>184</sup> *Böckernas tid* 2018, pp. 714 ff.

was a public debate about the ‘feminisation’ of the Swedish book world, where authors, publishers, and readers to a large extent are women.<sup>185</sup> There are no specific studies on the subject, but it seems as though there has been a shift in the period in question. Another important aspect is that the number of editions written by women have increased in recent decades.<sup>186</sup> In the 2000s many small publishing houses were founded, including Sekwa, which started publishing books in 2005 and whose publishers wanted to focus on translations of French women authors.<sup>187</sup> This indicates that small publishing houses have been central in disseminating translations of female authors from the three source languages from 2005 onwards.

The translators named in the largest number of editions between 1970 and 2016 are Jakob Gunnarsson (French, German), Ulrika Wallenström (German), C. G. Bjurström (French), Lena Anér-Melin (French, Spanish), Maria Björkman (French), Peter Landelius (French, Spanish), Gunnel Vallquist (French), and Margaretha Holmqvist (German).<sup>188</sup> These translators thus produced large numbers of translations and/or their translations have been frequently reprinted. Their work is widely distributed in the Swedish book market and many are known as distinguished translators. Several are also known as important cultural transmitters. One example is C. G. Bjurström, who introduced many Swedish authors to France and vice versa.<sup>189</sup> He has influenced what has been regarded as ‘French literature’ in Sweden; he mostly translated French existentialist authors and authors connected to *le nouveau roman*, which created the perception of French literature as difficult and philosophical.<sup>190</sup>

An important finding in Study II is that the mass-market publishing house B. Wahlströms was behind many of the editions. It had a long tradition of publishing cheap editions, mostly ‘category books’ in mass-market series, but they also published other types of literature such as classics. German as a source language has been especially important for the publishing house, with leading authors such as Hans Hellmut Kirst, Hedwig Courths-Mahler, and Erich Maria Remarque. From French, the pseudonym Sergeanne Golon (Serge and Anne Golon) and their series of *Angélique* books were heavily marketed and republished three times over about 30 years. This calls into doubt the notion that popular literature was mostly fastsellers. Interestingly, no translations from Spanish were published by B. Wahlströms or any other mass-market publishing house between 1970 and 2016.

<sup>185</sup> See Beckman 2021; Haidl & Lindkvist 2019; *Mediebarometern* 2019, pp. 78, 82; *Mediebarometern* 2020, 78, 82.

<sup>186</sup> Study II, pp. 100–101.

<sup>187</sup> Westlund, ‘Igelkotten fick fart på förlaget’, accessed 14 Dec. 2022.

<sup>188</sup> Study II, pp. 121–123.

<sup>189</sup> Hedberg 2022, 24–5, 49 ff.; see Tegelberg 2016.

<sup>190</sup> Study II, p. 134, 155–156. See Hedberg 2022, p. 138, n. 132.

B. Wahlströms' four most published authors translated from French or German (Kirst, Remarque, Golon, and Courths-Mahler) are to some degree similar, especially so Kirst and Remarque – their novels depict army life in wartime, although in different ways. A major difference is seen in how male and female authors have been received in the Swedish cultural context. Kirst and Remarque were introduced by other, more prestigious, publishing houses than B. Wahlströms, and were reviewed in the major Swedish newspapers. Their books were given more attention and treated in a serious fashion. Courths-Mahler and Golon were not reviewed, since they were not introduced by prestigious publishing houses. Their books were heavily marketed to a female audience, which shows that patriarchal structures are not only prevalent in high-prestige literature, but also popular fiction.<sup>191</sup> The same structures were also evident in the financial realities for women authors: many of them had unfavourable contracts with their publishing houses and were only entitled to a small cut of the profits their bestsellers generated.<sup>192</sup>

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<sup>191</sup> Study II, pp. 240 ff.

<sup>192</sup> For Golon's case, see 'La mère de toutes les Angéliques', *Le Monde*, 27 Dec. 2013; for the case of Sigge Stark (Signe Björnberg), see Leffler 2015, pp. 31 ff.

## Concluding remarks

When one analyses the Swedish book market from the viewpoint of translation, many different aspects can be highlighted. A main result in this thesis is that translated literature has migrated from large to smaller publishing houses over time, which is true for both high-prestige literature of all genres and prose fiction translated from especially French, German, and to some degree Spanish. Independent actors such as publishers and/or translators often play key roles in the dissemination of translations into Swedish, and at small publishing houses the roles of publisher and translator are often combined. The importance of small actors for a diverse literary market is immense. Small publishing houses have also been important for translations by women authors in Sweden. Publishing houses, such as Trevi (1971–1997) and Sekwa (2005–), have stated that their mission is to publish female authors in translation.<sup>193</sup> Their businesses rely heavily on public subsidies, and should they no longer be available to small publishing houses, their translations would be at risk. This potentially could harm the diversity of the Swedish book market, which is why the subsidies still play an important part when publishing of translations.

Publishing trajectories are important for this thesis, followed up by analyses in the two sub-studies. Indeed, the concept has proved fruitful in both Study I and Study II, although I have used it in different ways. Where Study I encompasses all published editions of the Nobel laureates, Study II captures a snapshot of the authors' trajectories. Since the time frame is 46 years, in some cases it spans an author's entire publishing trajectory. Some authors have been translated only a handful of times, others just once; some have remained with one publishing house, others have extensive trajectories running to numerous editions and several publishing houses. Some patterns can be detected: for the high-prestige authors, there are often several long hiatuses in their trajectories which lead to a change of publishing house. Prestige means there is a strong potential for the authors to be republished, which is evidently important for new, small publishing houses. For international bestsellers such as Isabel Allende, Anna Gavalda, Carlos Ruiz Zafón, or Patrick Süskind, large publishing houses have dominated their trajectories, and they have rarely migrated between publishing houses. It all comes down to the question of big books. Only large publishing houses have the means to finance them, and they

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<sup>193</sup> For Trevi's focus on female authors, see Lindqvist 2002, pp. 68–69 *et passim*.

like to see a return on their investment by continuing to publish the authors who prove successful.

In the early 2020s, the translator has taken centre stage in several debates. One concerned the act of putting the translator's name on the front cover. Another was the question of finding appropriate translators for Amanda Gorman's poem *The Hills We Climb*.<sup>194</sup> A third was the new artificial intelligence technology that burst onto the scene. Several Swedish publishing houses, including Bokfabriken and Lind & Co, have said they are using AI translations to speed up their production processes, reduce workloads, and cut costs – even though the same publishers have also said the technology is not yet fit to take on the challenges of literary texts.<sup>195</sup> Work assignments for literary translators have changed in a matter of months; many translators now receive inquiries about assessing texts translated by AI. The reception has been less than enthusiastic, with translators pointing out they could have produced better texts without the interference of AI.<sup>196</sup> What the future holds is hard to predict, but given translators have often been marginalised before, they now run a high risk of being replaced by AI technology.

Another shift in the Swedish book market in the late 2010s and early 2020s is the high number of English originals. Since 2018, Swedish book buyers have bought more foreign-language books. Online booksellers are important here and English dominates: SEK 598 million was generated in English book sales in 2022, as opposed to SEK 1,6 million for German and SEK 1,4 million for French.<sup>197</sup> Publishing houses and bookshops say that trends on the social media app TikTok are influencing book buyers. An important element in that, according to Swedish bookshop owners, is that the books look exactly as they do on TikTok, which has led Swedish publishing houses to use the original covers for Swedish translations. The pressure to produce translations has increased, because Swedish book buyers do not want to wait for the translation.<sup>198</sup> The competition from US and UK publishing houses that produce 'rest-of-the-world editions' has increased, leaving Swedish publishers reluctant to buy expensive publishing rights for books that Swedish readers want to read in English.<sup>199</sup> If publishing houses are finding that not even translations from English, the largest source language in the Swedish book market, are financially viable, which translations will then remain?

'Crisis' has been used in several places in this thesis to describe the state of translated literature in Sweden. Many publishers have said that the space

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<sup>194</sup> Paul, 'Stop Pretending All Books Are Written in English', accessed 3 June 2022; Jönsson, 'Tranan lyfter fram översättarna på omslaget', accessed 3 June 2022; *Translators on the Cover* 2022.

<sup>195</sup> Lönner & Laxgård 2023, pp. 24 ff.; see also Benaissa 'Förlag har börjat använda robotar', accessed 18 July 2023; Källén 2023.

<sup>196</sup> Mellin 2023.

<sup>197</sup> *Bokförsäljningsstatistiken 2022*, pp. 21 ff.

<sup>198</sup> Laxgård, 'Försäljning av engelska böcker skenar', accessed 17 July 2023.

<sup>199</sup> Laxgård, 'Försäljning av engelska böcker skenar', accessed 17 July 2023.

for translations in the Swedish book market has diminished over time and that Swedish readers prefer reading Swedish books.<sup>200</sup> The crisis is not to be found in the publishing statistics or in the datasets I have derived from them, however. There seems to be a continuous supply of new publishing houses that want to publish translations. Some founded since 2016 are Éditions J, Komet, Palabra, and Prosak. Éditions J has had a huge success with the sales of Valérie Perrin's *Färskt vatten till blommorna* (*Fresh water for flowers*) translated by Sara Gordan.<sup>201</sup> As the publishing trajectories have shown, if large publishing houses stop publishing a certain type of literature, smaller publishing houses are often motivated to publish it instead. The crisis does not seem to be the publishing of translations, then. Rather, it is the interest of book buyers, which has a direct impact on sales. That is why the public subsidies for translated literature are important, since they compensate for negative sales numbers. As long as the subsidies remain, there will be publishers, eager to produce translations, that hopefully will find readers.

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<sup>200</sup> See Pennlert 2012; Dahlman 2018; E. Olsson 2018a; E. Olsson 2018b, 26; Goethe-Institut Schweden, 'Jens Christian Brandt', accessed 19 July 2023.

<sup>201</sup> Laxgård, "'Det var länge sedan'", accessed 18 July 2023.

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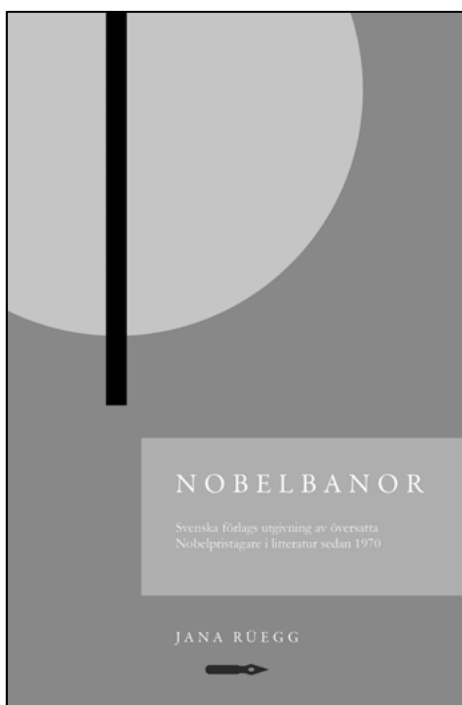
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## Sub-Study I: Nobelbanor



Title: *Nobelbanor: Svenska förlags utgivning av översatta Nobelpristagare i litteratur sedan 1970*

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### Abstract:

This study examines the Swedish publishing of translated high prestige fiction via data on the works by Nobel Prize laureates in literature. By using a statistical and bibliometric methodology, all printed editions in Swedish translation (almost 1,300 editions) by the Nobel Prize laureates in literature 1970–2016 have been collected and studied. Theoretical approaches have been inspired by Pierre Bourdieu, Pascale Casanova, and David Damrosch.

It takes in average 20 years from the writer's first published edition in Swedish translation until the writer is awarded the Nobel Prize. This means that the Nobel Prize in many cases reintroduces writers that otherwise may have been forgotten by the Swedish market. The notion of attention economy describes the mechanisms activated by the Nobel Prize, where attention creates more attention and leads to the reprint of backlist editions.

The publishing trajectories of the 45 selected Nobel Prize laureates highlight general patterns in the Swedish book market, i.e. that small publishing houses have become increasingly more important for translated high prestige literature, and the diminishing importance of medium-sized publishers. Many small publishing firms were founded after 1975, as a result of the state financial subsidy for ‘translated and valuable fiction’, and yet they introduced the largest number of future laureates in the 1980s. Large publishing houses have been important for the introduction and overall publishing of the laureates, although their publishing decisions appear to be more connected to guarantees of attention and prestige during the later decades of the study (mostly the 2010s) than the earlier.

This study investigates a half century of the Swedish book market where many changes occurred, highlighting structural changes in publishing practices and showing the importance of cultural transmitters, e.g. publishers and translators, for high prestige literature in translation.

Key words: The Nobel Prize in Literature, translation, book market, publishing, sociology of literature, sociology of translation.

## Sub-study II: Förmedla och förlägga



Title: *Förmedla och förlägga. Utgivningen av översättningar från franska, tyska och spanska på svenska förlag 1970–2016*

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### Abstract:

This study examines the publication of prose fiction translated from French, German, and Spanish into Swedish. Using a statistical and bibliometric methodology, all print editions in Swedish translation (almost 4,200 editions) published between 1970 and 2016 have been collected and studied. Theoretical approaches have been inspired by Pierre Bourdieu, Pascale Casanova, Johan Heilbron, and Gisèle Sapiro.

French and German held important positions in the Swedish book market in the 1800s and early 1900s. In the 1970s there was a shift, where Swedish originals were published in larger extent than translations. As Swedish originals have increased, translations from French and German have become fewer. Spanish as a source language has historically had a peripheral position

in the Swedish book market. It was not until the 1970s and 1980s, with Nobel laureates such as Gabriel García Márquez and the bestselling author Isabel Allende, that Spanish was established as a source language in the Swedish book market.

Between 1970 and 2016, translations migrated from large to small publishing houses. This was especially true for translations from French and German. The number of translations also decreased. Small publishing houses became increasingly important, while medium-size publishing houses lost their importance for translations from the three source languages.

Male authors from the three source languages were published more frequently than female authors, which relates to the high number of classics and high-prestige literature published in the period. Small publishing houses made a significant contribution to the publication of female authors from the three languages, especially after 2005.

General patterns in the Swedish book market are discussed on the basis of the dataset, including the importance of the state subsidy for translated fiction and the impact of financial crises on the publishing world.

Key words: translation, book market, book trade, publishing studies, sociology of literature, sociology of translation



