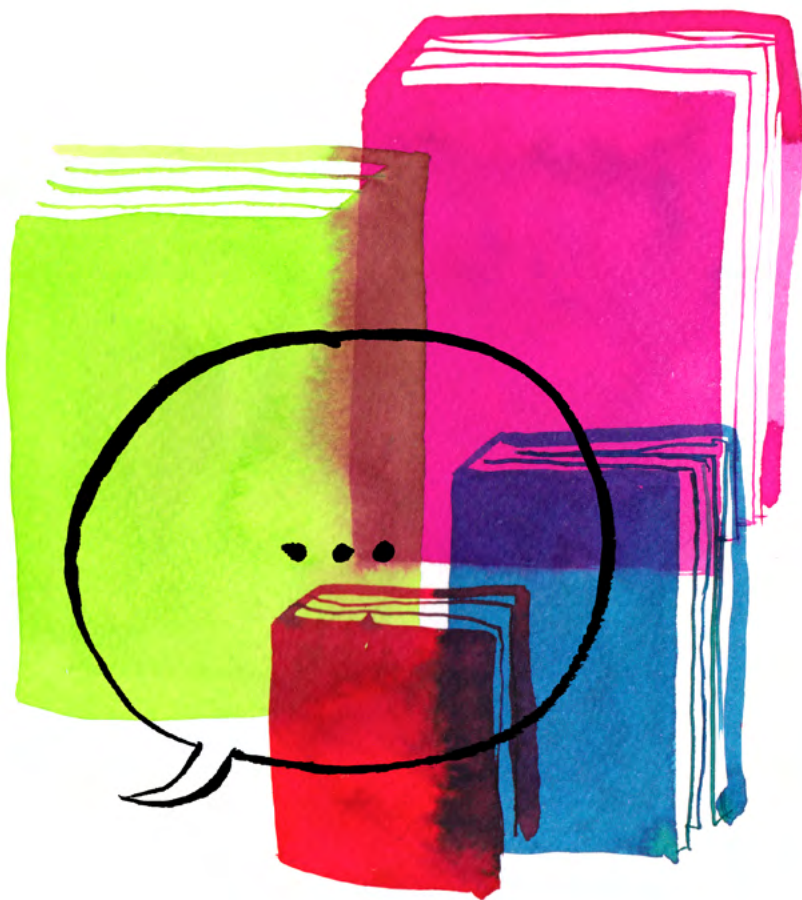


# Translation as a Weapon in the Struggle Against Cultural Hegemony in the Era of Globalization

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*It is currently believed that globalization fosters cultural diversity. This paper examines the development of the international book market, and more specifically, of the market of translations during the globalization era. Translation flows are considered here as a measure of cultural diversity. The first section of the paper analyzes the structure of the international book market, namely the opposition between center and periphery, and its historical evolution. The second section examines the transformations of this market during the globalization period, in order to determine whether globalization contributed to cultural diversity through translation. While the number of translations increased significantly, a study of the flows of translations according to the source language reveals that this intensification*

*did not correspond to a diversification of exchanges. On the contrary, it has reinforced the domination of the English language on the world market of translation: the percentage of books translated from English among all translations rose from 45% in the 1980s to 59% in the 1990s. The last section of the paper focuses on the mobilization in favor of translation in the English-speaking world, as a means of promoting cultural diversity and fighting cultural hegemony.*

## “translation presupposes, above all, a space of international relations formed by nation-states and linguistic groups”

Globalization is often conceived of as a recent phenomenon and a trend that favors dialogue and exchange between cultures. However, “globalization” was first used as a watchword for neo-liberal policies: replacing the discourse of “development”, it aimed at fostering the opening of national borders in order to allow for the free circulation of goods and capital. Historically, state borders have been set precisely as a way of regulating the circulation of goods and to protect the national markets. Following in the tradition of French historian Fernand Braudel, Immanuel Wallerstein (2004) has traced the emergence of a World System of unequal economic exchange between what he labels the centers and the peripheries back to the 17<sup>th</sup> Century.

This model applies to the book market, and more specifically to patterns of book circulation by the way of translation (Heilbron, 1999). As a transnational transfer, translation presupposes, above all, a space of international relations formed by nation-states and linguistic groups, which are linked together through competition and rivalry. To understand translation, one must begin by analyzing it as an act embedded within the power relations at work between countries and their languages. Three types of power relations can be identified: political, economic and cultural. The asymmetry in the flows of translation reflects how these three kinds of relations are connected. The economic dimension of the circulation of print is undeniable; it has been a trade since the 17<sup>th</sup> Century and an industry since the 19<sup>th</sup> Century. The struc-

ture of the market explains the fact that translations (like exportations) circulate principally from the center toward the periphery. However, the asymmetry in the flows of translation does not simply reflect the size of the markets. Political and cultural factors take part in structuring the circulation space for written texts as seen in the competition among nations for cultural hegemony or in the symbolic capital accrued in a literary or scientific domain (Heilbron and Sapiro, 2002, 2007; Sapiro ed., 2008). Nation states are still a relevant unit of study and category of analysis in the globalization era not only due to the existence of legal borders (copyright, censorship, customs), but also because of the cultural policies they implement, especially those supporting translation in our case. The adoption of such policies by many countries during the globalization era illustrates how economic and political logic can be woven together. Moreover, the balance of power between these logics can vary in different contexts.

In the first part of this paper, I will analyze the structure of the international book market and its historical evolution. I will then turn to the recent transformations of this market during the globalization era and determine whether globalization contributed to cultural diversity through translation. Lastly, I will evoke the mobilization around translation in the English-speaking world as a means of promoting cultural diversity and fighting cultural hegemony<sup>1</sup>.

### The Emergence of an International Book Market

The printing industry, the oldest of the cultural industries, was concentrated from the outset around a few cities, such as Leipzig, London and Paris. They became cultural capitals with the help of the political power that, to the detriment of the periphery, reinforced their monopoly through protectionist laws on copyright (on the French case, see Martin, 1971 and Mollier, 2001). In return, the printing industry played a crucial role in the construction of national identities, as shown by Benedict Anderson (1983). During the same period, however, the capitalist impulse to conquer new markets along with imperialist cultural policies, favored the formation of transnational book markets in the Spanish, English, German, and French linguistic areas; areas dominated by these same cultural centers. Like the provinces, the colonized territories as well as the regions under the cultural hegemony of these centers were relegated to the periphery of the book market. As a result, in this market, the frontiers of territories are defined by linguistic areas and the nation-states altogether, without these two principles overlapping.

The rise of national identities challenged the hegemony of these cultural centers, particularly those of the French and the British. Since the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, Belgian publishers have unsuccessfully contested the domination of French firms in the francophone area. Today, publishers from Quebec continue the same fight using a national policy that supports the

<sup>1</sup> These reflections are based on a research program on translation which combines a socio-historical perspective with a more contemporary empirical study of the flows of translations (through quantitative analysis) and of the agents of the world market of translation (through interviews with publishers, translators, literary agents, and state representatives). This research program has received funds from : the French Ministry of Research (ACI) for a study of the market of translation in France in the era of globalization, the French Ministry of Culture (“Cultures croisées” program) for a study of the obstacles to the translation of “great works”, and the MOTIF (Observatoire du livre d’Ile-de-France) for a study of the literary exchanges between Paris and New-York (the results were published in Sapiro ed. 2008, Sapiro 2010a, Sapiro ed. 2012). The interviews with American publishers quoted in the last section of the paper were conducted during two trips to the United States, in October 2007 (on assignment for the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs) and in January-March 2009 (thanks to a Fulbright fellowship). The identities of the individual publishers are kept anonymous in order to respect confidentiality. I would like to thank Madeline Bedecarré for helping me proofread this paper.

## “Paradoxically, translation favored the codification of national languages, the importation of literary models (...) and the development of publishing in many countries”

local cultural industry and strategies of co-publication with African publishers aimed at overturning the Parisian center. In the Anglophone linguistic area, the United States succeeded, in reversing power relations with Great Britain after two centuries by developing a book industry beginning in the 18<sup>th</sup> Century, which became dominant in the 1960s and an autonomous national literature,



which gained visibility on the international scene in the 1930s and acquired a great amount of prestige after World War II. In a similar way, the formation of nation-states in Latin-America favored the development of local literary and publishing fields, which flourished in the Franco era, thanks to the immigration of Spanish intellectuals who fled away. Since the 1980s, they have to resist the new imperialistic strategy of Spanish firms. Some Latin American editors and publishers go as far as to speak of “cultural colonization”, as one of them told us in an interview. As a result of the construction of national identities, starting in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> Century, translation became the main

mode of the transnational circulation of books. While Balzac’s novels were widely read in French throughout Europe, a much larger public read Zola’s in translation. Paradoxically, translation favored the codification of national languages, the importation of literary models (Even-Zohar, 1990; Casanova, 2005), and the development of publishing in many countries. Nation-states became active agents of an “international” book market. Thus, the internationalization process was strongly related to the nationalization of culture. More and more individuals and bodies began to specialize in the intermediation between cultures: literary agents, publishers, translators, state representatives of cultural policies. However, the exchanges did not become equal: translation flows move mainly from the center to the periphery. French and English were the most translated languages. German entered the competition in the interwar period. The Italian fascist regime tried to reinforce the place of Italian on the international market of translation but still imported a great deal of books in translation (Rundle, 2009). Smaller countries translated more books in their own languages than they exported in translation. The development of these exchanges, which reached a peak in the mid 1930s, was interrupted by the war.

### The Globalization of the Book Market

After the Second World War, the economic constraints on the circulation of cultural products stiffened. A global market emerged for movies, records and, more slowly, books, as trade was being liberalized within the framework of international negotiations, notably the General Agreement on Tariffs and

Trade (GATT), which reflected the dominant position acquired by the US. However, political and cultural factors counterbalanced the American domination of the book market. In the 1950s and 1960s, the UNESCO program supporting the translation of Non-Western works into European languages, especially Asian and Latin-American languages, favored the opening of the geographic borders of the international market of translation, which until then had been more or less restricted to Europe and North America. Thus, a true world market of translations came about.

The case of Gallimard, the most prestigious French literary publisher, is revealing (Sapiro, 2011): between the 1950s and the 1960s, the number of languages from which novels were translated in its prestigious series of foreign literature “Du monde entier” rose from 14 to 24, the number of countries grew from 23 to 38, and the share of translations from English fell from 60% to 42%. Simultaneously, Gallimard launched three new series: “Connaissance de l’Orient”, devoted to classical and contemporary literature from Asian countries, “La Croix du Sud”, dedicated to Latin American literature, and “Littérature soviétique”, focused on contemporary Russian literature, in the context of the Khrushchev Thaw, which allowed for the renewal of exchanges with the Communist bloc and gave rise to a greater interest in this particular literary production. These exchanges increased in the 1980s, especially during the Uruguay round of the GATT negotiations, starting in 1986, which aimed to extend the free exchange agreements to cover the service trade, and hence immaterial or incorporeal goods, including cultural products.

## “Moreover, the case of the book market demonstrates that denationalization does not necessarily entail deterritorialization”

This evolution was once again counterbalanced by political and economic factors. A dissenting group of representatives formed, led by the French, who argued that cultural products were not random commodities and should be protected from purely mercantile mechanisms. In 1993, the European Parliament adopted the principle of “cultural exception”, a notion criticized as being too protectionist and elitist, since it included only works deemed legitimate as part of high culture in the Western World. UNESCO played a major role in promoting the notion of “cultural diversity” as an alternative. Cultural diversity refers to the anthropological notion of culture and includes linguistic diversity, which gained recognition in 2000 at the G8 Okinawa Summit. In 2001, UNESCO adopted a “Declaration on cultural diversity”, and in 2005 Convention on the protection of “cultural diversity”.

In the book industry, globalization fostered the unification of a global market. A good indicator of this process is the multiplication of international book fairs since the 1980s, from Beijing to Ouagadougou and Guadalajara. The fall of the communist regimes and dictatorships in Spain, Portugal and Latin America opened up national borders and entailed a reconfiguration of the power relations structuring this market: Russia, which had enjoyed hegemony in Eastern Europe, moved all of a sudden from center to semi-periphery, while Spain strengthened its position. Formerly central actors organizing the “international” book market, nation states lost their influence due to the rise of multinational conglomerates. However, while their role declined, it has not disappeared. As in other domains (Held *et alii*, 1999, Sassen, 2007), nation-states remain active agents in this

world market of translation, not only because of the national borders which determine the conditions of the circulation of books, but also due to the national policies supporting translation, which developed in the 1980s in many countries.

Moreover, the case of the book market demonstrates that denationalization does not necessarily entail deterritorialization. On the contrary, the competition over territories of copyright is



harsher than ever: English, American, French and Spanish publishers tend to demand exclusive rights for entire linguistic zones—this is even more the case since the development of sales through the Internet, which solves the problem of local distribution; and when they do not get them, they struggle over the list of territories appended to the copyright contracts. According to one American editor working for the American branch of a large international conglomerate, English publishers consider Europe and its former colonies, like India, as their territory. In this competition over areas of jurisdiction, some spaces are defined as “open market”:

“We always have a list of territories appended to our contracts, and this has

to do with the open market so that we are very careful to try and get as many territories as we can. And the British publishers traditionally had all the territories that used to be in the old British Commonwealth when Britain was an empire, and the United States has had to chip away very hard at that because there is no empire and why should you automatically get the right to sell in India, India is not your colony anymore and neither is South Africa, neither is Singapore or Malaysia or Hong-Kong. We face the Pacific from California actually, it is easier for us to market there. Why shouldn't we send our books there? Yes, you can have Europe because it is right across the channel. But why shouldn't we have Asia? We'll battle you for South America and Africa and Asia as well. So it is constantly a matter of contention. The thing that makes me laugh is that I bought a book from a British publisher, and I looked at their schedule of territories, it was arranged by continent. And they actually had Antarctica. Underneath, “British Antarctica”. Antarctica is divided, so they had British Antarctica in their territories, which made me laugh out loud, I'd never seen anything like that. I count the days there might be a bookstore. I don't know when. There is more likely to be one on Mars or the Moon before there is one in Antarctica but they have it on their schedule of territories just so that we, Americans, don't think we can peddle a book into Antarctica. That was really funny” (Interview, October 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2007).

The dynamics of globalization stimulated the local book industry in many countries and fostered cultural exchange through translation. According to the Index Translationum database, the number of books in translation in the world grew from 50.000 published in 1980

## “(...) far from favoring diversity, globalization has reinforced the domination of English “

to more than 75.000 in 2000 (+50%). In the 1990s, the average number of books in translation published annually was 24% higher than in the 1980s. However, this growth did not signify a diversification of exchanges as assessed by the number of connections between languages. In fact, far from favoring diversity, globalization has reinforced the domination of English: the share of books translated from English grew from 45% in the 1980s to 60% in the 1990s, and the average amount per year was 64% more than in the 1980s (this is 2.6 higher than the growth rate of all books in translations, which is 24%). English conquered a large part of the domain previously occupied by Russian, whose shares fell from 11.5% to 2.5% after 1989. The central position of French and German (around 9-10%) has been more or less steady. Among the semi-peripheral languages (whose share represents between 1% and 3% of the overall number of translated books), Spanish alone strengthened its position, from 1.7% to 2.6%, while that of Italian remained constant at

around 3%. The share of the other formerly semi-peripheral languages has fallen below 1% (except for Swedish). Furthermore, contrary to what could be expected in the era of globalization, the overall share of the peripheral languages decreased from almost 20% to 14%, and the average number of books translated every year from other languages was even smaller in the 1990s than in the 1980s. Thus, quantitatively speaking, diversity has diminished.

Some Asian countries, mainly China and Korea, are better represented on the global market of translation, while Japan has strengthened its position largely due to the success of the Japanese comic books known as manga. Several areas remain excluded from the exchanges, in particular many African countries, where the publishing industry is underdeveloped and the book trade is dominated by large companies from the former colonial States (France and the United Kingdom).

Another consequence of the fact that translations circulate mainly from the center to periphery is that the share of translations in national book production increases as we move from the dominant or central countries in this market to the dominated or peripheral ones (Heilbron, 1999). The share of translations in 1990 was only 3% in the US, around 18% in France and Germany, 25% in Italy and Spain, 35% in Portugal, and 65% in Korea. In France the number of translated books has grown twofold from 1980 to 2000, twice more than the world average (50%, as previously stated). This could be an indicator of the relative decline of France's position in

the world market of translation.

Studying the flows of translations gives us a picture of the structure of this particular world market and can also provide us with data about what kind of books are circulating. But to understand the choices and the mechanisms of selection, as well as the functions translation fulfills, we must turn to the agents involved in this cultural transfer.

### Translation as a Cultural and Political Cause

Translation is mediated by agents, both individual and institutional such as translators, publishers, critics, booksellers, literary agents, and state agency representatives; thus making it an object for a sociological study. For these agents, translation can fulfill various functions in the economic, political, and cultural realms. For instance, the growth of the number of translations in France was fostered by the implementation in 1989 of a State policy supporting translation, not only of French works into other languages, but of contemporary foreign literature into French. This policy aimed at supporting small languages in front of the domination of English. It supported more than 30 languages.

Agents can act out of motivations that are neither political, nor economic. Many translators translate without pay, or a very small one, at that<sup>2</sup>. Some publishers are ready to lose money when they translate a work and their motivation can be purely intellectual or aesthetic, as illustrated by the following remarks made by a publisher running



<sup>2</sup> This is the case in many countries in Eastern Europe, Latin America, Asian Countries, where academic translations are done by students or scholars for free, as we have observed in our various inquiries on translation. It also happens in countries where translation is in theory much more professionalized, such as the United States: academic publishers often rely on the willingness of students or scholars to translate for free or for a very low fare, as they told us in interviews we did for an inquiry on translations of Social Science and Humanities works from French into English commissioned by the Institut français (in print).

a small independent house during an interview:

“We love success. But we don’t have shareholders we have to please... Our fundamental mission is to do good books and raise the level of conversation always.” (Interview, October 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2007). This attitude reflects what the sociologist Max Weber has called rationality according to values (as opposed to pro-

tion between the pole of large-scale circulation (the mass market) and the pole of small-scale circulation (upmarket). The law of the market rules the pole of large-scale circulation, where sales are the main criteria for measuring success. By contrast, at the pole of small-scale circulation, aesthetic (or intellectual) criteria, in the form of peer judgment coming from writers,

short-term profit that is typical of the commercial pole of the book industry. It differentiates the economy of cultural industries, based on the production of prototypes, from that of random industrial production.

This economy often relies on financial support from the State or from private bodies, though it is not a necessary condition. In some countries, like France, the small-scale upmarket production is supported by the State through a cultural policy (Surel, 1997). In other countries, like the United States, the book market is split between the trade sector and non-profit publishers who get financial support from philanthropic foundations (Thompson, 2005). However, small-scale production is not limited to the non-profit sector. Some literary publishing houses like Farrar, Strauss & Giroux, Knopf and Harcourt, which have been bought by big conglomerates and have become imprints, continue to apply aesthetic criteria, even though their room of manoeuvre is restricted by the bottom-line expectations of the corporation (as illustrated by the dismissal of Drenka Willen, the 73 year old editor of Harcourt, whose list of authors included four Nobel Prize winners: Günter Grass, Jose Saramago, Wislawa Szymborska and Octavio Paz. Her authors signed a petition in her support and Harcourt was eventually forced to hire her back due to the ensuing scandal in the publishing world<sup>3</sup>). Moreover, small-scale production characterizes small independent publishers, which have multiplied since the 1990s. This polarization of the publishing field

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fit). When asked if he knew he could lose money on an author, another American independent publisher of upmarket fiction and non-fiction answered:

“One of the justifications, well, what justifies for us to publish books of literary level is quality, it’s the passion we have for these books. And the feeling of really targeting something extremely important, for us, I mean, this justifies anything. But it needs to be at this level.” (Interview, October 15<sup>th</sup>, 2007; my translation).

According to sociologist Pierre Bourdieu (1977, 1993, 1999), the publishing field is structured around an opposi-

tion and literary critics, carries the most weight. Though it denies economic profits, presenting itself as an “economic world reversed” (Bourdieu, 1983), this way of functioning is not entirely devoid of economic rationality: symbolic recognition by peers is likely to lead in the long run to a larger consecration of the work and of its author. When a work is canonized as a classic and included in anthologies, academic programs and literary textbooks, it becomes a profitable product for its publisher. This conversion of symbolic capital into economic capital requires a long run process, as opposed to the search of

<sup>3</sup> Leon Neyfakh, “Drenka Willen Returns! Günter Grass’ Editor Hauled Back to HMH”, *The New York Observer*, January 6, 2009; see also Gayle Feldman, “The Virtues of Continuity”, *Publishers Weekly*, October 21<sup>st</sup>, 2002.

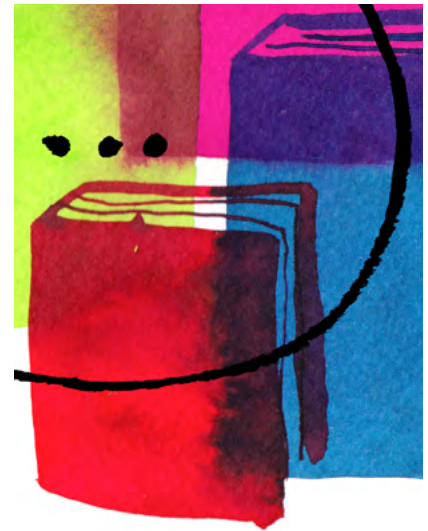
between small-scale and large-scale can be observed at both the national and international levels. First, it allows for the comparison of the structure of the publishing fields in different countries (in the case of France and the United States, see Sapiro 2010b). Moreover, the opposition between the poles of large vs. restricted circulation can be transposed to the world market of translation (Sapiro, 2008a). The world market of translation is split between a pole of large circulation, where products called by the literary agents themselves “commercial” (worldwide bestsellers, thrillers, romantic novels) circulate, and a pole of small-scale circulation where we find what the same agents call “literary upmarket” and “serious” books. While the pole of large-scale circulation has its particular set of international actors (scouts, foreign right persons, literary agents), publishers located at the pole of small-scale circulation have their own networks in specific, relatively autonomous fields: writers, literary critics, translators for the literary field; academics for the scientific fields. These international networks embody the elective affinities between publishers in different countries, a factor often mentioned by them in interviews as important, expressing homology of position in different national publishing fields.

In the case of translation, English dominates at the pole of large-scale production. This explains why at this pole most translated books are from English, and why there are so few translations into English. Thus, linguistic diversity is very low at the pole of large-scale circulation. On the contrary, translation plays a si-

gnificant role at the pole of small-scale production and linguistic diversity is very high, especially in literary translation, because of the aforementioned historical link between literature and the nation. For instance, in France, the big literary publishers (such as Gallimard, Seuil, Fayard) translate up to between 20 and 30 foreign languages, from about 40 countries in their foreign literature series, and many small publishers in France as in the US specialize in peripheral languages (Sapiro ed., 2008). However, the commercial constraints that the pole of large-circulation imposes on the pole of small-scale circulation have grown with the concentration and rationalization of the book industry. In the US, these constraints have direct consequences on translation. Translations are increasingly abandoned by the trade publishers and taken over by the non-profit sector. Among the reasons for their reluctance to publish books by non-American writers, several publishers interviewed by the New York Times journalist Stephen Kinzer on July 26, 2003 evoked as a decisive factor,

“the concentration of ownership in the book industry, which is dominated by a few conglomerates. That has produced an intensifying fixation on profit. As publishers focus on blockbusters, they steadily lose interest in little-known authors from other countries” (Kinzer, 2003).

Other reasons mentioned were the lack of staff editors reading foreign languages, the high cost of translations, the local references, and the different writing. In the interviews I conducted



in 2007 and 2009, American publishers and editors mentioned the same arguments. Most translations need subsidies to be published, as the head of a literary upmarket imprint in a large conglomerate explains:

“[In the past] a book didn’t have to sell so many copies to become doable. But now it’s impossible, you know, now every book is sort of scrutinized to see whether it can succeed, and it’s like tying a large stone around the neck of a book to make it be an unsubsidized translation.” (Interview, February 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2009)

Moreover, it appears that when they do publish translations, publishers tend not to present them as such (it is not specified on the cover) out of fear that retailers will “skip” them, as this editor explains:

“Because the big chains, when we arrive with these fictions in translation, they now have what is called a “skip”, which means that for instance there is a [chain] which has 1.200 bookstores they take zero, not one available copy, among books in translation [...]” (Interview, October 15<sup>th</sup>, 2007; my translation).

**“[In US], most translations (around 80% in 2008) are published either by nonprofit presses (...) or by small independent trade publishers “**

Traditional prestigious publishing houses, which have become imprints in large conglomerates, like Farrar, Strauss & Giroux, Knopf, Harcourt, and Pantheon continue to play a significant role in importing foreign literature. However, most translations (around 80% in 2008) are published either by nonprofit presses who mention it as part of their mission—such as Archipelago, Overlook, White Pine, Dalkey Archives, The New Press, and academic presses that publish literary translations, especially Nebraska UP—or by small independent trade publishers like the older New Directions, founded in 1936, presses established in the 1960s-1970s like David Godine, Sun & Moon, the smaller albeit influential Burning Deck, and a number of small firms created in the late 1980s, like Host Publication, Seven Stories, and Arcade.

They use terms opposed to the rationalization of profit governing the economical logics which prevails within the large conglomerates to describe their activity: “mission”, “vision”, “labor of love”, “pleasure”, “magical”, etc. One of them explains:

“Sure, we’re, we’re a not-for-profit press, set-up, devoted to international literature, um, both fiction and non-fiction, and poetry, but we’re set up as a not-for-profit just because it, it’s, difficult, book sales are low and we wouldn’t be able to do the sort of books that we want to do, not just international literature but it’s groundbreaking, innovative international literature that’s, you know, we’re not opposed to things that might be a little bit commercial, but it’s really literary, you know, literary books that

have a, have a strong voice, a strong spirit.” (Interview, February 17<sup>th</sup>, 2009) They can rely, for this purpose, on the support of the nation-states, which implemented translation policies. Therefore, there is an objective alliance between those small publishers and the representatives of cultural policies of various countries. This alliance includes other bodies such as the Pen Club.

The discovery towards the end of the 1990s of the very low share of translations in the American book production (3%) opened up a window of opportunity for the rise of a movement in favor of translations. This movement emerged in the United States around 2002 and eventually spread to the United Kingdom. Defining the low share of translations in the English-speaking world as “a problem”, which was “pretty embarrassing”, the movement emphasized a need for foreign voices. The reasons invoked were not only cultural but also political. Translating was considered as a means of combatting the growing hegemony of English throughout the world and the closure of American culture as illustrated by the following remarks from an interview with a literary up-market editor :

“Um, it just seemed to me increasingly important, that, um, in a country that is so, in some ways, removed, from any other kind of international, I mean, especially under the Bush years, but it’s been true in our whole culture, we’ve been so, unable to assimilate and learn about other cultures, that it seemed crucial that some few of us keep publishing international literature [...]”

A website named Three Percent was created and the online literary magazine Words without Borders was launched. This magazine, which in 2010 published a thousand pieces originally written in eighty languages by authors from 114 countries, intends to promote the “globalization” of cultural exchange by bringing foreign voices in translation to the United States, as claimed in their self-presentation:

“Our ultimate aim is to introduce exciting international writing to the general public [...] presenting international literature not as a static, elite phenomenon, but a portal through which to explore the world. In the richness of cultural information we present, we hope to help foster a “globalization” of cultural engagement and exchange, one that allows many voices in many languages to prosper<sup>4</sup>.”

As this quote indicates, the movement had to respond to the reproach of “elitism” that the agents of the pole of large-scale circulation commonly brandish against the pole of small-scale circulation in order to discredit it. In addition, they used the notion of “international literature” to replace that of “translation”, which suffers from negative connotations on the American book market. Diversity of languages and voices were presented as an alternative globalization. In one interview, a publisher who founded a small independent firm with a radical orientation elaborated upon the idea of “authentic voices” from around the world, as opposed to the standardized products that large conglomerates sell under the label of globalization:

“Now you have more interest on the part of the big publishing houses in

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.wordswithoutborders.org/?lab=AboutUs>.



## “the collective action in favor of translation serves as a protection and encouragement for individual agents in their daily choices and decisions”

the world because they just want to have everything. It is a kind of aspect of globalization. It is not that they want to present to the American people, American readers, authentic voices to explain what is really going on in these countries by people who really know, it is not that at all. It is kind of the opposite. It is just, they will go wherever they have to go to get a sexy story or the same story with new exotic locations. It is really worse than I can even describe.” The Pen Club American Center played an important role in this movement. Founded after the First World War in order to promote understanding among nations, the Pen Club fosters literary exchanges and defends freedom of expression throughout the world. In 2005, the Pen American Center launched the World Voices Festival of International

Literature as well as a translation prize. In his opening speech for the 2009 festival, its chair, Salman Rushdie, reiterated that the festival was created “out of the deep concern that, in the climate of those days, the conversation between the United States and the rest of the world was breaking down”. He also mentioned the low figures of translations in the United States as evidence of this<sup>5</sup>. In 2010, the festival brought 150 writers and translators from 40 countries, with the official support of more than a dozen of them who are represented among the sponsors of the festival<sup>6</sup>. This movement at least partially succeeded in making translation into a cultural and political cause and in drawing attention to the need to support translation, thanks to media coverage. It contributed to the revaluation

of literary works in translation through the notion of “international literature” and to the promotion of an alternative conception of globalization, based on exchanges between languages through translation. Though this conception prevails only at the pole of small-scale publication, the collective action in favor of translation serves as a protection and an encouragement for individual agents in their daily choices and decisions. Moreover, it gives a broader cultural meaning to their actions. Thus, like the cultural policies launched by some nation-states, this movement participates in the forces, which try—and partly succeed—to counter the growing unequal tendency of translations flows and the cultural and economic imperialism of Anglo-American publishing corporations.

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<sup>5</sup> <http://www.viddler.com/explore/Mediabistro/videos/303/>

<sup>6</sup> 57 out of 151 in 2007; 66 out of 174 in 2008; 42 out of 173 in 2009.

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