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Fiction from the Periphery: How Dutch Writers Enter the Field of English-Language Literature

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Abstract

When it comes to literary translations, English is by far the most used language in the world. There have been a lot of studies that try to make sense of this dominance, but not many that look at the other side of the coin, at how writers on the outside can break through the barriers of their native language and become part of the international literary elite through having their works translated into English. We suggest a case study of the publication and presentation of literary translations from Dutch in the United Kingdom and the United States from the theoretical standpoint of a multi-level field approach. The research lays out the steps that Dutch writers used to overcome macro, meso, and micro challenges. The suggested theoretical framework adds to our sociological knowledge of how writers from the margins can break into the world's most powerful centres, showing that this knowledge is an integral aspect of the same theoretical framework that explains the much more common reversal of fortunes.

Keywords

literature, literary, literary field, global, centre, periphery, translations, translation, core-periphery structure, global translation field, global literary field, boundaries

The Globalizing Dynamic of Cultural Fields

There is often a center-periphery pattern in the global circulation of cultural commodities. Crane (2002), Heilbron (2010), Janssen et al. (2008), Kuipers and de Kloet (2009), and Quemin (2006) all point out that a limited number of centres, frequently situated in Anglo-American nations, dominate the cross-border flows of art, films, and music, and that these flows are quite unequal. Translations of books provide a unique opportunity to study cross-national cultural exchange and the challenges to establishing a global cultural field or world-system (Bourdieu, 1993, 1999; De Swaan, 2002b; Sapiro, 2013) due to the linguistic and distributive constraints placed on literary texts. The fact that, in the 30 years after 1980, English accounted for 60% of all translated publications provides a good indication of the fundamental structure of the global field of translation (Brisset and Aye, 2007). According to the worldwide ranking (Pym, 1998), English is in the "hypercentral" position, with German and French following closely behind in the centre of the pack, each accounting for around 10% of the global translation market. Russian, Spanish, Italian, and Swedish are among of the "semi-central" languages that follow, making about 1% to 3% of all book translations done abroad. All other languages are on the periphery of the global translation system, with a share of less than one percent. Some of these languages, like Arabic and Chinese, have a huge number of native speakers yet see comparatively few literature translated into them. According to Heilbron (1999, 2010), there is a general tendency for there to be an inverse relationship between the percentage of translations in a country's book production system and the significance of a language in the global translation field. Because of its prominent role in global exchanges, this language has been the subject of many translations from other languages, but very few translations into it. Thus, a country's cultural output becomes less interested in importing foreign cultural commodities as it becomes more prominent and influential, but it becomes more of a role model for other nations. This tendency is shown by domestic translation rates. Translations account for a negligible fraction of the total number of books published in the US and UK. Translations account for a steadily larger percentage of national book output in less central nations, such as Germany and France, ranging from twelve to eighteen percent. The proportional importance of translation is higher in semi-peripheral nations such as Spain and Italy, and it is around one third of all published books in countries with peripheral languages such as the Netherlands. In light of this unequal pattern of exchange, it is not unexpected that most of the recent research on cultural translation and exchange has concentrated on English's dominant role (e.g., Apter, 2001; Bielsa, 2005, 2010; De Swaan, 2002a; Franssen and Kuipers, 2013; Heilbron, 1995, 1999, 2010, 2011; Luey, 2001; Méltiz, 2007; Sapiro, 2008a, 2010). However, translations do not just go from the core to the periphery; they may also go in the other way. Despite the many challenges, cultural commodities from the periphery may achieve some level of recognition in a dominating centre and then spread to other (semi)peripheral places. There has been a lack of focus on these peripheral-to-central cultural transfers (e.g. Heilbron, 1995).

(Wilterdink, forthcoming; 2011; Sapiro, 2008a). This article will provide a case study of the process of translating literary works written in the peripheral language of Dutch into the central language of English. We contend that these processes are best understood from the same theoretical vantage point—that is, as an essential component of the global field of translation—rather than as contradicting a center-periphery paradigm. The uneven distribution of resources across nations and linguistic groups is a defining feature of the translation sector, as it is of other globalising cultural fields. Dutch literature may reasonably be thought of as having a peripheral position in the worldwide literary arena. There aren't many Dutch writers whose works are considered classics over the globe. For instance, writers from the Low Countries only contribute three books to the Penguin Classics collection, which boasts over a hundred volumes. The first is Erasmus, a Latin-writing professor of the Renaissance; the second is Multatuli, a groundbreaking book about Dutch East Indian colonial power; and the third is Van Gogh, whose letters are renowned as an outstanding creative and literary record. The international status of Dutch literature has not changed significantly despite an increase in translations and increased praise for contemporary Dutch writing from English-language literary critics (Parks, 2011; Walterdink, forthcoming). Several tiers of investigation are involved in determining how writers from peripheral literature gain entry to the English-language literary sphere. We recommend a multi-level field strategy that takes into account the macro, meso, and micro levels of translation (Heilbron and Sapiro, 2007; Sapiro, 2008a), as opposed to the more typical practice of selecting a single level. At the most fundamental level, we have the power dynamic between the many language groups and nations that make up the global translation system, as well as its central-periphery structure. The national publishing sectors are the most important at the meso level, and various publishing firms utilise different techniques to get publication and translation rights. Finally, at the micro level, we have the many players who play an important part in the selection, editing, translation, and framing of individual works, such as publishers, literary reviewers, and translators. While being translated into English, writers from the periphery of the field face obstacles on these three levels of the worldwide translation field. International publishers, literary agents, and book fairs like the Frankfurter Buchmesse are all transnational intermediary actors, events, and institutions that Dutch authors must work with to some degree if they are to break through the barriers that exist at each of these levels and establish themselves as sacred within the English-language literary field.

MacroLevel:CompetingCentersintheGlobalTranslationField

Authors from peripheral languages and literatures need to overcome a multiplicity of barriers before they can enter the English-language publishing field. These barriers exist on different levels and specific mechanisms can be identified for each of them. Cultural flows from the periphery to the center depend, first, on the rivalry between the leading cultural centers. Processes of globalization have in various areas taken the form of

polycentric concentration (Heilbron, 2010), that is, in the rise of competing international centers. These centers do not only compete for the diffusion of their own products, they also compete for the benefits that can be gained from the transit, transfer and translation of cultural goods from other countries and regions. Having the rights to globally represent, sell or reproduce foreign artists and authors has become a significant stake in globalizing cultural fields. Translating peripheral literature allows publishers in certain centers to gain material and symbolic advantages over their competitors in other cultural centers (Bielsa, 2010: 159; Casanova, 2004).

The translation of Dutch literature illustrates the dynamics of these international rivalries. Due to the geographical and cultural proximity of the Netherlands to Germany, Dutch literature first gained international visibility through being translated into German. Nineteenth-century Germanists considered the Netherlands and Flanders as outer provinces of the larger Germanic culture. In the course of the 20th century, translations from Dutch into German increased slowly, whereas for many decades very little Dutch literature was translated into either French or English (Heilbron, 1995). During the 1980s and 1990s, several Dutch authors were for the first time published by prominent German publishers, and the Frankfurt Book Fair of 1993 – during which the Netherlands was the ‘Guest of Honor’ – is generally considered to have represented a breakthrough in the international visibility and recognition of Dutch fiction outside the Netherlands. Foreign interest in Dutch literature remains highest in Germany, where authors like Cees Nooteboom are considered to be world-class writers and are valued more highly than in other foreign countries (Heilbron, 1995; Wilterdink, forthcoming).

The rising status of Dutch literature in Germany was followed by a similar process in France. In part because the leading role of French literature has declined, the country’s publishers and critics have become more open to foreign literature. Literary translations into French have increased, including translations from (semi) peripheral literatures (Sapiro, 2008b, 2012). The number of translations from Dutch into French enjoyed a provisional peak in 2003, when the Netherlands and Flanders were ‘Guests of Honor’ at the Salon du Livre – an influential international book fair in Paris (Heilbron, 2008; Voogel and Heilbron, 2012). Following this pattern of international diffusion upwards from international regional centers such as Germany and France to the global (hyper)center, German and French translations are likely to have served as examples for translations into English (Heilbron, 1995, 2010).

Hypothesis 1a – Dutch literary works which have been translated into German and/or French are more likely to be translated into English than works which have not (yet) been translated into these central languages.

Hypothesis 1b – Positive reception of these works in the German and/or French literary field further increases their chances of being translated into English.

Meso Level: The Structure of National Literary Fields and Horizontal Isomorphism

Moving close to the actual level on which translation takes place, it is crucial to consider the functioning of the publishing field. How do publishers select foreign literary works

and acquire translation rights, in particular for works by authors from peripheral language groups?

Authors from the periphery who are reliable to be translated into English must first have enjoyed considerable success within their own national literary field. This success, which is their starting capital in the international field, can be based on two types of resources: economic and symbolic capital (Bourdieu, 1993). Economic success is derived from national book sales. National 'bestsellers' are generally works of commercial fiction produced at what Bourdieu has called the pole of large-scale production (Bourdieu, 1993; Sapiro, 2010). Fiction which originates from the more autonomous pole of small-scale production can gain specific literary recognition, that is, favorable reviews by renowned literary critics and acquiring awards which endow books and their authors with symbolic capital that can also attract foreign publishers.

Hypothesis 2—Dutch literary works that have been translated into English have first enjoyed national success, providing them with a sufficient amount of economic and/or symbolic capital to attract the attention of foreign publishers.

John Thompson (2010) has researched the changes in the English-language publishing industry as they pertain to Merchants of Culture. Despite his lack of training in the field, he identifies several trends that have bearing on translation dynamics. There has been a general trend towards more commercialisation and a higher concentration on short-term profit interests. The publishing industry has become more consolidated, similar to other areas of cultural output. Nowadays, tiny, often independent, presses have been pushed to the margins by a handful of huge, well-managed conglomerates that control the majority of the publishing industry. Although Thompson disagrees with Bourdieu on this point, he argues that tiny publications like these represent the vanguard of small-scale production, where intellectual or literary concerns take precedence over immediate financial gain. Similar consolidation has taken place in distribution as a result of the dominance of retail chains, which has severely diminished the importance of mom-and-pop bookshops. This never-ending search for the next hit has led to a process of economic rationalisation in both book production and distribution, which is driven by economies of scale. The emergence of literary agents has increased the costs that publishers must pay for novels that are seen to be potential blockbusters, another trend that Thompson (2010) notes and which has similarly diminished the importance of small publishers. The most notable effect of these changes is the dramatic tightening of commercial restrictions on publication. Thompson (2010) calls this situation the "margin squeeze," and it occurs when publishers are asked to choose between paying more for a book by literary agents and offering deeper discounts to powerful retail chains (Thompson, 2010: 310). The majority of English translations of Dutch literature are probably at the low end of the production scale, as literary translations from peripheral languages are usually not a big deal from a business perspective.² The percentage of translations on the "backlist" of smaller, typically independent publishers is higher than that of bigger, more established publishers.

to the larger publishing corporations, as they exploit market niches that are characterized by lower levels of sales and profitability (Sapiro, 2008a: 157).

Hypothesis 3a – Literature translated from Dutch is more likely to be published by publishing houses located at the pole of small-scale production, characterized by their relatively small size, independent status and predominantly literary and cultural orientation.

But how do these publishers make decisions about which books to translate? Within the pole of small-scale production, commercial criteria are less important in the acquisition of books than considerations of literary, cultural or intellectual value. The actual practices of these small publishers are generally based on their ‘elective affinity’ with similar publishers from foreign literary fields. Depending on the specific niche in which they operate and the amount of symbolic capital they possess—as manifested in the composition of their backlist—publishers which occupy a homologous position within their literary field tend to be connected to each other through international networks (Franssen and Kuipers, 2013; Sapiro, 2008a).

Instead of mimicking the profit-driven, commercial practices of the larger publishing houses, small publishing houses tend to be focused more on foreign publishers, specifically on those publishers that share a similar literary identity underscored by distinctively non-commercial aims. This leads to what has been described as ‘horizontal homogenization’ (Sapiro, 2008a: 160) or ‘horizontal isomorphism’ (Franssen and Kuipers, 2013). The strategies of these publishing houses are shaped by monitoring foreign publishers with a homologous position in their respective national publishing field which creates an ‘elective affinity’.

Hypothesis 3b – Literature translated from Dutch tends to ‘fit’ the backlist of the foreign publisher, generally based on occupying a similar position within the literary field and an elective affinity between the English-language publisher and the ‘original’ Dutch-language publisher.

In addition, cultural activity within the pole of small-scale production often relies on financial support from non-profit organizations, foundations, cultural institutions and/or national governments (Sapiro, 2010: 425). The possibility for (semi)peripheral writers to successfully transcend their national literary field and obtain international recognition often depends on the cultural policies adopted by nation-states and public agencies, which are aimed at increasing the international visibility of their culture. Since the 1950s, the Dutch government has actively stimulated translations of Dutch literature through a non-profit foundation, the Dutch Foundation for Literature (DFL). The DFL not only provides financial support for translations from Dutch literature, it also monitors the quality of translations and translators and suggests specific books and authors to foreign publishers. Many works which have been translated with the support of the DFL would probably not have been translated otherwise, as the economic risks involved for foreign publishers to translate books from relatively unknown authors would be too big.

MicroLevel:GatekeepingPracticesandtheReceptionofForeignLiterature

The actual process of publishing translations involves the work of various people – editors, literary specialists, agents, translators – who operate within the constraints imposed on them by both the global translation field and the (supra)national literary field. This group consists of all those people who are the actual intermediaries between the foreign author and the new audience. Since the process of translation is carried out by this group, it is important to consider their specific practices as well, and to pay special attention to those who have played an important role in overcoming the barriers Dutch authors encounter.

Hypothesis 4 – Dutch literary works which have been translated into English will have gained the favor of particular foreign intermediaries – i.e. editors, publishers, scouts, agents, critics – who have significantly contributed to the international visibility of the translated author(s).

Among the various intermediaries, editors have a special importance. Although publishers are often held to be central actors in the acquisition of translation rights, editors are the ones whomake these selection from the globally available pool of foreign literature and hence function as the actual ‘gatekeepers’ of the literary field. With respect to the practice of translation, they mediate between different national fields and often have the final say about foreign works to be translated (Franssen and Kuipers, 2013). Together with their advisors, experts and scouts, they are in charge of classifying books and authors, thus drawing a ‘symbolic boundary’ (Lamont and Molnár, 2001) between those who are worth acquiring and those who are not.

In assessing the value of foreign literary works, editors use several indicators, such as previous sales, literary awards generated, recommendations from their peers and the backlist of their publishing house. At the heart of this process lies what Thompson (2010) calls the ‘web of collective belief’:

At the end of the day, it is a specific combination of judgments and opinions, of who thinks what and why they think about it, that determines whether a house will buy a book and, if so, how much they are willing to pay for it. (Thompson, 2010: 204)

This belief is a more or less coherent, practical sense of what should and should not be published by the publisher in question. Individual editors operate on the basis of their specific version of this set of shared views and practices. Depending on whether the editor is active within the pole of large-scale or small-scale production, they legitimize their choices for the acquisition of certain titles in fundamentally different ways.

In order to compete with indigenous books and translations from other languages, Dutch authors have to be perceived and presented as having a ‘special quality’. Drawing attention to peripheral and otherwise unknown literatures requires specific ‘framing’ strategies. The particular way in which these titles are ‘framed’ is to a certain extent dependent on the location within the spectrum of cultural production. For publishers

such as those that operate on a massive scale, obtaining titles like "bestsellers" and others that are commercially appealing will present these books in a certain way, highlighting their economic success in the Netherlands, how they are "easily accessible" to a diverse audience, or drawing comparisons between the Dutch author and popular writers from the United Kingdom or the United States who write in the same genre. Alternatively, unique literary and cultural norms are more likely to shape Dutch literature. Here, the title's lauded literary qualities take precedence over its commercial success; when discussing Dutch literature in the English-language field, there are two main ways to frame it: as "typically Dutch" or as having a "cosmopolitan quality" (for more on this, see Wilterdink, forthcoming). When describing titles as "typically Dutch," there are often four separate but related approaches. First, they do this by making use of a literary style that is uniquely Dutch; this style is defined by a realist portrayal of daily life that is detailed, accurate, and solemn. The second way of looking at it is that the book is a microcosm of Dutch culture. It embodies the paradoxical combination of the more traditional Calvinist aspects of Dutch society (realism, sobriety, directness, practicality, and entrepreneurship) with the more modern connections to drug use, prostitution, and cultural diversity. Particular Dutch landscapes are mentioned in the third frame, including the polder, windmills, canals, and dykes around the city of Amsterdam. The fourth point is that books may be analysed by looking at how they portray the Dutch viewpoint on and involvement in significant historical events like colonisation or WWII. Each of these four categories represents a different facet of Dutch literature's portrayal of Dutch culture to an international audience (cf. Griswold, 1981). What is "typically Dutch" might change depending on the style. Some people think that Dutch children's novels are especially defiant (Whitmore, 2013). Titles that are shown as having certain "cosmopolitan qualities" are usually presented in one of four ways. First, certain Dutch books are lauded for their unique European style, which is described as more philosophical, experimental, fantastical, and meta-fictional than the "typically Dutch" realistic style. Secondly, the way in which Dutch works address the hotly debated topic of immigration—namely, the tensions that arise between the migrant's home culture and the new one—is one way to see them. Thirdly, there are some literary traits shared by famous English and American writers with whom Dutch authors and their works are comparable. As a result of its lengthy and fruitful history of receiving international critical praise and being seen as having ongoing and significant significance within its area, the book may be considered a classic, which brings us to our fourth point.

Hypothesis 5 – Depending on the location of the title within the literary field, Dutch titles will be 'framed' so as to emphasize either symbolic or economic qualities. Among the symbolic qualities several literary frames are employed to present trans-lated titles as more 'typically Dutch' – in terms of their style, culture, landscapes and historical events—or as having a more 'cosmopolitan quality'—through their ascribed employment of the 'European style', treatment of the issue of immigration, comparability to established authors or status as a 'classic'. In contrast, the more economically

oriented frames value books because of their high sales – ‘bestseller’ – and being ‘easily accessible’ to a large audience.

The Presentation and Reception of Dutch Fiction Translated to the English Language

We built a database that includes information about Dutch literary works that were translated into English in 2010 so that we can see how well the previously described theoretical framework and proposed multi-level approach work for understanding cultural flows from the periphery to the centre. The Foundation for the Production and Translation of Dutch Literature (now called the Dutch Foundation for Literature) provides the Translations and Translators database, which is the primary source of data on these works. In comparison to the widely used Index Translationum, this database contains a far larger collection of translations from Dutch literature, including both titles that have received financial support and those that have not. It has also shown to be more comprehensive and reliable (Voogel and Heilbron, 2012). The number of titles translated into English in 2010 reached seventy-four at the time of data collection in the fall of 2011. A total of sixty-four literary works, spanning several genres such as fiction, non-fiction, children's books, poetry, travel literature, comics, and plays, survived after the translation anthologies were removed. Table 1 provides a summary of all English-language works translated by the Dutch Foundation for Literature, organised by genre and funding level. According to Table 1, the Dutch Foundation for Literature provided financial assistance for the translation of almost 60% of the titles into English, excluding fiction. We will mostly use the 23 titles in this area as our data corpus since fiction was our primary focus.³ The studies will continue to take into account the distinction between supported and unsupported titles. We used more than a hundred websites and other sources to gather information about the twenty-three books that were part of the study. These included author and publisher websites, Amazon, the Dutch Literary Museum, and reviews in prominent newspapers like *The Times*, *The Independent*, *The Guardian*, *The Daily Telegraph*, and *The Wall Street Journal* (some of which were retrieved through the LexisNexis database). Literary critics give more in-depth analyses, while writers, publishers, retailers (Amazon), and cultural organisations like the Dutch Foundation for Literature provide information on particular works and authors. The public's view of translated Dutch writers is "framed" by how they are presented and received, as well as by the names of their works. For more on framing, see Goffman (1974). They decipher and interpret the foreign book. One way to understand why these books were chosen to be translated into English is to look at how they were presented and how people responded to them. It is necessary to critically reflect on the data sources used in this study and the constraints they offer before moving forward with the analysis. Firstly, because the data is collected after the fact, it cannot capture any significant aspects that may have happened during the actual process of translating the titles into English that are being studied. This is connected to the following

Table 1. Overview of the absolute and relative numbers of Dutch titles translated into English in 2010 per genre, including the distinction between titles which were translated into English with and without the support of the DFL.

	Fiction	Non-fiction	Children's books	Poetry	Travelliterature/ comics/plays	Total
Supported by the DFL	8	12	9	3	4	36
Not supported by the DFL	15	7	5	1	0	28
Total	23	19	14	4	4	64

DFL=Dutch Foundation for Literature.

Source: Dutch Foundation for Literature. *Translators and Translations* database. Available at: <http://www.nlpvf.nl/vertalingendb/search1.php> (accessed 5 September 2011).

limitation, namely that the data are derived from a limited variety of publicly available sources which were not always equally available for each title and tend to emphasize certain aspects more while downplaying others in their framing, limiting the amounts of relevant information available per title. Last, but not least, in order to further facilitate comparison between the cases, the qualitative data will be reduced to quantifiable indicators which leaves out room for potential important qualitative variances encountered between titles in their translation into English. Having said that, we found that the available data for each of the titles under study were sufficient enough in order for us to explore whether the outlined multi-level field approach can be used to study cultural flows from the periphery to the (hyper)centers of our global literary field.

Crossing Macro-Level Boundaries: From the Periphery to the Center

Before gaining access to the dominant English-

language center, it is expected that Dutch writers have passed through international regional centers first. In the case of translated Dutch authors, this means that they were probably translated into German and/or French before being translated into English (hypothesis 1a). It may be hypothesized, further-more, that either economic or symbolic success in the German and/or French literary fields makes it even more likely that these titles will be translated into English (hypothesis 1b).

Analyzing the ways in which each of the titles has been presented and received in Germany and/or France allows a confirmation or rejection of the hypotheses. Table 2 presents a summary of the analyses per individual title.⁵

When considering the number of titles translated into German and French before being translated into English, hypothesis 1a can be confirmed since two-thirds of the titles under study were retranslated into German and/or French before they were published in English. In line with previous studies of translated Dutch literature (e.g. Heilbron, 1999; Wilterdink, forthcoming), Germany is indeed the most significant market for Dutch authors in quantitative as well as in qualitative terms, that is, for obtaining some measure of international visibility. Although France plays a relatively limited role in the international diffusion of Dutch literature compared to Germany, French still remains the second most important target language for Dutch translations.

Table2.Summaryoftheanalysesofmacro-levelhypothesis1.

	Hypothesis1a		Hypothesis1b	
	Publishedin German	Publishedin French	Success inGerman y	Success inFrance
SupportedbytheDFL(8titles)	6	5	4	3
NotSupported by the DFL (15 titles)	13	6	9	1
Total(23titles)	19	11	13	4

DFL=DutchFoundationforLiterature.

In terms of either economic or symbolic success, the pattern is less pronounced. A total of 13 titles (more than half) were commercially and/or critically acclaimed in Germany; in France, however, their success was relatively marginal. These results are illustrative of the importance of geographical, cultural and historical proximity between the Netherlands and Germany, which is in line with the existing historical pattern of translations made from Dutch literature, which shows an overwhelming dominance of translations into German (see Heilbron and van Es, forthcoming).

Crossing Meso-

Level Boundaries: The Acquisition of Capital and Horizontal Isomorphism

Before gaining access to international regional centers, however, Dutch authors first have to acquire economic and/or symbolic capital in their own national literary field (hypothesis 2). A writer who has gathered economic capital is likely to be praised for commercially successful work, which is often presented as being a ‘major bestseller’. On the websites of authors, publishers and large retailers, the qualification ‘bestseller’ is regularly accompanied by national sales figures.

In a similar vein, authors can also be presented in such a way that their symbolic capital appears as their predominant quality. By considering the authors under study in terms of their critical literary acclaim, indicated by literary awards and positive reviews by renowned critics, it is possible to distinguish a group of writers whose reputation depends primarily on their symbolic capital. In addition to analyzing the framing of these authors on the websites of the authors and publishers themselves, Amazon, the Dutch Foundation for Literature, reviews in renowned newspapers and magazines, and the database of the Literary Museum (Letterkundig Museum) were used in verifying literary awards won by the authors under study. Table 3 summarizes the findings.

Almost all Dutch authors who have been translated into English have enjoyed considerable amounts of symbolic success. Economic capital, on the other hand, was less frequently encountered for the cases under study. Within the group of titles financially supported by the Dutch Foundation for Literature, only two titles can be considered as commercially successful works of literature. Since these commercially successful books tend to ‘sell themselves’, making financial aid available is often not necessary for selling the translation rights.

Table 3. Summary of the analyses of meso-level hypothesis 2.

	Hypothesis 2	
	a. Economic Success	b. Symbolic Success
Supported by the DFL (8 titles)	2	7
Not Supported by the DFL (15 titles)	7	13
Total (23 titles)	9	20

DFL=Dutch Foundation for Literature.

It is therefore not surprising that domestic economic success for Dutch authors is more prevalent within the unsupported group (almost half of the titles) than in the supported group (a quarter of the titles). Commercial authors, such as Kluun and his best-seller novel *Komteenvrouw bij de dokter* (translated as *Love Life*) are able to rely solely on their economic capital to transcend their national literary fields, despite the novel's negative reception among literary critics. Selling over a million copies (author website: Kluun) and described as the most-sold novel in the Netherlands ever (publisher website: Podium), the critics denounced Kluun's work as 'a symbol of all that is wrong with modern society' (Franks, 2007: 4). Kluun's profit-driven exploitation of cancer was written in 'the powerless literary language of a 12-year-old' (Franks, 2007: 4).

However, as the case of Esther Verhoef illustrates, the acquisition of economic capital does not necessarily exclude symbolic recognition. Being famous for writing psychological thrillers 'in the best-selling tradition of Nicci French' (publisher website: F&M), she has received several awards for excellence within her genre (author website: letterkundig museum.nl). All in all, only one title under study receives significant amounts of economic capital, and most obtained symbolic capital, thus confirming hypothesis 2. The capital acquired by the author in both national and international regional fields determines to a large extent the location of the author within the publishing field. Being commercially successful makes an author more prone to be published at the commercial pole of large-scale production, whereas more critically acclaimed writers are more likely to be published by small-scale publishers. A translation of peripheral literature are frequently held to occupy a 'niche position' within the global literary field of publishing (Heilbron, 1995; Luey, 2001; Sapiro, 2008a), our titles under study are expected to be published mainly by publishers located at the pole of small-scale production (Hypothesis 3a).

By analyzing the profile of the English-language publisher – frequently described in the 'about us' section or in the 'mission statement' on their website – it can be assessed whether they operate predominantly within the pole of large- or small-scale production. Indicators, such as the publisher's size, juridical and financial status (independent, part of larger media conglomerate, receiving financial aid), goals and motivations (profit-driven and/or enabling access to [foreign] critically acclaimed literature) and amount of translations in the backlist (e.g. Sapiro, 2008a: 156) will, where available, be used to determine the profile of the English-language publisher of Dutch translations. In general, clear statements are made on behalf of the publishers about being

Table 4. Summary of the analyses of the meso-level hypotheses.

	Hypothesis 3	
	a. English literary publisher	b. Similarity between Dutch and foreign publisher
Supported by the DFL (8 titles)	7	3
Not Supported by the DFL (15 titles)	3	8
Total (23 titles)	10	11

DFL=Dutch Foundation for Literature.

more oriented towards publishing ‘quality literature’ – and hence are located at the pole of small-scale production – or, in contrast, have more defined commercial interests underlying their publishing activities – indicative of their operation within the pole of large-scale production.

It has been argued that foreign publishers make decisions about translations on the basis of elective affinities (Franssen and Kuipers, 2013; Sapiro, 2008a) between the original Dutch publisher and the English-language publishing house (Hypothesis 3b). By comparing the publisher’s profile of the ‘original’ Dutch publication with their English-language counterpart, it can be assessed whether or not both publishers converge in terms of their publishing practices. A summary of the analysis of these hypotheses can be found in Table 4.

In interpreting these results, hypothesis 3a can only be partially confirmed. The big difference between titles supported by the Dutch Foundation for Literature and unsupported titles can be attributed to the fact that the Dutch Foundation for Literature only provides financial support to publishing projects which are commercially difficult to publish otherwise (e.g. Sapiro, 2010; Thompson, 2010). The larger share of the unsupported titles is indeed published by large-scale publishers within the English-language field, due to the relatively larger amount of commercially successful titles within this group. This seems indicative of the competition which exists at the pole of large-scale production, driving some English-language commercial publishers to translate peripheral literature which might in the long run be profitable. This is in line with the conclusion of Franssen (2015), where he states that innovation and cultural diversity are playing an increasingly important role in the publishing practices of larger commercial English-language publishing houses.

Moving on to the comparative analysis of the English-language and Dutch publishers, hypothesis 3b can also be partially confirmed. Whereas almost half of the titles under study show a similarity between both publishers, the small majority of these titles were published by different publishing houses, occasionally even at opposite poles of the field of cultural production. A first explanation for this finding would be that both publishers are operating in different worlds: one that is engaged in national publishing of Dutch literature, while the others devote a large share of their activities to translating and publishing foreign literature within the English-language field. The case of Kluun may again serve as an example. His Dutch publisher Podium is an independent, small publisher

Pan Books, a division of the British MacMillan Publishing empire, is responsible for publishing a wide variety of popular, "commercial," fiction in English, while Podium focusses on publishing modern Dutch and translated literature. Despite apparent differences between the indigenous and foreign publishers, the most important thing is that Kluun was a huge financial success in the Netherlands even though it was released by a tiny publisher; on the other hand, literary reviewers were in complete agreement that it was terrible. On the other hand, there were occasions when the situation was less clean and white, like *Joe Speedboat* by Tommy Wieringa, where the publishers seemed to have different opinions. A prominent Dutch literary publisher, De BezigeBij has been around for a long time and has published works by many famous writers, including Hugo Claus, Cees Nooteboom, Gerard Reve, and Harry Mulisch. A young and independent English publisher, Portobello Books is dedicated to bringing international authors into the English-language field. They call themselves "a home to original and independent-minded writers, many of them from outside the UK, and a third of them coming into English in translation" (website: Portobello Books). Despite appearing to be in poles apart in their respective literary fields, both publishers share a common goal: to publish high-quality literature while rejecting commercial publishing practices and putting more emphasis on works by highly regarded authors. The internal diversity of the English-language publishing sector must also be considered. The acquisition of the rights to publish foreign literature in English is a matter of some rivalry among English-language publishers operating within their separate national publishing sectors, such as the Australian, Canadian, North American, and British publishing industries. The majority of the English-language publishers in our sample were based in the UK, which highlights the growing significance of the English-language literary sector in the UK for Dutch literature that has been translated into English over the last decade. Despite American publishers' inclination to embrace cultural diversity, British publishers started showing a growing interest in acquiring Dutch literature around the year 2000. They then proceed to sell it to their American "colleagues" for exorbitant prices (Wester, 2000). The 'double publications' of *Bride Flight* by Marieke van den Pol (in both the UK and Australia in 2010) and *Eline Vere* by Louis Couperus (in the UK and the US in 2010) show that the selling and re-selling of translation rights between English-language publishing fields can happen very quickly. In eight of these instances, the DFL served as a crucial go-between for publishers in the Dutch and English-language literary industries, which explains why most of the publications in the DFL-supported group were published by separate companies. They send them information on possibly intriguing Dutch titles since the DFL has a global network of publishers. By providing regular updates, the Dutch Foundation for Literature (DFL) makes it easier for foreign publishers to acquire and translate works from other countries without having to spend as much time and energy scouring the Internet for the "right" Dutch publishing houses. Filling a comparable role inside each country

literary field and having an 'elective affinity' with one another is less important when the process of translation is informed and supported by the DFL than when it is not.

Crossing Micro-Level Boundaries: The Power of Intermediary Actors

Arriving at the actual process through which translation takes place, it has first been said that the various actors engaged in this process—editors, literary specialists/critics, agents and translators—play an important role in consecrating foreign, peripheral literature within their domestic literary field (Franssen and Kuipers, 2013; Heilbron, 2010; Sapiro, 2010). Gaining the favor of prestigious intermediary actors contributes significantly to the chances of entering the English-language field and of gaining some measure of visibility, attention and appreciation (hypothesis 4).

Due to the limitations of this research discussed earlier, we have not been able to contact the individual editors involved in the process of translating the Dutch titles under study into English, as well as the literary agents and literary scouts. These actors were completely absent in the presentation and reception of the translated titles under study, making it unfortunately not possible for us to systematically gather data on the particular role and importance of these actors in the translation process. Therefore we have chosen to focus the analysis on the translators on the one hand and the literary critics on the other, in terms of how their reputation in the field—acquired symbolic capital—has contributed to the entering of Dutch literature into the English-language field. Following this line of thought, we first set out to discern the amount of symbolic capital gathered by the individual translators involved in translating the cases under study. Through looking at the way in which the translator is being mentioned in the presentation and reception of the title abroad, as well as looking up their personal website (if available) and profiles to take notice of any awards or other literary distinctions earned by the translator, a good image of their status within their respective fields can be assessed.

In addition, all 23 titles and their authors under study will be analyzed in terms of their reception within the English-language field in renowned magazines and newspapers by literary critics. Reviews of each title were searched for in the *LexisNexis* database, as well as the websites of prestigious English-language magazines and newspapers. Reviews have been analyzed in terms of who wrote them and whether or not the Dutch author and his/her work were positively valued. Having gained the favor of having both a prestigious translator and positive reviews written by renowned literary critics allows for an increased visibility of Dutch authors and their works within the English-language literary field.

Mentioning prestigious intermediary actors who have worked on the book itself (translators) and who have judged the book from their position of expertise (literary critics), in the presentation and reception of foreign titles amidst a new audience, can in itself be seen as an important part of the 'framing' of a specific title. Legitimizing the consecration of peripheral Dutch literature proceeds through emphasizing either a novel's symbolic or its commercial qualities, depending on the location of the title within the publishing field (hypothesis 5).

When a title can be located, on the one hand, more towards the pole of small-scale production, it is expected that it will be framed accordingly through two main literary frames: ‘typically Dutch’ and ‘cosmopolitan qualities’. Both of these are further divided into four sub-frames which are frequently used in the framing of translated Dutch literature (Wilterdink, forthcoming). Dutch titles can thus be framed as ‘typically Dutch’ in their employment of atypical realistic, descriptive, detailed, sober and pragmatic style of writing, their relation to typically Dutch cultural values derived from Calvinism and tolerance, drawing on a particular Dutch landscape or providing a typically Dutch perspective on a major historical episode. In addition, titles can also be framed as having ‘cosmopolitan qualities’, employing a more typically European, philosophical, meta-fictional style, treatment of the issue of migration, being comparable to an established international writer (‘comp’) or deemed a ‘classic’. Those titles which are, on the other hand, located at the pole of large-scale production are expected to be presented more through commercial frames, referring to the title as a ‘bestseller’ or as being deemed ‘easily accessible’ for a large audience.

Table 5 presents a summarized overview of the analyses of each individual case, in terms of having prestigious intermediary actors facilitating the introduction of the author and his/her title to the English-language public (hypothesis 4). The way(s) in which each title is framed within the English-language literary field (hypothesis 5) can be found in Table 6.

Starting out by relating these results to hypothesis 4, it is first important to note that a total of 16 translators are responsible for the 23 English translations of Dutch fiction in 2010. One very important translator in this respect is Paul Vincent, who translated four of the titles under study into English. According to the English-language publisher of Dutch literature, Holland Park Press, Paul Vincent has been ‘one of the most renowned translators of Dutch literature for the past twenty years [...] His work is internationally recognized and he has won quite a few major awards’ (website: Holland Park Press). Another prestigious translator of Dutch (historical) fiction is Ina Rilke, who translated the works of Louis Couperus and Hella Haasse into English in 2010. In addition to having been awarded the *Vondel Translation Prize* in 1999, Ina Rilke is also frequently praised by renowned literary critics, such as Paul Binding – an important reviewer of Dutch literature in the UK (interview DFL) – for her translations. About Rilke’s translation of WF Hermans’ *De Donkere Kamer van Damokles* (*The Darkroom of Damocles*), Binding illustratively states: ‘To read this novel in Ina Rilke’s sensitive, supple English is a literary experience of the rarest kind’ (website: Ina Rilke; Binding, 2007: n.p.).

Looking at the total numbers from Table 5, we can say that a small majority of the titles under study have been translated by a renowned translator and/or have received positive recommendations in prestigious English-language magazines/newspapers, leaning towards a confirmation of hypothesis 4. Taking a closer look at both groups of titles reveals that having prestigious intermediary actors is relatively more frequent within the DFL-supported group compared to the group of unsupported titles. This can be explained by the intermediary role of the DFL, as they keep internal records of ‘good’ translators which they can recommend to foreign publishers to call upon when deciding to translate with support from the DFL. Bringing less risk into the process of translation, as well as being more likely to gain the favor of literary critics abroad, involving a renowned and

Table 5. Summary of the analysis of micro-level hypothesis 4.

	Hypothesis 4
	High level of symbolic capital 'intermediary actors'
Supported by the DFL (8 titles)	6
Not supported by the DFL (15 titles)	8
Total (23 titles)	14

DFL=Dutch Foundation for Literature.

awarded translator in the process seems to have a positive effect on the entrance of a Dutch author into the English-language literary field.

However, a positive evaluation of foreign literature amidst a new audience does not rest on being connected to renowned intermediary actors alone, as this goes accompanied by framing these titles to reflect their ascribed symbolic or commercial qualities. Out of the 23 titles under study, not one proved to be unable to be framed by any of the afore-mentioned frames (see Table 6).

Looking at Table 6, it can be stated that in general Dutch translated works are pre-sented and received through literary frames, which in most (almost all) cases involved a mentioning of their realistic and detailed depiction of everyday life. Further, the majority of the translated titles under study were compared in one way or the other to internationally renowned and prestigious authors, both from within and outside the Netherlands. In addition, over one-third of the translated titles were framed in relation to their description of a historical event in which the Dutch were involved, such as the colonial writings of Louis Couperus, Hella S Haase and Cynthia McLeod, or depictions of the Low Countries during and immediately after the Second World War in the novels of Louis Paul Boon and Otto de Kat. Overall, both the literary frames 'typically Dutch' and 'cosmopolitan quality' are relatively more frequently applicable to the titles translated with the support of the DFL compared to those which have not received support. As the non-supported group of titles is made up of relatively more commercially successful fiction, it is in line with expectations that we find here more commercial framing in terms of easily accessible literature and bestsellers.

Those titles which were framed mainly in order to highlight their economic qualities, were generally found within the non-supported group, which is reflected in the nature of the 'comp' frames encountered within this group as well. Being largely compared to similar, bestselling authors – Nicci French is a popular 'comp' to Simone van der Vlugt as well as Esther Verhoef – the framing of these titles is in line with the fact that the large majority of these titles are published by publishing houses located at the commercial, large-scale pole of their literary field (see hypothesis 3a). Similarly corresponding to the fact that by far the largest share of the supported titles were published by small-scale, independent publishers, the titles within this group were relatively more framed to signify their symbolic value as 'quality' literature. This encompassed at times both typically Dutch as well as more cosmopolitan qualities in their presentation and reception in the

Table 6. Summary of the analysis of micro-level hypothesis 5.

	Literary Frames				Commercial Frames					
	Typically Dutch				Cosmopolitan Quality				Economic Qualities	
	Style (Realism, everyday and/or life)	Culture (Calvinism, Tolerance)	Landscapes (Amsterdam, dykes etc.)	Historical (Colonisation and/or Second World War)	European Style (Philosophical, meta-fiction)	Migration	'Comp'	'Classic'	'easily accessible'	'bestseller'
Supported by the DFL (8 Titles)	7	3	1	4	2	2	5	2	1	4
Not Supported by the DFL (15 Titles)	13	2	2	5	2	3	9	2	8	7

DFL=Dutch Foundation for Literature.

field of English literature. It follows from this that in the case of framing translated Dutch literature, the employment of either more literary frames or more commercial ones, is indeed strongly related to the location of the English-language publisher in their respective fields, confirming hypothesis 5.

‘Fiction from the Periphery’: Implications of the Dutch Case

Starting from the notion that the global literary field is increasingly dominated by English-language literature, this article aimed at improving our understanding of the workings of this global literary field by looking at the way(s) in which translated literature from a peripheral country – the Netherlands – gains access to the English-language publishing world. In acknowledging the multiple levels on which the process of translation takes place, a multi-level field framework was outlined on the macro, meso and micro levels. After exploring this framework by means of analyzing the ways in which 23 Dutch fiction titles have been translated into English in 2010, it can be concluded that this process needs to be seen as an obstacle race in which progressively more and more authors are unsuccessful in overcoming the boundaries imposed upon them at various levels and stages into the translation process.

The first and most important boundary which Dutch authors have to overcome is that of their own national literary field by means of acquiring significant amounts of economic and/or symbolic capital (hypothesis 2). A large majority (20 titles) had indeed acquired especially significant symbolic capital in the Dutch literary field, which was about twice as frequent as their economic success. The acquisition of symbolic capital was particularly important in order to receive further aid from the Dutch Foundation for Literature, further increasing the chances of a successful translation not only due to their financial support in the process of translation but also due to their vast network of foreign publishers, translators and other intermediaries. The DFL thus does not only provide the necessary financial security for translating Dutch literature, it is also active in increasing its international visibility, contributing to the potential success of Dutch authors and novels in international regional centers. Being a significant characteristic of the niche market of translated peripheral literature located at the pole of small-scale production, support from non-profit institutions is often a necessary precondition for the translation process.

The importance of the Dutch Foundation for Literature and other similar institutions remains frequently absent from analyses of the dynamics of the global literary field, which mainly focus on the dominant flows from the center to the periphery. As the English-language field operates mainly without interference from public institutions, a focus on the role of actors such as publishers, editors, agents and literary scouts on the translation process results in omitting the (potential) influence of state agencies. Shifting the focus to cultural flows from the periphery to the center, as we have shown, illustrates the overall importance of public institutions in facilitating the translation process of peripheral literature into central languages. Though this has been mentioned in several previous studies (e.g. Heilbron, 1995; Sapiro, 2010), future comparative research toward the importance of public institutions in the translation process within other peripheral literary fields is needed.

Successfully getting access to the international regional centers of Germany and France is similarly important in order for Dutch authors to overcome macro-level barriers and gain access to the English-language field. Out of the titles under study, roughly two-thirds were translated into German or French prior to being translated into English in 2010 (hypothesis 1a), underscoring the importance of particularly the German publishing field for providing international visibility for Dutch literature. Although this was significantly less in the case of France, the French publishing field remains important for Dutch literature to increase its international visibility. The fact that about half of the titles under study had subsequent economic or symbolic success in Germany, showed that this is a contributing factor to eventually becoming translated into English (hypothesis 1b).

The importance of the regional center of Germany for Dutch literature in the process of gaining access to the English-language literary field points towards the relevance of further research into the importance of regional centers in facilitating the process of translating (semi)peripheral literature into English. Additionally, future studies might also look more into the cumulative effect of gaining capital in different literary fields – i.e. first gaining capital in a national field and then in regional field(s) – on the process of translation into English. This seems to manifest the underlying mechanics of polycentric concentration of the global literary field, where there is a rather gradual, cumulative transition of translations of peripheral literature via regional centers to the English-language hypercenter instead of a more sudden transition (Heilbron, 2010). However, further systematic research is needed to prove this further.

In finding a suitable publisher within the English language field, Dutch literature can overcome the meso-level boundaries of this field through being published by small-scale independent publishers focused on quality literature (hypothesis 3a), which was mainly the case in the supported group of titles, as the vast majority of titles within the non-supported group were published by more commercial publishing houses. On the other hand, sharing an ‘elective affinity’ between the original Dutch publisher and the publisher of the English translation (hypothesis 3b) was particularly important for over half of the titles within the non-supported group. This contrast between the supported and non-supported group of titles can be interpreted as an effect of the role of the DFL in bringing otherwise unconnected publishers into contact with each other and informing them on potentially interesting Dutch titles to translate and publish. As the non-supported group of titles has not received the aid of the DFL, it makes sense that an ‘elective affinity’ between publishers was encountered relatively more here, as the publishers need to rely on their own networks in acquiring new, foreign works.

Finally, Dutch authors and their works need to overcome the micro-level boundaries encountered within the English-language field in their presentation and reception among a new audience. In doing so, the majority of the titles under study made mention of the involvement of critically acclaimed translators who translated the novel in a praiseworthy way (hypothesis 4). In addition, all the titles under study were framed in one way or another, signifying either their symbolic, literary qualities or presenting the title and author more in commercial frames to highlight their economic success, based on the position of the title and English-language publisher in their respective English-language field (hypothesis 5). Following this, the fact that there are relatively more titles within the non-supported group which are commercially framed can be explained by the

fact that a large share of these titles has been published by commercial publishers located at the pole of large-scale production in the English-language publishing field. In contrast, the larger share of supported titles are framed to signify their symbolic and literary qualities, corresponding to their overall translation and publication by small-scale, independent literary publishers in all but one of the cases.

The case of Dutch fiction in English translation shows that what we have called a multi-level field approach is well suited to understand transnational cultural flows from the periphery to the center. While field theory is most commonly used to understand national and international power relations and flows from the center to the periphery, it can be fruitfully used also to identify the mechanisms by which authors from the periphery overcome barriers of access to the English-language publishing field. From a consistently relational perspective, which avoids dichotomies, there is no contradiction between cultural flows from the center to the periphery and from the periphery to the center. Both processes take place in competitive fields in which actors dispose of unequal resources and are subjected to power relations. For the dynamics of the global literary field, three specific mechanisms are of particular importance. First, the polycentric structure of the global field highlights the particular role of international regional centers for obtaining international visibility for (semi)peripheral literatures. Second, the distinction between the poles of large-scale and small-scale production is crucial, in particular for the translation into English of literature originating from the (semi)periphery. Third, and related to the previous point, is the fact that the distinction between symbolic and economic capital is equally significant. Smaller publishing houses that are more oriented towards proper literary and symbolic recognition, and are able to obtain financial and other support from non-profit foundations which support cultural diversity, play a crucial role in translating fiction from the (semi)periphery.

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Notes

1. For an elaboration on the field concept, see Bourdieu (1993) as well as his work on the social conditions of the international circulation of cultural goods (Bourdieu, 1999). Additionally, for a discussion on the emergence of global literary fields existing next to national fields, see Casanova (2004).
2. In practice this seems to deviate between genres. Whereas literary translations of Dutch literature are commonly conceived to be published at the pole of small-scale production, recent studies have illustrated how in particular Dutch children's literature is lucrative for large, conglomerate English-language publishers due to their high sales (Whitmore, 2013: p. 83).

3. For an in-depth overview on the 23 fiction titles which will be used in this study, see Appendix A.
4. For an overview on the main sources which were used per title, see Appendix B.
5. For a more elaborate overview on the confirmation or refutation of the hypotheses per title on the macro, meso and micro levels, see Appendices C, D, E and F.

Supplemental material

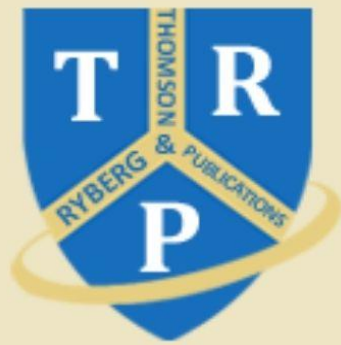
The online appendices are available at <http://cus.sagepub.com/supplemental>.

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