

A Hybrid Art

Literary Non-fiction in the Netherlands and

Non-fiction Translation Policy

(a study carried out for the Dutch Foundation for Literature)

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Introduction

In the Netherlands, non-fiction is quickly gaining ground. The reading public seems to be developing an increasing interest in non-fiction, and the genre is taking up a substantial part of publishers' title lists in the Netherlands.

Because of the expansion of the genre, literary translators are more likely to come in contact with the translation of non-fiction during their translating career. The governmental body that subsidises literary translators in the Netherlands is the Dutch Foundation of Literature (Fonds voor de Letteren) and they – in reaction to the expansion of the non-fiction genre – want to reassess their subsidiary policy for the translation of cultural important non-fiction. To develop a fitting policy for non-fiction, the foundation has requested me to reassess their policy, examine the policies of other literary funds regarding non-fiction and the policies of several literary publishers, and to interview non-fiction editors at literary publishers and send questionnaires to literary translators to see how actors within the literary field deal with non-fiction. This study¹ was carried out from May to August 2009, is presented to the foundation in Dutch and is part of this thesis.

The primary focus of the Dutch Foundation of Literature is the stimulation of quality and availability of Dutch and Frisian literature. This quality is assessed based on the literary importance of the works for which subsidies are requested, but this procedure creates problems for the evaluation of non-fiction. The literary quality of non-fiction seems to be more difficult to assess than the literary quality of fiction. Since the non-fiction genre envelopes everything from computer manuals to historical biographies, the scope of this thesis is limited to literary non-fiction.

¹ Titled: "Cultureel belangrijke non-fictie en vertaling: een studie naar het beleid van fondsen en uitgeverijen van cultureel belangrijke non-fictie en non-fictievertalers"



Literary non-fiction seems to correspond to both fiction and non-fiction and has been a topic of discussion ever since the term was coined. Subgenres overlap and reveal the hybrid nature of literary non-fiction, and different terms seem to refer to the same genre. By re-evaluating literary non-fiction as a genre, looking at how literary non-fiction is evaluated in The Netherlands and abroad and regarding how classifications are made and by whom, the problematic nature of literary non-fiction is portrayed. This forms the framework of the study carried out for the Dutch Foundation of Literature. This examination of literary non-fiction does not lead to clear definition of the genre, but is used as a point of reference of the problems relating to the non-fiction policy of the Dutch Foundation of Literature.

It is often claimed that the roots of literary non-fiction have sprung from journalism. The genre is often considered a product of the social reforms in the 1960s and the radical changes within journalism as a reaction to these reforms. In the sixties, journalists began turning to fictional devices to spice up their journalistic stories, and the border between fiction and non-fiction became clouded. This change in journalism is often referred to as *New Journalism*. This development was initially visible in the United States and remarked upon by literary scholars in the 1970s. The historical discussion of literary non-fiction will focus mainly on Anglo-Saxon sources. The United States is regarded the 'birthplace' of literary non-fiction, which evolved from new journalistic texts.

When regarding non-fiction as a genre, fiction has to be defined first. Fiction can be easily explained as a 'made up' or 'imagined' text. But despite the fact that fiction is the product of the author's imagination, it can still hold true elements. The opposite seems more problematic: if the text is labelled non-fiction, the readers are expecting to read something 'true'. But as all art forms, non-fiction is merely a representation of reality, and not reality itself. So the author could be wrong, their research inadequate or the author could



simply regard reality in a different way than the reader does. All these issues are found in the four subgenres presented in this thesis, which are the non-fiction novel, the autobiography, the biography and the essay.

The non-fiction novel is a product of *New Journalism*. The new journalists were writing more personal articles in which they were using fictional devices, such as dialogue or the portrayal of thought. The next development were novels which were thoroughly researched. A well-known non-fiction novel is *In Cold Blood* by Truman Capote, who, by writing a thoroughly researched account of the brutal murder of a family of four, offered a compelling story that was stranger than fiction. The use of fictional devices can also be seen in the biography and the autobiography. The essay is an example in which the commitment and opinion of the author is easily shown, but the genre is not as straightforward as it may seem. This genre also seems to overlap with journalism, and the aspect of 'truth' is also an important focus of discussion.

The non-fiction novel, the biography, the autobiography and the essay are not well-defined subgenres in themselves, which only adds to the problematic discussion of literary non-fiction. Tom Wolfe, an influential American new journalist has said: "Nonfiction is not a stable set of texts easily and readily subordinate to our illustrations of rhetorical categories. Literary nonfiction opens up on a whole set of vexing, disturbing, frustrating epistemological and ontological questions" (Anderson, xxi). This thesis does not aspire to give a definition of literary non-fiction, but merely addresses the problems surrounding the genre and the opinions of literary critics and scholars. Since literary non-fiction is such an ill-defined genre, many discussions about the evaluation of non-fiction seem to get entangled in a discussion about what defines literature. This is also the case in discussions of literary non-fiction in the Netherlands. Non-fiction is becoming increasingly visible within the Dutch literary tradition, and since the mid-nineties the



importance of literary non-fiction has become apparent. Opinions expressed by Dutch authors and by critics in literary magazines give shape to the current literary climate in the Netherlands.

Literary critics and authors are not the only actors that shape the literary climate. Society itself changes overtime which influences public opinion, but the publishers and the literary funds also steer the classification of literature. By addressing the complex process of cultural classification and the classification of literature in the Netherlands, the scope of the study for the Dutch Foundation for Literature becomes clear. The most important actors which are involved in the process of subsidising translated culturally important non-fiction are other literary funds, the publishers and the literary translators. To make this English thesis as complete as possible, the study for the Dutch Foundation for Literature is presented in English as well, although the Dutch version offers a more complete view by including appendixes of the interview of non-fiction editors for example. I recommend regarding this thesis as the first of two volumes, of which the first offers the background material and the literary discussion useful for understanding the second volume; the Dutch study.



Literary Non-fiction

The process of discussing literary non-fiction consists of several obstacles. By discussing this genre, one does not only need to know what non-fiction is, but also what is implied by the term *literature* and subsequently, what is meant when those two confusing terms are put together. When do we consider something literature? What are the characteristics? It seems that several scholars have tried to escape those problems by renaming the genre. For example the term *creative non-fiction* is often used, but also *new journalism*. The link with journalism and literature initially seems strange, since it implies that the text will expose the truth, while literature is often regarded a product of the author's imagination and requires a different attitude of the reader. The boundaries, however, are not always easy to define. The attempt to define the contents of any text as 'the truth' can be met with scepticism, but another problem is that literature is not by definition fictive; can hold 'true' elements. The characters can be well researched and based on actual living persons, or the setting may exist as it is described in the book. It may even a complete account of the truth, written in a literary style. This is often regarded as literary non-fiction. Often, the boundary between fiction and non-fiction seems to be based on the intention of the author. It is the choice of the author to present something as true, or, as will be discussed, his version of the truth.

Non-fiction

It immediately becomes clear that when trying to define literary non-fiction the initial response is to try to define the two separate terms *literary* and *non-fiction*. Non-fiction is simply said all texts that are not considered fiction. Fiction is an expression of creativity that is essentially imagined, whereas non-fiction refers to reality, and the transfer of information of that reality.



Non-fiction, therefore, is a genre in which the transfer of information is central. Academic texts and other informative textbooks are clear examples, as are all texts that are written to evoke a reaction from the reader, such as manuals, cookbooks or travel guidebooks. These are non-fiction genres that can easily be defined. Other genres, such as narrative history, journalism, essays and biographies, are more problematic. These refer to a reality, but this reality is more personal and often portrayed from the author's viewpoint.

When discussing the transfer of information, journalism plays an important role. Journalism is a field in which the transfer of information is essential. Therefore, journalism can be regarded as non-fiction. The reader uses newspapers, television or the internet to construct an opinion of current events. Our world-view is mainly constructed by the processing of our personal observations and the information offered by the media regarding national and international events. However, reporting this information often requires an initial interpretation by journalists. This is not just the case with journalism, but also with academic texts and historical writing, such as biographies. In all cases, the information is processed and interpreted by humans who, often subconsciously, leave their mark.

Most non-fiction texts bear no mark of their maker. The reader wants to be informed and has no interest in finding out who the author is. A reader is not interested in the person who created the dictionary or the television manual. There are, however, different levels of visibility of the author. Sometimes the reader does want to know who is teaching them English grammar in their textbook, or who is giving them dietary advice in a book about losing weight. There is also a whole range of non-fiction texts that consciously bear the mark of its maker, such as autobiographies and memoirs or collected letters. The transfer of information is intrinsically linked to the author. This can also be the case with journalism. Sometimes the presented information is equally important to the person who supplies that



information, and sometimes even more important. This is where the definition of the genre of non-fiction becomes problematic, when the interest of the reader shifts from information alone, to the subjective and personal account of that information, and of reality. This is also where *non-fiction* can become *literary*.

A Hybrid Art: Introducing Literary Non-fiction

The United States was the initial birthplace of literary non-fiction when, in the 1960s, journalists began writing accounts of their personal experiences in novel form. These novels were thoroughly researched and were reminiscent of journalistic writing. Literary critics became aware that the development in journalism could also be considered a development in literature, since it also worked the other way around: novelists turned to a more journalistic approach in their fiction. The interest in this new literary development becomes visible in the studies by American literary scholars such as John Hollowell in his 1977 study *The New Journalism and the Nonfiction Novel*, Michael L. Johnson's *The New Journalism* from 1971 and the collection of texts in *New Fiction, Non-Fiction* by editors John Mahoney and John Schmittroth also from 1971. The influence of new journalism and the further development of literary non-fiction is visible in Chris Anderson's *Literary Nonfiction, Theory, Criticism, Pedagogy* from 1989, which demonstrates how literary non-fiction should be incorporated into literary studies. Both Hollowell and Johnson attribute the development of literary non-fiction to a more journalistic approach of literature, while Mahoney and Schmittroth and Anderson do not really address the journalistic quality, but merely base their examination on literature alone.

All studies do express a search for a useful term for this new literary mode. New journalism and the most important product of new journalism,



the non-fiction novel, are probably the least clear-cut of the discussion of different literary non-fiction. Other names are being used in the literature about this subject. The most important one is 'creative non-fiction', but since this refers to both newspaper articles as novels, this study will only focus on the non-fiction novel to indicate that this refers to literary non-fiction in novel form. However, in the discussion of the non-fiction novel and literary non-fiction, it is sometimes impossible to refrain from using the term creative non-fiction. Important similarities between creative non-fiction and the non-fiction novel are used to clarify the specific characteristics of the genre.

Hollowell mentions in the preface of *The New Journalism and the Nonfiction Novel* that the blending of journalistic and fictional techniques in the form of a novel can be considered a hybrid art. According to Hollowell, literary non-fiction consists of "books and articles that blend the empirical sense of the journalist and the fictional technique of the novelist" (ix). Anderson in his introduction to *Literary Nonfiction, Theory, Criticism, Pedagogy* also reflects on the hybrid nature of literary non-fiction, but this hybrid nature is not due to the blending of journalistic tactics and fictional techniques, but based on the problematic barrier between fiction and non-fiction. He says: "it's difficult to tell the difference between the fictive and nonfictive, since we can never apprehend reality without bias" (ix). Thus, if something is considered non-fiction, it does not necessarily mean that the 'truth' is portrayed, since this is always someone's truth; a subjective view of reality and a personal interpretation of events. Despite the problematic definition and hybrid nature of non-fiction texts, Anderson argues that literary non-fiction is a useful term. In his study, he tries to "break down discipline barriers", and use both "literary criticism, and rhetoric and composition" (x) in the discussion of literary non-fiction.



New Journalism

The overlap between journalism and literature has led to the term *new journalism*. The development in both literature and journalism demonstrated a different form to report stories from a fast changing society in the 1960s. Both Hollowell in *Fact and Fiction* and Michael L. Johnson in his study *New Journalism* refer to the extraordinary speed in which social life and culture changed in the 1960s, and its response in the form of literary non-fiction. Not only were journalists exploring the boundaries between fiction and non-fiction; novelists were also adopting journalistic tactics to write their fiction. The transfer of information is subordinate to the style of the article or novel. Also, the representation of the experience of the author in the article or novel was more important than the information it transferred. Michael L. Johnson explains in *New Journalism* that the development can be regarded as a “change in journalism during the 1960’s” (xii) in which “the writing itself – its style and technique, its expression of the writer as a person, and its record of human events – that is central” (xii). He presents Truman Capote (*In Cold Blood*), Tom Wolfe (*The Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test*) and Norman Mailer (*The Armies of the Night*) as three major stylists, which are exemplary for new journalism. These three authors are also discussed by John Hollowell, for they are, as he explains his preface, “fairly representative of the themes that such books present” (Hollowell, x). The popularity of authors like Capote is due to the fact that “these nonfiction works have successfully conveyed the national confusion and the cataclysmic tenor of American life” (10).

Hollowell says that for novelists “to direct confrontations with social reality” it is no longer necessary to invent plots and characters (10), though other narrative devices are used in the new journalistic novels. They are

1. Portraying events in dramatic scenes rather than in the usual historical summary of most articles



2. Recording dialogue fully rather than with the occasional quotations or anecdotes of conventional journalism
3. Recording 'status detail', or the 'pattern of behavior and possessions through which people experience their position in the world'
4. Using point of view in complex and inventive ways to depict events as they unfold
5. Interior monologue, or the presentation of what a character thinks and feels without the use of direct quotations
6. Composite characterization, or the telescoping of character traits and anecdotes drawn from a number of sources into a single representative sketch. (25-26)

The first four narrative devices are coined by Tom Wolfe, who were initially published in the *New York Times Book Review* in his article "The Birth of New Journalism". The last two are added by Hollowell himself. Pegi Taylor refers to the first four devices more extensively in her 2002 article "Creative Nonfiction" in *Writing*. She says:

Wolfe defined New Journalism as appropriating four specific fictional devices: 'scene-by-scene construction'; recording the dialogue 'in full'; and taking advantage of the third-person point of view, 'presenting every scene to the reader through the eyes of a particular character.' (...) [and] the fourth element [is] 'Recording the everyday gestures, habits, manners, customs, styles of furniture, clothing, decoration, styles of traveling, eating, keeping house, modes of behaving toward children (...) and other symbolic details that might exist within a scene'. (29)

The ultimate goal of these fictional devices is to "enhance the narrative's realism" (29), Taylor argues.

In Johnson's *New Journalism*, the focus lies on the difference between the old journalistic style in newspapers and magazines, and the change since



the 1960s that has led to new journalism. He explains the foremost distinction between 'old' and new journalism as the

[A]ttempt [of the journalist] to be personalistic, involved and creative in relation to the events he reports and comments upon. His journalism, in general, has no pretense of being 'objective' and it bears the clear stamp of his commitment and personality. (46)

Hollowell also remarks on the emphasis on the personal experience: "the writer of the nonfiction novel says (...): '*This I saw and this I did and felt*. My book implies only whatever impressions and observations I can make about my own experience.'" (Hollowell, 15).

Reporting in this style is not an invention of the 1960s, however. There were reporters before Wolfe, Capote and Mailer who also tried to add a personal note to their journalism. Johnson agrees with this but explains: "it is only recently that it has become really acceptable, significant in quantity, and, particularly, shaped into an esthetically coherent and vitally informative literature" (Johnson, 47). It thus seems that the form in which this journalism is poured is the most important change. But the content is equally important according to Johnson. He quotes literary critic Robert Scholes who wrote a review of Wolfe's *The Electric Kool-aid Acid Test* in the *Saturday Review* in 1968. He says: "[Mailer and Wolfe] manage to remain more open to the contemporary scene than most reporters or commentators. They are more involved in what they report than a journalist would be, and they bring to their reporting a more efficient intellectual apparatus, a richer framework of ideas and attitudes, a perspective more historical than journalistic. (...) The old realistic novel in its death throes is fragmenting into new forms – a more fabulous nonrealistic fiction and an imaginative literature freed of the necessity to invent stories, a creative journalism that I am calling hystory" (62-3). The term "hystory" refers to the way Mailer and Wolfe "chronicle the hysteria of contemporary life" (Hollowell, 131).



Content and form seem equally important when discussing new journalism. This journalism consists of a personal account of events, of topics that are favourably displaying the hysteria of modern times and to which are added the fingerprints of the journalist. New journalists do not pretend to be objective, it is clear that the story bears the marks of the author. US editors John Mahoney and John Schmittroth published various texts in *New Fiction, Non-Fiction* in 1971, because they believed these examples were part of a new literary mode called New Fiction, Non-fiction, which combined the essay, the biography and the novel. Reflecting on American society in the early seventies, they say: “we have grown out of a historically-oriented culture into an issue-oriented culture” (5).

The new journalists wanted to portray reality, and they were extremely conscious about this reality. Hollowell feels that new journalism is “a reflection of our unusual self-consciousness about the historical importance of our times” (147). Written in 1977, he feels that the popularity of the new journalistic style of Wolfe and Capote will eventually decline. His future prediction is that further development of the genre will consist of a more “investigative and sociological reporting” (149).

The discussion of new journalism has initially lead to a more poststructuralist attitude to literature, like in Anderson’s 1989 study *Literary Nonfiction, Theory, Criticism, Pedagogy*. As the editor of this collection of essays reviewing literary non-fiction, he pleads for a re-evaluation of literature “to reconnect literature and composition, in both theory and in practice, and thus establish a more comprehensive understanding of rhetoric and composition as a field of inquiry” (xvii). He says: “the traditional hierarchies of literary study are actually quite porous or fluid, and recognizing this (...) has the effect of opening things up, releasing new energies” (xix). The boundary between journalism and literature is in essence not important, he believes: “Any text can be interpreted from a literary perspective” (xx). He quotes



Scholes and Comley who say in *Composition and Literature*: “All texts have secret/hidden/deeper meanings” (xx).

Nowadays, the term new journalism often refers to new media and the influence of the public on journalism. It refers to publications of photos taken with mobile phones and public newsfeeds on websites like Twitter. The heritage of new journalism are non-fiction novels and highly personal articles, in the United States often referred to as “creative nonfiction”. The magazine *Creative Nonfiction*, published by author and editor Lee Gutkind, displays a persistent interest in this literary form.

Depicting the Truth

Before the different genres of literary non-fiction – the non-fiction novel, the biography, the autobiography and the essay – are introduced, it is important to focus on the non-fictive quality of all these genres. In the literature about new journalism, there are quite a few references to new journalists using fictional devices to spice up their reporting. For example, Hollowell mentions that in his quest to write a more personalistic, involved and creative journalism, the journalist is allowed to fill in certain gaps, like interior monologue or to introduce composite characters – e.g. several characters melted into one. (25-26) The general opinion nowadays, however, is that literary non-fiction has to be true. Geert Mak at the 1998 Quality Nonfiction Conference in the Netherlands mentions in his speech “Confrontations with Reality” that non-fiction authors have “an implicit agreement with the reader. And that agreement – which is often reflected in the presentation, layout, or the use of the term ‘travel writing’ instead of ‘travel novel’ – binds the author to facts and limits him to what really happened” (8). But what the author considers the truth can simply be a subjective opinion. Peter Roy Clark mentions the postmodernist view of non-fiction in an article for the magazine



Creative Nonfiction in “The line between fact and fiction”: “[the postmodernists argue] that there are no facts, only points of view, only takes on reality, influenced by our personal histories, our cultures, our race and gender, our social class” (§11).

Clark offers two basic rules for writing non-fiction. They are: “Do not add. Do not deceive” (§16). What he means is that leaving things out, or to “subtract or condense” (§17) is virtually inescapable when writing, but adding things that did not happen is equal to deceiving the reader. He says: “The implied contract of all nonfiction is binding: The way it is represented here is, to the best of our knowledge, the way it happened” (§18). His opinion about using composite characters is most emphatically: “The use of composite characters, where the purpose is to deceive the reader into believing that several characters are one, is a technique of fiction that has no place in journalism or other works that purport to be nonfiction” (§ 37).

By adding fictional elements to your story, you undermine the credibility of your writing. Lee Gutkind, the editor of *Creative Nonfiction* is quoted by Lynn Z. Bloom in her article “Living to Tell the Tale: The Complicated Ethics of Creative Nonfiction”: “‘Once you change a name, what else have you changed?’ If you do it, he says, ‘then my reader has a right to doubt my credibility’” (279). Even though Bloom for the most part agrees with this view, she also mentions that “where living people are concerned there can be virtue in protecting the innocent, the vulnerable, the voiceless, private people who would be destroyed if their inmost secrets were betrayed” (279).

Besides to protect the innocent, concealing the truth is accepted in another form as well: when the author is not aware of his mistake. Writing the truth implies writing down the author’s version of the truth, or as Clark says: the truth “to the best of [the author’s] knowledge” (§18). And authors could be wrong. Joan Didion reflects on the truth in her collection of essays



Slouching Towards Bethlehem. In “On keeping a notebook” she describes the entries in her diaries and her apparently creative way of dealing with the truth.

‘That’s simply not true’,” the members of my family frequently tell me when they come up against my memory of a shared event. ‘The party was *not* for you, the spider was *not* a black widow, *it wasn’t that way at all.*’ (134)

Didion believes, however, that this does not matter, because essentially the event described was “*how it felt to me*” (134). Keeping a notebook means that it is essentially about the author and the author’s version of the truth. Didion says: “However dutifully we record what we see around us, the common denominator of all we see is always, transparently, shamelessly, the implacable ‘I’” (136).

Despite the presence of ‘I’ in literary non-fiction, Bloom believes that “characters, actions, revealing details are all saturated with values that the author can count on readers to recognize – and, ideally, to share” (Bloom, 286). Despite the author’s effort to convey the truth, the truth does need to be verifiable by the reader. Bloom comments on this by saying that even though the author gets to tell the truth, “other truths [are] filtered through the authorial rendering” and “the writer’s version [of the truth] varies over time and intervening circumstances, shaped by the protean personalities of his or her subjects”. Not only does time often catch up with the truth, the reader might experience the truth differently as well. “Although the facts of the story, any story, remain the same, its truth (...) can change. And does.” (286). This collaboration between author and reader is what is extraordinary about literary non-fiction. Bloom says: “Readers expect the writer to tell the truth. Writers, in turn, trust their readers to understand and respect that truth, and the larger Truths their work implies, even though readers may not share its values” (288).



The Non-fiction Novel

It can be argued that the non-fiction novel is the product of new journalism. In the non-fiction novel the use of literary tactics and narrative devices is most evident. But while new journalism is a useful term to describe the more personal approach of journalists in their articles, the focus of the non-fiction novel lies on the choice of the author to write about true events, whether the author is a journalist or not. The aspect of truth is present in all the genres introduced in this study, and is intrinsically linked to the clouding of boundaries between journalism and literature, and fiction and non-fiction.

According to Hollowell, Truman Capote was the first to use the term *non-fiction novel*, when he referred to his book written in 1966: *In Cold Blood*. (Hollowell, 64) This documentary novel combines in-depth investigation and interviews with a narrative and plot, which makes the novel both informative and exciting. It blurs the distinction between fact and fiction, not just because of the form in which it is written, but also because of the incomprehensible subject: the brutal murder of an innocent family. The need to write non-fiction novels is partly due to the incomprehensibility of reality, according to Hollowell. He says: "Brooding about the sweeping changes in social values, mores, and life-styles, some of our best novelists complained about the difficulty of writing fiction at all in a period in which daily events seemed to preempt the possibilities of the novelist's imagination" (4). This, however, is not the only reason, as Alfred Kazin mentioned in 1969 in an article in *The New York Book Review* as quoted by Hollowell: "The non-fiction novel has provided novelists with 'a disguise and retreat from fiction while permitting them to maintain their interest in fiction'" (14).

Despite being the first to coin a term for the non-fiction novel, there were several other fiction authors before Capote who occasionally turned to non-fiction, like George Orwell (and his novels *Down and Out in London and Paris* and *Homage to Catalonia*), and Ernest Hemingway (with his *Green Hills of*



Africa and Death in the Afternoon) (Hollowell, 35). The non-fiction novel, then, seems to be the point where journalists who wish to use more fictional devices in their reporting, and authors who wish to portray a true representation which can, as Hemingway explains in the foreword of *Green Hills of Africa*, “compete with a work of imagination,” (Hollowell, 35) meet in the middle.

Sometimes the truth is stranger than fiction. This was the case with *In Cold Blood*, in which the storyline of a brutal murder of a family of four, could compete with a work of imagination. Hollowell gives Capote a lot of attention in his study. He mentions that Capote chose to write a true account of the murder in novel form, because he recognised three “crucial ingredients” for his story. They were:

1. The timelessness of the theme
2. The unfamiliarity of the setting
3. The large cast of characters that would allow him to tell the story from a variety of points of view. (Hollowell, 64)

Capote based his work on a huge amount of researched documents and interviews, and double-checked all facts. He created a documentary novel, though Hollowell mentions that “it is a work of literature because it is clearly the product of an artist’s imagination. Capote shaped the ‘facts’ and manipulated our response to the characters and events he describes” (85).

Hollowell uses the term documentary novel as the definition for this book, but according to him it is also clearly literary. What then are the literary characteristics of these texts? Literary critic William Weigand wrote in 1967 “the most eloquent defense of [Capote's] book” (85), according to Hollowell. In the discussion what separates literature from reporting, Weigand said: “[it] is not the imagined, or fictional, character of the material, (...) but the suggesting and extending capacity all art forms share” (85). This “suggesting and extending capacity” refers to the way in which *In Cold Blood* gives rise to



the discussion about “social dislocations of the sixties and the failure of conventional morality to explain away the senseless violence we read about in the newspaper” (85). This transcending quality, that the topic of the report can be viewed in broader terms, is what makes *In Cold Blood* literary. The issue of senseless violence could be projected on various events which were happening in the world at that time, but also to situations in the present, which is why this novel is still regarded literature today.

Mahoney and Schmittroth in their *New Fiction, Non-fiction* give precisely this name to the new literary mode: “Whatever this New Fiction, Non-fiction is, wherever it may go, and whatever scholars may someday come to call it, it seems to be an important new form for us, even if it has a history behind it. It is a product of the urgency of our times. Its forbears are most importantly the essay and the novel. But its relationship with autobiography has kindled its life” (8). With autobiography they mean the relationship it bears to the author’s ‘real-life’. They say: “It may consequently be true that the older and generalized verities of truth, faith, and honor have been replaced by the more specific issues of racial justice, civil rights, environment and other ‘politicizable’ issues as the viable subjects of poetry and prose” (5-6). This seems to be the exact opposite of what Weigand says: the nonfiction novel, though portraying ‘specific issues’, can become more ‘generalized verities’, which is precisely the strength of these novels.

The Biography

The biography in the discussion of literary non-fiction is a more accepted subgenre. This genre has links with history and journalism and is, especially in the United Kingdom, a popular genre of literary non-fiction. As with the non-fiction novel, the boundary between fiction and non-fiction is also often crossed, not only because of the fictional devices used in the biography, but



since the topic of the biography is subjectively portrayed by the author. In some cases, the facts are hard to check, for example when the person about whom the biography is written, is deceased. This problem should not arise when writing an autobiography or memoir. All the events portrayed in the book what he or she believed happened. The addition 'what he or she believed', portrays that even the autobiography cannot promise to portray events as they actually happened, because, once again, this is merely a personal version of the truth. To make the discussion even more complex, the link between biography and autobiography can sometimes fade, when the author of a biography finds him or herself close to the subject involved.

Eric Homberger and John Charmley reflect upon the relationship between the novel and the biography in *The Troubled Face of Biography* (1988). They use an example of Edmund Morris' biography of Theodore Roosevelt in which its "careful scene setting, and delayed presentation of the subject's central concerns, suggests how comfortably the contemporary biographer works within the narrative structures of traditional fiction" (xiv). The biographer has so clearly described the subject's experiences that one gets the feeling that the author has seen the world through the subject's eyes. But is this still the truth? Homberger and Charmley believe that: "It may be a matter of time before biography, loosened from its roots in fact and document and 'truth', and bolstered by the techniques of fiction, makes its appearance" (xv), but are not suggesting that this is a desirable development. Fiction should be fiction, and non-fiction non-fiction, they believe.

The "troubled face of the biography" according to Homberger and Charmley, is that the boundaries between fiction and non-fiction are diminishing, which could lead to the end of the biography in the "traditional sense" (xv). This is a development they do not applaud. They quote Hugh Brogan, who commented that: "unless a biographer 'feels a strong commitment to the truth of his subject, he ought not touch it'", which they



regard as a “deeply controversial and necessary assertion for the future of the biography” (xv). The same concern was shared by US publishing house Alfred E. Knopf publisher Carol Brown Janeway, at the 1998 non-fiction conference held in the Netherlands. From a different standpoint – as a publisher, instead of a literary scholar – she expresses her concern for the fact that often “sincerity has become a substitute for truth when considering whether or not to publish a book” (Baensch, 57).

In her essay on the biography titled “Subjectivity, Self-representation and the Revealing Twitches of Biography”, associate professor of history at San Diego State University Elizabeth Colwill, defines the biography as a “temptation”. She says: “it tempts us to cross boundaries, to experiment with narrative, and to explore the relationship between our subjects’ strategies of self-fashioning and our own modes of self-representation” (421). The experiments with narrative may consist of constructing dialogue from memoirs to make the story come alive. Colwill paraphrases biographer Nina Baym who says that she was often forced to “read from behaviour – gestures, itineraries, silences – to fill in the archival gaps” (423) in the description of the life of Madame du Coudray, a historical figure who had a “‘mischievous’ refusal to reveal an inner life or personal history” (423). These problems force the author to turn to fictional devices in trying to describe the events in the life of the person in question. By referring to self-representation, Colwill expresses the problem of the biographer to reflect one’s opinion, (life) experience and world-view on the life of the historical figure.

The Autobiography

The portrayal of the author’s version of the truth is most evident in the autobiography. The author was an eyewitness to all events described in his book. But in an autobiography, the reader can be no more guaranteed to be



presented with a truthful depiction of events than with any other eyewitness report, because this too is simply a personal interpretation of events. Dave Eggers in his autobiographical novel *A Heartbreaking Work of Staggering Genius* (2000) has cleverly avoided the possible objection that his novel is not a truthful depiction of events, by including the following fictional disclaimer on the title page:

NOTE: This is a work of fiction, only in that in many cases, the author could not remember the exact words said by certain people, and exact descriptions of certain things, so had to fill in gaps as best he could. Otherwise, all characters and incidents and the dialogue are real, are not products of the author's imagination, because at the time of this writing, the author had no imagination whatsoever for those sort of things, and could not conceive of *making up* a story or characters – it felt like driving a car in a clown suit – especially when there was so much to say about his own, true, sorry, and inspirational story, the actual people that he has known, and of course the many twists and turns of his own thrilling and complex mind. Any resemblance to persons living or dead should be plainly apparent to them and those who know them, especially if the author has been kind enough to have provided their real names and, in some cases, their phone numbers. All events herein actually happened, though on occasion the author has taken certain, very small, liberties with chronology, because that is his right as an American.

The “true, sorry, and inspirational story” features the account of the loss of both parents to cancer at the age of 21, only five weeks apart from one another. Eggers then takes up custody for his eight year-old brother.

When the author accounts for his mistakes by telling the reader that some facts could be wrong because he could not remember them properly, the novel is not instantly viewed as fiction. This is an interesting observation.



According to Hugh Brogan, in “The Biographer’s Chains”, included in the study of Homberger and Charmley, this is solely a privilege of autobiographers. “Autobiographers have the priceless advantage that no one expects them to tell the complete, literal truth; they can stray into fiction as much as they like, and even their omissions will be read as significant” (104). This, however, does not apply to biographies. Here, the author has an “implied contract” (Clark, §18) with the reader that the non-fiction text is, to the best of the author’s knowledge, the truth. When some part of the truth has been changed for whatever reason, this has to be communicated to the reader. Fitzgerald quotes Mark Kramer, director of the Nieman Program on Narrative Journalism at Harvard University, who says that “readers lose trust – and interest – in writers who do not honor the tacit contract to disclose, for instance, what details have been changed or why the author can reliably relate the innermost emotions of someone in the story” (§12). This instantly becomes clear when an author does not honour this code of conduct. And several examples show that this even applies to autobiographers.

The public opinion of authors who present their novels as non-fiction and which later on turn out to be partly imagined, is not mild. An example is the autobiography of Herman Rosenblat, who wrote his memoir *Angel at the Fence* (2008), about his childhood imprisonment in Buchenwald concentration camp during the Second World War. He claims to owe his life to his wife, whom he met on a blind date in New York twelve years after the liberation of the camp, because she, as a little girl, had been throwing apples over the fence of the camp. When other Buchenwald survivors said this could not possibly be true, Rosenblat admitted to having fabricated this story, though everything else in the book was true. The novel was not even in stores yet, but publisher Riverhead Books decided to cancel the publication, as journalists Motoko Rich and J. Berger reported in the *New York Times*. By changing one aspect of the story, the credibility of the book had disappeared. This would not have been



the case when the author had owed up to whatever fictional devices he had used. It seems that the intentions of the author have to be clear for the reader in all works of non-fiction.

The biography and autobiography are genres of literary non-fiction which are, together with the non-fiction novel, closely linked to fiction. Though historical writing is first and foremost based on facts, there is often the problem of archival gaps. Archival information on the subject, such as diaries, or eyewitness accounts, are used to construct a consistent story of one's life, but often there is no way of knowing for sure that something has happened. In these cases, the biographer, like Nina Gelbart has to "read from behaviour (Colwill, 423), and turn to fictional devices to fill in the gaps. Applying these devices does not instantly lead to the re-evaluation of the biography as fiction. This is also the case with the autobiography. The author has to communicate to the reader that some aspects are not based on the truth. If this implied contract between reader and author is neglected by the author, the author risks losing his credibility, and, in some cases, even risks whether or not his story is published.

The Essay

While most scholars solely focus on the new journalist's activities and the (auto)biography in relation to literary non-fiction, Chris Anderson introduces the essay in the discussion in *Literary Nonfiction*. According to him, journalism and the essay are "at least two kinds of writing that fit underneath the larger notion of literary nonfiction" (ix). He believes that teaching literary non-fiction has a "humanistic" quality, since these texts demonstrate the value of personal engagement, concreteness and the recognition of complexity" (xiii). This is especially true when discussing the essay. In Anderson's study, Richard Filloy discusses George Orwell in "Orwell's Political Persuasion: A



Rhetoric of Personality". He says: "Orwell's writing was a response to the immediate issues of the age he lived in; and those issues, as he saw them, demanded writing that was clearly rhetorical". Furthermore, Orwell wanted to "make political writing into an art" (51). To do so, Orwell was aware that not only did he have to focus on the topical, the rhetorical quality of his essays had to speak to readers in the future as well. "Long after his immediate political ends have been achieved or outmoded, his writing must still make audiences feel their importance at some level" (52).

Despite the often topical nature of the texts, a well-written essay transcends a use-by-date and is still interesting when the topics they address are no longer of current interest. According to Richard Filloy, who contributed to Anderson's study, the most important quality of the rhetoric power of Orwell's essays is the use of personal discovery in political argument. (54) He says: "one personal story well told may be more affecting than many a statistical sampling" (55). This leads back to ancient Greek values of persuasion of which Aristotle considered *ethos* the most important one. "A successful ethos was founded on three qualities: virtue, good sense and goodwill (...). From that belief, indeed, springs much of the suspicion of arguments resting on the speaker's character" (55-56). This claim is also being made by Carl H. Klaus, who in "Essayists on the Essay" in Anderson's study, discusses essays by Montaigne and Bacon who both "describe their practice in terms that emphatically distinguish essayistic form and purpose from the methodical discourse that dominated classical rhetoric and medieval scholasticism" (157).

The difference between the essay and a journalistic article meant to persuade its readers, is the personal note of the essay, according to Klaus. He calls this the "personal orientation of the essay" versus the "factual orientation of the article" (161) or the "highly systematized – and thus highly impersonal – approaches to knowledge" (163) of journalism. This explanation



does not seem quite sufficient when discussing the difference between an essay and a highly personal journalistic article, since these two forms of texts blend and overlap. According to Anderson in *Literary Nonfiction*, the essay differs from a journalistic article with a clear personal note, though the distinction is not always clear. He says: “the essay is reflective and exploratory and essentially personal. Its purpose is not to convey information, although it may do that as well, but rather to tell the story of the author's thinking and experience” (Anderson, x). Even though this defines the difference between a factual journalistic article and an essay, the ‘problem’ with new journalism is that it transcends this factual approach, and also renders a more personal experience. Klaus believes that the essay is free of “the systemized form of thinking imposed by [methodical prose]” (164). He quotes Theodore Adorno who says: “The essay does not obey the rules of the game of organized science (...), the essay does not strive for closed, deductive or inductive, construction. (...) The essay (...) proceeds so to speak methodically unmethodically. Discontinuity is essential to the essay” (Klaus, 163-64, deletions by Klaus). But this claim can also be made for articles in a new journalistic style, since they too strives to be liberated from the traditional forms of journalistic writing.

Aldous Huxley does give a somewhat more marked distinction of the essay and refers to it as: “Free association artistically controlled” (Klaus, 168). In his *Collected Essays* he says: “Essays belong to a literary species whose extreme variability can be studied most effectively within a three-poled frame of reference. There is the pole of the personal and the autobiographical; there is the pole of the objective, the factual, the concrete-particular; and there is the pole of the abstract-universal” (Huxley, v). But as Klaus argues, Huxley fails to refer to “any of the logical, systematic, and tightly organized qualities that are usually associated with it” (Klaus, 165). In his compilation of various opinions about the essay, Klaus remarks that most essayist dismiss the essay



as non-fiction. Like new journalism and its non-fiction novel, the essay is a hybrid form: “Rather than being the clear-cut, straightforward, and transparent form of discourse that it is usually considered to be, is [the essay] itself a very problematic kind of writing. So it should not be confused either with article-writing and theme-writing, or with exploratory writing and expressive writing” (173).

Despite the difficulty defining the essay, the genre as such has a long history and has always been considered prestigious. This is especially the case in the United States, where Houghton Mifflin published the first volume of *The Best American Essays* in 1986 and since then published a collection of essays each year. Pegi Taylor in “Creative nonfiction” mentions that from 1991 to 2000 BAE published 219 essays by 170 authors. Guest editor of the 1998 BAE was Cynthia Ozick, who in 1991-2000 was “represented six times, more than any other writer” (§21). Ozick describes the essay as follows: “Essays, unlike novels, emerge from the sensations of the self.” An essay is “like ‘a character in a novel or a play,’ she concludes, ‘Above all, she is not a hidden principle or a thesis or a construct: she is there, a living voice. She takes us in’” (§21). The “living voice” does indeed imply a problematic kind of writing, since no rules apply. In Ozick’s description, the essay seems to exist separate from its author. Once the author has finished the essay, the essay becomes a separate entity over which the author no longer has control.

While Ozick believes in the notion of the independent identity of the essay, Joseph Epstein says that the essay is only an essay when the essayist defined it as such. Furthermore, “the essay is in large part defined by the general temperament of the essayist” and: “There are as many kinds of essays as there are human attitudes or poses, as many essay flavors as there are Howard Johnson ice creams” (Klaus, 166). This does not really help the definition of the essay and despite the efforts of Klaus, Adorno and Epstein,



one cannot help but wonder what the difference is between a highly personal ‘new journalistic’ article and an essay.

Since the boundaries between journalism and fiction writing are fading and new forms of non-fiction writing are emerging, the position of the essay is changing. In defining the essay, Dutch writer, poet, translator and essayist Atte Jongstra mentions in the 2004 annual report of the Dutch Foundation for Literature, that like all literature, the literary essay has “an own voice” and a “personal style of expression, an apparent choice in what is shown and what stays hidden”. Furthermore, contrary to the journalistic article, there is a presence of a “fundamental, prevailing notion of doubt of a philosophical nature” (FvdL annual rapport 2004, 46).² Despite his effort to define the genre, he concludes by saying that all appreciation is in nature personal and therefore subjective, as is the definition of the essay. This subjective nature is exactly what makes the discussion of the evaluation of non-fiction so vivid.

² “Opnieuw de vraag: waar houdt een tekst op journalistiek te zijn, wanneer wordt hij literair? (...) Essentieel voor literatuur is iets wat je ‘een eigen stem’ zou kunnen noemen, een persoonlijke manier van uitdrukken, een duidelijke keuze in wat wordt getoond en wat niet. (...) Wat ik graag een literair kenmerk zou nemen (en dat is duidelijk afwezig in het doorsnee journalistieke stuk) is (als grondtoon, een ‘ruis’ als men wil) twijfel van de filosofische soort.”



Evaluating Non-fiction

The major part of the discussion of what literary non-fiction actually is, consists of the definition of literature. This discussion has been around for decades and will continue to be held in every society where literary forms are changing and 'high' and 'low' art exist side by side. The trouble defining the genre literary non-fiction creates problems in the policy of the Dutch Foundation for Literature. The foundation wants to stimulate the quality of all literary genres, including literary non-fiction, but assessing the literary quality of non-fiction seems more difficult than assessing the literary quality of fiction. The difficulty creating a manageable policy for non-fiction is intrinsically linked to the discussion about evaluating non-fiction in literary magazines. This part will mainly focus on Dutch sources, to give insight in the literary climate in the Netherlands.

The problem with evaluating non-fiction, according to non-fiction author Geert Mak, is the relationship between fiction and literature. In a speech published in the 1997 yearbook of the Maatschappij der Nederlandse Letterkunde (Society of Dutch Literature) he says:

There are two misconceptions in the discussion of the relationship between fiction and literature. The first misconception is: all fiction is literature. Apart from authors of a particular romantic fiction there aren't many present here today who will agree with this statement. The second misconception, however, is more popular. This misconception is: all literature is fiction. (17)³

According to Mak, there is no reason to esteem non-fiction differently than fiction. Both genres can be of exceptional quality. In his speech titled

³ "Er bestaan twee misverstanden over de verhouding tussen fictie en literatuur. Het eerste misverstand luidt: alle fictie is literatuur. Afgezien van de auteurs van sommige streekromans zullen weinigen in deze zaal met deze stelling instemmen. Het tweede misverstand is echter populairder. Dit misverstand luidt: alle literatuur is fictie."



“Confrontation with Reality” at the 1998 Quality Nonfiction Conference in the Netherlands he quotes author Hella Haasse:

‘A creative writer unites in his person the observer, he who experiences, the processor, and the stylist.’ Hella Haasse's description of literary biographers also characterizes literary non-fiction writers in general. ‘His or her primary concern is not the perceptions, events and experiences themselves but the meaning they obtain in linguistic form.’ That is literature in her eyes. But the content, in her eyes, can be either fiction or non-fiction. (9)

The content of the novel is of no importance, it is style of the author and the elegance of the language which gives a novel quality.

George L. Dillon in “Fiction in Persuasion: Personal Experience as Evidence and as Art” in Anderson’s *Literary Nonfiction* goes as far as completely rejecting the literary aspects in the discussion of esteeming non-fiction. His focus of non-fiction lies on books without a *literary* label, i.e. practical books and self-help books. He believes that: “We will discover a great deal of good writing when we can find ways of esteeming without estheticizing it. Certain of the postconstructionalists insights into the working of written language extend beyond literature and can be illuminatingly applied to texts with clear practical purposes” (209). He focuses on the use of fictional examples in non-fiction, claiming that by focusing on fiction only causes to “exclude from literature a good bit of contemporary writing that its readers feel is as rich and delightful and instructive as much that is in the canon” (197). It seems that Dillon, by focusing on non-literary books of which no literary discussion exists, can more easily define the qualities of all non-fiction texts. The quality of a book, however, is simply defined as ‘good writing’.

Quality is in essence what the focus of the discussion should be in evaluating non-fiction texts. This is the opinion expressed in several articles in



the Dutch literary magazine *De Revisor*. By focussing whether or not a text is worthy of the label *literary*, editor Menno Lievers says, the author is excused from doing proper research. And by calling it non-fiction, he is excused from writing well. “Of course, we can call everything ‘literature’ but that is not in the interest of literature” (104).⁴ The same issue of *De Revisor* features an article by Bertram Mourits, who wonders why the label literary has ever been given to non-fiction of a particular quality, since non-fiction is so clearly the legacy of journalism. According to him, it seems as if “some authors are ashamed of their journalistic activities – and if not, their publishers definitely are” (17).⁵ In the Anglo-Saxon world, these novels are considered *narrative non-fiction*, he continues. But since the Dutch translation of the term does not evoke a prestigious genre, the label literary is applied. (17) By focussing on quality, the term literature is more easily defined. Prometheus/Bert Bakker publisher Mai Spijkers said on the 1998 non-fiction conference that: “Literature is not non-fiction, but quality non-fiction is literature. ‘Non-fictional literature’ would have been a better description of the genre” (Spijkers, 32).

The difference between fiction and non-fiction is often portrayed by the marketing strategy of the publisher. Non-fiction novels are often written by assignment. The publisher wants to print a book on a particular subject and finds an author to write it exactly the way the publisher wants. If this is not carried out the way the publisher had expected, he asks the author to rewrite the particular part until it is to his satisfaction. With works of fiction, scouts and literary agents spot new talent, or authors find their way to the publisher themselves and the marketing strategy revolves around the author, instead of

⁴ “Op z’n best biedt literaire non-fictie boeiende, goed geschreven literatuur die je ogen opent voor een segment van de werkelijkheid dat je niet eerder kende of nooit zo bekeken had. Op z’n slechts zijn het boeken waarvan de schrijver zich door het predikaat ‘literatuur’ ontslagen voelt van de plicht goed onderzoek te doen en door de categorisering van ‘non-fictie’ van de plicht goed te schrijven. Natuurlijk kunnen we alles ‘literatuur’ noemen, maar daar is de literatuur niet mee gediend.”

⁵ “Het lijkt wel alsof de auteurs zich een beetje schamen voor journalistieke activiteiten – of anders wel hun uitgevers.”



the subject. "Picking a subject and searching for a matching author leads to non-fiction," Spijkers argues, "but not to literary non-fiction" (33).

The grey area in between is literary non-fiction, in which the author is also central. In these novels, the subject is not the most important aspect, but instead the style of the author and the experience he gives his readers. The experience is what makes Geert Mak such a popular non-fiction author, Arjen Fortuin argues in *De Revisor*. "Mak does not emphasise the facts and links, but focuses on the experience," he says. "What would it feel like if I were there in person?" (60).⁶

The hybridism of literary non-fiction, the grey area in between fiction and non-fiction, will not disappear if the genre is renamed. But it will help the discussion of assessing literary non-fiction if the label *literary* is exchanged with something else. Novels related to new journalism are often referred to as narrative non-fiction or creative non-fiction, but the biography or the essay are not included in these definitions. The Dutch Literary Production and Translation Fund (NLPVF) has escaped the problem of defining literature, by using the term quality non-fiction. This refers to all culturally important non-fiction and is partly defined by the demand of foreign publishers. It can be argued that by renaming the genre, the problem is shifted elsewhere, since it still does not clarify or specify the subgenres belonging to literary non-fiction. However, by not focussing on the literary aspect of texts, a whole range of texts can be reconsidered and their cultural value can be reassessed.

⁶ "Mak legt de nadruk niet op de feiten en de dwarsverbanden, maar op de ervaring. Hoe zou het voelen als ik er zelf bij was?"



Literary Non-fiction in the Netherlands

The position of non-fiction within the literary field in the Netherlands has been topic of debate since the mid-1990s. Nowadays, almost all publishers focus on both fiction and non-fiction and their interest in particularly literary non-fiction seems to be growing as the media seem to be promoting more and more non-fiction. The importance of non-fiction on an international level is acknowledged by the Foundation for the Production and Translation of Dutch Literature, who organise an international non-fiction conference roughly every two years since 1997. When it comes to evaluating literature, many different actors are involved. These are of course the authors and readers themselves, but the publishers and the media are perhaps more important actors in the literary field. Education and funds have long been the gatekeepers of literary quality, but developments within the cultural field and the influence of the media have changed the position of these governmentally controlled actors.

A useful tool in trying to describe the interest in literary non-fiction, would be the sales figures of the genre, but these figures do not appear to be representative of the actual sales of the genre. The Dutch classification system NUR has a literary non-fiction category, but this category focuses on non-fiction about authors, such as correspondences between important literary figures, or biographies about these authors, and books about literary schools. Other literary non-fiction is often classified as fiction, for various reasons. One reason is that the publishers themselves can award the codes, so they can choose any classification code they want. Publishers often award their quality non-fiction with the label fiction, since the Dutch reader will more easily link fiction to literature than non-fiction, and fiction often gets a more prominent place in the bookshop.



Whether or not Dutch readers are more likely to link fiction with literature, applying the label 'literature' to broader forms of fiction is not just something the publishers came up with themselves. It also implies a changed perspective of literature in general, and the "diversification and levelling of boundaries of cultural genres". This observation is made by cultural sociologists Kees van Rees, Susanne Janssen and Marc Verboord and they refer to these phenomena in their study "Classificatie in het Culturele en Literaire Veld 1975-2000. Diversificatie en nivellering van grenzen tussen culturele genres" (Classification in the Cultural and Literary Field 1975-2000. Diversification and levelling of boundaries of cultural genres.) published in *De Productie van Literatuur (The Production of Literature)* (2006). In their study they refer to the different actors present in the Dutch literary field and the changes that can be perceived throughout society regarding the appreciation and classification of cultural products.

NUR-classification

In the Netherlands, literary non-fiction is categorised by a uniform classification system, which was developed in the mid-70s by several organisations operating on the Dutch book market. The NUR classification system exists since 2002, and replaced the NUGI classification system. The categories 000 to 900 are divided into a maximum of nine subcategories, for instance 010 to 090, which are subsequently also divided into a maximum of nine categories, for instance 011 to 019. The publisher decides which code is awarded to the book and this is incorporated in the ISBN code before production. The publisher can give a book a maximum of two NUR codes. If the publisher neglects awarding the codes, the employees of Centraal Boekhuis, the logistic service provider of the Dutch book market, give the book a NUR-code. Until 2001, the classification system was used to give



insight into the sales figures of different genres and is nowadays used to categorise the books within a bookshop or library. Sales figures are nowadays based on consumer research carried out by Gfk Intomart for Stichting Marktonderzoek Boekenvak.

Literary non-fiction (NUR 320) is a subcategory of literary fiction (NUR 300) and has five different categories. These are:

- Biographies literary authors (NUR 321)
- Correspondence literary authors (NUR 322)
- Literary essays (NUR 323)
- Literary magazines (NUR 324)
- Collected literary columns (NUR 325)

The last subcategory 'collected literary columns' seems to return in Non-fiction (NUR 400) under the subcategory 'collected columns and interviews' (NUR 401), while categories 321 to 323 may also be present in the category 'non-fiction informative/professional' (NUR 600) since this category holds 'literary history of Holland and Flanders' (NUR 621). Travel stories are subcategorised in 'travels' (NUR 500) and philosophy is under 'theology' (NUR 700), even though these can also be considered important genres of literary non-fiction. By regarding the different categories, it immediately becomes clear that because of the hybrid nature of many literary non-fiction, linking the texts to the categories can often be problematic. According to the NUR-classification, only works of non-fiction linked to authors or literary schools can be labelled literary non-fiction, which excludes all other non-fiction novels, essays and (auto)biographies not written about a literary figure or literary movement. Also, the categories do not distinct original work from translations, so no separate figures are available for works of translation.

The adjective 'literary' in the NUR-classification 'literary non-fiction' is not a qualitative denominator, but simply refers to the content of the text. This



definitely influences the sales figures of non-fiction in the Netherlands. Before 2001, when the Dutch book branch research institute Stichting Speurwerk betreffende het Boek published book sales, the figures of non-fiction were only based on NUR 400 sales, because literary non-fiction falls under the 300-category of fiction. The authors Van Rees, Janssen en Verboord refer to the fact that sales figures in the period 1975-2000 were often solely based on the figures offered by Stichting Speurwerk betreffende het Boek, and were never checked by another organisation. (Van Rees et al., 252)⁷ The institute used the NUR-numbers to calculate the volume of trade and the sales in Euros for the different categories. As mentioned before, the NUR-numbers are not based on an objective classification, but are awarded by the publishers themselves. Nowadays, NUR-numbers are no longer used for sales figures. Instead, consumers are approached by research institute Gfk and questionnaires are analysed. (SMB, press release 2009) These questionnaires only focus on fiction, however. There is a category 'literature', but it is unclear if literary non-fiction belongs in this category. Furthermore, internet book sales of stores like Amazon, are not included. Internet book store Bol.com is included in the research of Gfk, but those figures are based on an estimation, according to journalist Edwin Feldmann in an article on Twinkle, a website for internet retailers.⁸

Cultural classifications

Despite the fact that publishers use the adjective 'literary' to upgrade their status, the appreciation of cultural products like literature is not merely based on the label given to it by an actor like a publisher. Though the influence of

⁷ "De cijfers over omzet (geldwaarde) en afzet (aantal aan particulieren verkochte exemplaren) uit die periode, gaan vrijwel zonder uitzondering terug op gegevens van Stichting Speurwerk betreffende het Boek."

⁸ "Bovendien zijn de cijfers die Gfk in dit geval verzamelt beperkt. Zo wordt er wel een schatting gemaakt van de verkoop van algemene boeken via internet, maar vallen daar bepaalde categorieën, zoals studieboeken, weer buiten" (Feldman, §7).



publishers is definitely substantial, they cannot solely be held responsible for the diversification and levelling of boundaries between cultural genres. Cultural sociologists like Bourdieu rejected the notion that the art status of various works of cultural expression is primarily based on intrinsic qualities. He claimed that art is not art until “particular *gatekeepers* – critics, gallery owners, literary publishers, an exclusive audience – allow these works of art in the existing art scene and when the members of that scene assign particular characteristics and value to these works” (Van Rees, 239-40).⁹ This also applies to literature. The gatekeepers of literature can be authors, literary critics, teachers, jury members (of literary awards, festivals, competitions), editors of literary magazines and publishers. “Publishers, editors of publisher’s lists and booksellers are usually regarded as key figures in the material production and distribution, but they have also always played an important role in the classification of literature” (240).¹⁰ Despite their influence, these actors still need an audience who “register their activities and acknowledge them as binding” (240).¹¹ These activities differ in form, visibility and effectiveness and those differences can become larger or smaller due to social changes. This influences the perception and status of the classified works. This process is dynamic and cannot be attributed to a couple of actors or activities, Van Rees, Janssen and Verboord say. (240)

According to these cultural sociologists, the publishers nowadays have a more broad-minded view of literature compared to the 1960s and 70s. Several subgenres that had no literary status before, are now considered literature. Examples by Van Rees, Janssen and Verboord are books by well-

⁹ “Hij [betoogde] dat producten pas aanspraak kunnen maken op de status van kunstwerk, wanneer ze door *gatekeepers* – critici, galeriehouders, literaire uitgevers, een select publiek – binnen het bestaande kunstcircuit worden toegelaten en door de leden hiervan eigenschappen en waarde krijgen toegekend.”

¹⁰ “Uitgevers, fondsredacteuren en boekhandelaren worden gewoonlijk gepresenteerd als sleutelfiguren in de materiële productie en distributie, maar toch vervullen ook zij van oudsher een belangrijke rol in de classificatie van literatuur.”

¹¹ “Of actoren in het literaire veld er *de facto* in slagen om de perceptie van literaire werken te sturen, is afhankelijk van een publiek dat hun activiteiten registreert en als bindend erkent.”



known television figures, whose columns are categorised as literature by their publisher. Control over the evaluation and classification of literature had always been a matter of literary critics and education, but this role has been taken over by publishers and branch organisations, which, by being linked to high quality and legitimacy, benefit from high classifications. (249) This only partly explains the change in classification. The readers and their views have changed as well. Because of social mobility, people came in contact with art forms unknown to them. Literary education changed, less time was spent on traditional complex forms of literature and more on new genres and more popular texts. The youth, including those who were highly educated, spent more money on a broader range of cultural forms, such as television entertainment, popular music, films and sports. The influence of literary criticism in newspapers lost ground, due to a reduced number of readers. Also different forms of consumer information that required less cognitive effort, such as television, became more popular. (248) All these factors have attributed to the levelling of literary genres. Literature no longer has the status it had before the 1970s. The cultural hierarchy has changed because literature is increasingly becoming “a possible option of many other options” (249).¹² This does not mean that literature has lost its status as a legitimate art form, Van Rees, Janssen and Verboord argue. However, literature is no longer as exclusive as it once was. (280)

Different factors attribute to the change in classification and not all institutions benefit the same from these changes. Publishers are no longer as independent as they used to be: many have merged with large media groups, which have a more commercial focus: they want to know if the books can sell. To control the quality of literature, the Dutch government offers money to different cultural institutions and funds, like the Dutch Foundation for Literature (Fonds voor de Letteren: FvdL), which was founded in 1965. The

¹² “[De literatuur is] steeds meer een mogelijke optie uit vele geworden.”



quality of the literature is judged by “panels of experts (other authors, critics and scientists). Their judgement often corresponds with the literary criticism of the author’s earlier work”¹³ because the experts, lacking any form of objective quality standard, are forced to judge a former performance of the author, according to Van Rees, Janssen and Verboord. (274) They also argue that the functioning of the fund is difficult to examine. The literary views of the experts should be researched, the authors say, because these experts are perhaps not objective in their judgement. They are often associated to other interests. For example, colleague authors are part of the fund's panel, who could be signed with the same publisher, or the panel can consist of literary critics linked to a magazine which propagates a certain literary opinion. All these factors associated with the peer review of the texts – in essence the assessment procedure at the FvdL – can affect the classification of the texts as literature. (274)

For authors, the importance of being awarded a subsidy, Van Rees, Janssen and Verboord argue, is not just of economical nature. The influence is mostly social-psychological: “[Authors] see their authorship, their status as literary author, being acknowledged” (275).¹⁴ The funds are therefore, besides being important gatekeepers, part of the process of categorisation. But just like all other gatekeepers, their attitude toward literature can change – and perhaps even has to – if other institutions like publishers and the reading public acquire a different view of literature. Literary translation is the next link in the chain of cultural classification. When the production of literature is assessed and categorised as literature, the focus shifts toward the re-production of literature, or rewriting that literature in a different language.

¹³ “De besluitvorming (...) wordt voorbereid door commissies van deskundigen (collega-auteurs, critici en wetenschappers). Hun oordelen correleren doorgaans sterk met literair-kritische aandacht voor eerder werk van de betrokken auteurs.”

¹⁴ “Voor schrijvers heeft toewijzing van een aanvraag, naast een economische, vooral een sociaal-psychologische betekenis: ze zien daarmee hun schrijverschap, hun status als literaire auteur bevestigd.”



Translation Policy and Literary Non-fiction

The attention for translation in the Netherlands is growing. Several institutions are doing their best to put translation and literary translators on the literary map, and have requested more money from the Dutch Ministry of Education, Culture and Science to improve the standards of the Dutch literary translators and translation education. These efforts have already led to improved working conditions for literary translators in the Netherlands, and several institutions are in the process of developing a degree programme for literary translation. These developments are partly the result of the publication of *Great translation by the way. A pamphlet for preserving a flourishing translation culture*,¹⁵ presented by several institutions¹⁶ to the Dutch Minister of Education, Cultural Affairs and Science, Ronald Plasterk and the Flemish Minister of Culture, Anciaux, in 2008. The result of this publication in the Netherlands was that in the cultural policy plan 2009-2012, the Dutch Minister is prioritising literary translation and making more money available for several initiatives of the Dutch Foundation for Literature and other institutions. An important issue for the Dutch Foundation for Literature is the re-evaluation of the policy for translation of cultural important non-fiction.

The FvdL (Dutch Foundation for Literature) has requested a study which reveals the various criteria for subsidising culturally important non-fiction at various funds and the opinions of the importance of non-fiction expressed by actors within the literary field, such as editors and literary translators. In this study, carried out from May to August 2009, the policies of three Dutch funds (FvdL, NLPVF and the FBJP) and two Flemish funds (VFL

¹⁵ The Dutch title of the pamphlet is *Overigens Schitterend Vertaald. Voor het behoud van een bloeiende vertaalcultuur*.

¹⁶ These are the Dutch Foundation for Literature (Fonds voor de Letteren), the Dutch Literary Production and Translation Fund (NLPVF), The Flemish Literature Fund (Vlaams Fonds voor de Letteren), The Expertise Centre Literary Translation (Expertisecentrum Literair Vertalen), and the Dutch Language Union (Nederlandse Taalunie).



and the Fonds Pascal Decroos) were compared and the criteria for non-fiction (translation) projects were assessed. Also, an inventory of six publishers was made to determine the scope of their focus on non-fiction, and the ratio translation/originally Dutch work. While the FvdL does already subsidise the translation of non-fiction projects, the question is whether this is done at the right scale, and if their policy reaches the translators involved in translating non-fiction.

In 2007-2008, the FvdL received 82 applications for translation grants for non-fiction projects, of which 14 were denied. This is only a small number when considering the amount of non-fiction titles published nowadays. The number of applicants can be influenced by various factors, which are the hypotheses of the study carried out for the FvdL. They are:

- The publishers deny the literary translators a model contract for literary translations for non-fiction projects. The model contract is a criterion when applying for a grant at the FvdL.
- The translators whom the publishers approach for non-fiction, are different translators than those who translate fiction. These non-fiction translators are not familiar with the possibility to apply for grant at the FvdL.
- The publishers approach the same translators for the translation of non-fiction as for fiction, but the translators are unaware that the FvdL also subsidizes non-fiction projects.

The Dutch study is titled: "Cultureel belangrijke non-fictie en vertaling: een studie naar het beleid van fondsen en uitgeverijen van cultureel belangrijke non-fictie en non-fictievertalers", and the assessments of the various criteria of the different funds, the profiles of the six different publishers and the outcome of the survey sent to literary translators, are also offered in this thesis in English.



Dutch and Flemish Literary Funds

The two Flemish funds are the Vlaams Fonds voor de Letteren (Flemish Literature Fund, VFL) and the journalistic fund Fonds Pascal Decroos voor Bijzondere Journalistiek, (Fund Pascal Decroos for Special Journalism, Fonds Pascal Decroos). The three Dutch funds are the Fonds voor de Letteren (FvdL) and the Nederlands Literair Productie- en Vertalingenfonds (NLPVF) and the journalistic fund Stichting Fonds Bijzondere Journalistieke Projecten (Fund for Special Journalistic Projects, FBJP). The journalistic funds are examined because they also subsidise the production of non-fiction novels. The sources used for the comparison of the non-fiction (translation) policies of all five funds were their annual reports (published on the websites of the funds), and a comparative study by Tim Hermans, who wrote a dissertation for the University of Antwerp in which he presents recommendations for the Flemish policy for literature 2004/2005. Some information presented in this study was available via other, non-public sources such as assessment forms and the regulations of the FvdL.

The Netherlands

The FvdL subsidises Dutch and Frisian literary work and translations into Dutch to stimulate the quality of literature. The applications for productions of Dutch work, or translations into Dutch are assessed by two and sometimes three external advisers whose opinions are re-assessed by an advisory board. On the assessment forms for translations, the advisers are requested to pay attention to “literary quality, c.q. significance, the level of difficulty and the size of the source texts”.¹⁷ In 2001, the FvdL used special forms for non-fiction for production of literature, but these are no longer used. The criteria as set in these non-fiction assessment forms for external advisers, explained that the

¹⁷ “De literaire kwaliteit, c.q. het belang, de moeilijkheidsgraad en de omvang van de bronteksten.”



fund “promotes high-quality innovative and/or investigative literary non-fiction, in which the author displays a high level of involvement with his subject, and which is characterised by an original treatment of the subject”.¹⁸

There are special criteria for the production of biographies. From 2006 to 2009, the FvdL and VFL co-subsidised biographies of important Dutch or Flemish persons. The funds will continue subsidising biographies in 2009, but now individually. Biographies are subsidised once every two years. The biography’s subject has to be an important Dutch literary author, and – similar to works by other literary authors and translators – the biographers are judged on their previous publications. For translations of biographies, no separate criteria are set.

Requests for translation funds are judged on the literary quality of the source texts and the previous skills of the translator. What the literary quality entails is not further explained, but literary authors of originally Dutch works of non-fiction are assessed on their previous publications, the position this work has in the literary and cultural Dutch tradition, the elaboration of storyline, thematics, use of language and the relations between form and content. No special attention is given to translations of literary biographies.

The NLPVF is a fund for foreign publishers who require financial support for the publication and translation of culturally important Dutch literary projects. The NLPVF’s attitude to literature is slightly different from the FvdL. The initial goal of the NLPVF is the promotion of Dutch literature abroad, while the focus of the FvdL lies on stimulating literary quality in the Netherlands. This gives the NLPVF perhaps a more liberal view of literature, since their focus is more on the marketability of the authors abroad. The NLPVF does not always rely on external advisers when assessing non-fiction. Internal employees offer their opinion, and if a re-evaluation is desired,

¹⁸ “De bevordering van kwalitatief hoogstaande literaire non-fictie die vernieuwend en/of onderzoekend is, een hoge mate van betrokkenheid toont van de auteur bij zijn onderwerp en die zich kenmerkt door een oorspronkelijke behandeling van het onderwerp.”



external help is asked. The criteria for literary non-fiction are not specified in the annual reports, but upon inquiry it appears that the literary aspect of the text is not that important. The quality of the non-fiction is the foremost criterion, which can be assessed by the originality of the subject and the singular existence of a particular novel e.g. that no novel has ever been written in that way about that particular subject. Because these novels have usually already been reviewed in the media, the NLPVF also takes the opinions of literary critics into consideration. The assessment process of the FvdL is more extensive, but because it is based on external assessments, it is also a more rigid and slower process than the NLPVF's assessment procedure. The two funds will merge in 2011.

The third literary fund in the Netherlands is the journalistic fund FBJP, which does not subsidise translations. Their assessment criteria are that the journalistic projects involve high costs or are extremely time-consuming and are insufficiently financed by the editorial office or publisher. Furthermore: "The projects have to rise above traditional reporting, daily journalism or correspondent activities. The subject or theme has to be special, or else the approach or point of view of the subject"¹⁹ (FBJP, 5).¹⁹ The projects have to have a certain topical value, and have to contribute to a current cultural, social or political debate. This is different from the criteria of the other two funds, where no reference is made to a topical subject of the project. The most important difference between the literary funds and the journalistic fund is that for the literary funds, the involvement of the author with his or her subject is an important criterion.

¹⁹ "De projecten moeten uitstijgen boven de reguliere verslaggeving, de dagelijkse journalistiek of het correspondentenschap. Het onderwerp of thema moet bijzonder zijn, of anders de benadering of invalshoek"



Flanders

The two Flemish literary funds are the VFL and Fonds Pascal Decroos.

Contrary to the FvdL, the VFL specifically refers to the essay in their annual report 2008, as an important literary non-fiction genre. A grant is rewarded, according to this report, if the essay meets the following criteria: “The most important criteria to its power of persuasion are subject choice and point of view, the familiarity of the author with the subject, the defined outline of the proposal, the feasibility of the project within the given time limit, and the relevance of the proposal within [Dutch] literature, culture and society” (28).²⁰ Also, the fund has recently expanded its range of subsidiaries for biographies with biographies for culturally important figures. They will subsidise these biographies in collaboration with the Fund Pascal Decroos. Requests for translation grants are assessed on the same criteria as the FvdL. The literary quality, the level of difficulty and size of the source texts are assessed, though reference is also made to genre. This is not further specified, so it is unclear what criteria the VFL has for translations of literary non-fiction. The VFL is also responsible for subsidiaries of translations abroad, and already combines the several fields of interests in a form which is preferred by the FvdL and the NLPVF after their merger.

The Fund Pascal Decroos for special journalistic projects do not subsidise translations, but do specify their criteria in a more accessible way. They give a relative weight to these criteria and discriminate between beginners and senior journalists. Their criteria and corresponding relative weight are:

- Non-regular character (beginners 18, seniors 15)
- Social relevance (beginners 14, seniors 10)
- Originality and innovative character (beginners 18, seniors 10)

²⁰ “Als belangrijkste criteria voor die overtuigingskracht gelden de keuze van het onderwerp en invalshoek, de vertrouwdheid van de auteur met het onderwerp, de concreetheid van het voorstel, de realiseerbaarheid ervan binnen het voorgestelde tijdsbestek en de relevantie van het voorstel binnen de literatuur, de cultuur en de samenleving.”



- Daring character (beginners 14, seniors 8)
- Feasibility (beginners 6, seniors 10)
- Newsworthiness (beginners 10, seniors 10)
- Experience of the journalist (beginners 3, seniors 7)
- Marketability (beginners 7, seniors 13)
- Time consuming character (beginners 10, seniors 14)

Both journalistic funds consider social relevance as an important criterion.

The focus on marketability is striking, since most funds offer grants because the proceeds are usually very low for authors.

When comparing the criteria of all funds, quality non-fiction is assessed based on the special point of view and an innovative approach to the subject. A good non-fiction project is original and investigative. The VFL, the FvdL, as the NLPVF believe that quality non-fiction displays involvement of the author with his or her subject. It is striking that the journalistic funds do not refer to this criterion. The journalistic funds do emphasise social relevance and topical nature of the project and newsworthiness. These criteria are of lesser or no importance to all three literary funds. Concluding can be said that literary non-fiction is not specified within the criteria of all funds, despite the reference to essays and biographies in the VFL and FvdL's annual reports. The journalistic fund does not specify literary non-fiction as a separate genre of (new) journalism. Little attention is given to translation of non-fiction. The policies do not seem to differ from the policies of translation grants for fiction.

Criteria put in practice

When examining some twenty assessment procedures for translation grants for literary non-fiction at the FvdL, it becomes clear that several factors are taken into account. Every text is evaluated separately and every advisor reviews literature differently. It is impossible to combine the separate assessment forms into a standard set of criteria for qualitative non-fiction. The



criteria for a good essay are not the same as for a good biography. An important criterion for a collection of essays can be: “analytical, but at the same time critical and provocative”,²¹ while a good biographer is “loving while at the same time objective”.²² A subsidiary for a translation of a biography for Frida Kahlo is denied, because this work does not focus on a literary aspect and is mainly informative, while essays by Heinrich Heine are praised for their informative quality. Sometimes a grant is awarded because the FvdL believes that it is important to for a whole oeuvre of the author to be available in translation, while grants are also denied based on this criterion, when for example the specific text is regarded as too specialised and ‘historic curiosa’.

The assessment is sometimes based on an estimation of the interest of the Dutch public for a particular work. When there is probably no or limited attention for a particular work, grants are more easily denied, especially when the advisers were already doubting the literary quality of a particular work. One assessment for a ‘conceptual-logical-philosophical’ work by Douglas Hofstadter, has an useful description of the quality. This work has “ingredients which should be present in a good work of non-fiction: an entirely original vision, perspective and style. The author has utilised rhetorical and stylistic elements in his work, which also displays a high level of intellectual precision and writing accuracy, as well as a broad erudition”.²³

²¹ “Analytisch maar ook kritisch en provocerend.”

²² “Liefdevol, zoals een biograaf moet zijn, maar tegelijkertijd objectief.”

²³ “Een geheel eigen visie, originele invalshoek en stijl, er zijn retorische en stilistische middelen ingezet, er is een grote zorgvuldigheid van denken en schrijven aanwezig en er wordt een brede belezendheid tentoongespreid”



Publishers

Six publishers were examined to see if there was a difference in the approach to non-fiction and the opinion of culturally important non-fiction between the FvdL and the publishers. The assessed publishers are De Bezige Bij, Atlas, Meulenhoff, De Arbeiderspers, Ambo/Anthos, and Prometheus/Bert Bakker. Cultural classification is partly based on the approach of publishers, but literary translators are also highly dependant on the approach of publishers to non-fiction. The literary translators have to have a model contract if they want to apply for a translation grant at the FvdL. This model contract is developed for translations of literary genres, but if the publishers fail to recognise the literary value of non-fiction, this contract could be denied. In 2007-2008, the FvdL has received 82 applications for translation grants for non-fiction. A total of 43 titles originated from the six publishers, while these publishers do publish a lot more translated non-fiction titles in these two years. If the publishers fail to provide their literary translators with a model contract for literary translations, these translators cannot apply for a subsidiary at the FvdL. This is one hypothesis of the FvdL. Two other hypotheses why only a fraction of non-fiction titles originating from these publishers is known at the FvdL, are:

- the publishers use different translators for the translation of non-fiction than for fiction, and these translators are completely unfamiliar with the FvdL.
- The publishers use the same translators for the translation of non-fiction as for fiction, but the translators are unaware of the possibility to apply for a translation grant for non-fiction.

An examination of these publishers and interviews with the editors at these publishers will provide clarity regarding these hypotheses.



While websites and publisher's lists offer information about the ratio fiction/non-fiction and translation/originally Dutch work, information about contracts was provided in interviews. Of the six publishers, five agreed to partake in an interview, in which their (non-fiction) editors offered information about trends within non-fiction, their policy regarding translations and information about how translators were approached and what contract they received. These interviews are submitted as an appendix to the Dutch study of the FvdL. In this thesis, some references to these interviews will be made, to clarify the translation and publishing policy of non-fiction of the publishers in question. The six publishers were considered representative of the way in which the Dutch literary field deals with non-fiction and offers insight in the policy of literary publishers regarding non-fiction.

In preparation for the interviews with the non-fiction editors, the non-fiction titles on the publishers' websites and brochures were examined and placed into categories. The ratio fiction/non-fiction and the ratio translation/original Dutch work offers insight into the publishing and translating policy of these publishers. The publishers presented here are considered representative of the Dutch literary climate and they publish quality non-fiction titles that the FvdL wants to target with their subsidiary policy. The non-fiction titles are divided into categories. The categories in which their non-fiction is placed – with the exception of the category 'memoires', were used on the website of publisher Ambo/Anthos, and were considered useful in categorising the title list of the other publishers as well. Important to note is that in the category 'politics', there are some autobiographies or novels by politicians, which could also be placed in the category 'memoires'. 'Literature' holds works by authors who write about a literary author or literary school. Works about other art forms are placed in the 'cultural history' category.



De Bezige Bij

The title list of De Bezige Bij features 1272 titles; both fiction and non-fiction titles, and are not categorised. A categorisation for De Bezige Bij titles was impossible, since the only available information were the publisher's list; only the titles are mentioned. It was impossible to define which titles were non-fiction and which were translations. Leonoor Broeder, non-fiction editor at De Bezige Bij mentions in the interview that roughly twenty percent of the title list is non-fiction. The ratio translation/original Dutch work of non-fiction is 50/50. Since early 2008, De Bezige Bij has expanded its activities regarding non-fiction, Broeder explains. Publisher De Bezige Bij is historically not a non-fiction publisher. Traditionally, non-fiction on their title list was written by fiction authors. Their focus nowadays lies on quality non-fiction, which is acquired the same way as fiction is.

The interest in non-fiction, according to Broeder, is due to a growing need of information. People want to find answers for the things that are happening in the world around them. When deciding to translate a particular non-fiction book, a comparative assessment is made whether or not this book is too specialised and whether or not it is likely to be read by those interested in the subject in the original language anyway. These subjects can, for example, be history (modern history and the Second World War) or biographies about important historical figures. Literary non-fiction is, according to Broeder, personalised non-fiction. The reader feels that the author is personally involved in the subject. Literary non-fiction is original and captivating, informative but not pedantic, and sparks the curiosity of the reader.

The publisher usually works with translators whom the editors know, and who often have a particular preference for certain works. There is no difference between fiction or non-fiction translators, according to Broeder. Both are regarded as highly qualified, and fiction translators are sometimes



asked for non-fiction translations and the other way around. Broeder mentions that some literary translators decline a non-fiction project – even though they do prefer this genre – because they fear they cannot apply for a grant at the FvdL. This indicates that the translators themselves assess the literary value of the non-fiction projects themselves, prior to the assessment procedure of the FvdL. Since, according to Broeder, all translators are given a model contract for literary translation at De Bezige Bij, the few applications for translation grants for De Bezige Bij non-fiction titles – only five in two years – could be due to the fact that the translators assess their work as non-literary and refrain from applying for a grant.

Atlas

The title list of Atlas holds 560 titles, of which 230 are non-fiction. Because several fiction titles occur twice on the website (for example for hard-cover and mid-price editions), the relation fiction/non-fiction can be considered 50/50. The non-fiction segment holds 91 translations and 139 originally Dutch works (40% translation). They can be categorised as follows:

- cultural history, (translated: 5 of 36 titles)
- philosophy, (translated: 8 of 8)
- history, (translated: 8 of 31)
- classical, (none)
- literature, (translated: 6 of 30)
- people and society, (translated: 5 of 19)
- people and society, (translated: 5 of 12)
- politics, (translated: 6 of 6)
- psychology, (none)
- travels, (translated: 30 of 52)
- spirituality, (translated: 3 of 6)
- memoires (translated: 15 of 30)



Atlas clearly focuses on travel literature, which is by far the largest category. The traditional NUR-classification for 'literary non-fiction' can be applied to the titles within the category 'literature': these titles are about important literary figures, or literary schools, and are mostly about Dutch authors. 'Narrative non-fiction' at Atlas is often given a NUR 301 code, according to the editors Jessica Nash and Denise Larsen. A well written non-fiction novel is not necessarily classified as literary non-fiction. Both author-oriented non-fiction as subject-oriented non-fiction can become popular. The publisher wants to focus less on translations and more on originally Dutch non-fiction. Dutch non-fiction has a promotional advantage and the publishing process is much more interesting when the writing process can be reviewed. This is a development in non-fiction which is also seen at Meulenhoff and De Arbeiderspers. When Atlas does choose to translate a title, they approach translators which are already known at the publisher and have often also translated titles by the same author. Both non-fiction as fiction translators are offered the model contract.

Atlas' translators are more familiar with the FvdL than those at De Bezige Bij: in 2007 three applicants requested translation grants for Atlas titles, which were all awarded and in 2008, twelve requests were made of which only one was denied because a negative assessment of the translation skills of the applicant.

Meulenhoff

The Meulenhoff title list features 526 titles, of which 186 are non-fiction and 340 are fiction titles. The ratio translation/originally Dutch non-fiction is 62 translations to 92 original Dutch works: translations take up exactly 30%.

Cultural history and history are popular categories. Philosophy, psychology,



spirituality and travel literature are, as opposed to the other publishers, not popular at Meulenhoff.

- cultural history, (translated: 18 of 38 titles)
- philosophy, (translated: 3 of 3)
- history, (translated: 13 of 27)
- classical, (none)
- literature, (translated: 0 of 9)
- people and society, (translated: 21 of 50)
- people and science, (translated: 5 of 8)
- politics, (translated: 2 of 7)
- psychology, (translated: 3 of 3)
- travels, (translated: 1 of 3)
- spirituality, (none)
- memoires (translated: 14 of 23)

Non-fiction editor Thijs Bartels at Meulenhoff believes that literary value is important but specialised non-fiction can have literary value as well. The literary value can also reveal itself in a well written book which is accessible for a broad audience. The titles reveal many topical books, for example about the influence of the Islam, or environmental related issues. Like De Arbeiderspers and Atlas, Meulenhoff is planning to focus more on Dutch authors, instead of translating non-fiction from abroad. Dutch authors have a promotional advantage, they can become well known authors in the Netherlands, while the marketing of foreign authors is much more difficult. The writing and publishing process is also often cheaper and can be reviewed more easily. Meulenhoff does give all their translators the same contracts. In 2007 and 2008, the FvdL awarded five translation grants to Meulenhoff titles, and four applicants were denied a grant.



De Arbeiderspers

Because the website of publisher De Arbeiderspers offers a very limited amount of titles, the non-fiction brochure of 2007 was used to make a categorization. 19 originally Dutch non-fiction titles are presented in the brochure and 16 translations, which is almost 50/50. In the 2007 fiction brochure only 25 titles are presented, which makes De Arbeiderspers the only publishers which has more non-fiction than non-fiction titles (59% are non-fiction titles). The title list is, despite being limited, extremely varied and of high quality. The following categories can be distinguished:

- cultural history, (translated: 5 of 9 titles)
- philosophy, (translated: 2 of 3)
- history, (translated: 3 of 5)
- classical, (none)
- literature, (translated: 2 of 5)
- people and society, (translated: 1 of 4)
- people and science, (translated: 1 of 4)
- politics, (none)
- psychology, (none)
- travels, (none)
- spirituality, (translated: 0 of 1)
- memoires (translated: 2 of 4)

In an interview with *Boekblad*, publisher Elik Lettinga of De Arbeiderspers mentions that she focuses on “narrative non-fiction” on the title list of De Arbeiderspers. In this narrative non-fiction, she says, “the voice of the author is more important than the subject” (Romeny, 2009, 12). She also mentions that “without non-fiction it is impossible to have a literary publishers’ list, mainly because authors will not be tied down [to one genre]. Non-fiction is also important for the dynamics of the title list” (12).²⁴

²⁴ “In verhalende non-fictie is de stem van de auteur belangrijker dan het onderwerp. Zonder non-fictie kun je geen literair fonds hebben, alleen al omdat auteurs zich niet laten inperken. Het is ook belangrijk voor de dynamiek van het fonds.”



This is reflected in the answers by Michel van de Waart, non-fiction editor of De Arbeiderspers. There are several series, like de 'Privé-domein' series, which consists of autobiographical works and correspondence between authors. Sports is another topic that reoccurs regularly within the publisher's list, but most non-fiction is assessed individually.

A striking development is that De Arbeiderspers will change the presentation of the title list: the brochures will no longer separate fiction from non-fiction, all titles will be presented in one catalogue. This portrays the general trend in literature, Van de Waart explains. The difference between fiction and non-fiction is often difficult to make and fictional books hold non-fictional information while non-fiction books are often very creative and lean heavily on fictional devices. Another development, also referred to at Atlas and Meulenhoff, is that De Arbeiderspers wishes to focus more on Dutch non-fiction authors. This is a promotional decision, because a Dutch author is presented in the media and signing sessions can be organised etc. Both fiction as non-fiction translators are offered the same contracts. The FvdL awarded three titles of De Arbeiderspers with a translation grant in 2007 and 2008, and one request was denied.

Ambo/Anthos

The ratio fiction/non-fiction on the title list of Ambo/Anthos is nearly 50/50. The non-fiction section consists of 65% translations and 35% originally Dutch works. A categorisation is made as follows on the website of Ambo/Anthos:

- cultural history, (translated: 11 of 16 titles)
- philosophy, (translated: 15 of 23)
- history, (translated: 21 of 30)
- classical, (translated: 4 of 5)
- literature, (1: oddly enough they place Dante Alighieri's *Divine Comedy* in this category)



- people and society, (translated: 10 of 23)
- people and science, (translated: 5 of 5)
- politics, (translated: 4 of 5)
- psychology, (translated: 7 of 12)
- travels, (translated: 2 of 3)
- spirituality, (translated: 1 of 1)
- memoires (none)

Ambo/Anthos publishes a lot of translations (65%) but non-fiction editor Laurens Ubbink mentions that Ambo/Anthos wants to bring this down to 50%. Works of both fiction and non-fiction are recommended to the publisher by literary agents, American or English scouts and colleague editors. The editors themselves also spot new talent on book fairs, such as the Frankfurt Buchmesse. Traditionally, the Ambo/Anthos' title list features a lot of historical non-fiction, especially about the First World War. Narrative non-fiction about historical or cultural history subjects are often translations, but the narrative non-fiction is also becoming a popular genre by Dutch authors, according to Ubbink. The decision to translate a particular non-fiction book does not differ from a fiction translation. All translators are offered the same literary contracts and often fiction translators are asked to translate non-fiction, Ubbink says. There are also some specialised translators for non-fiction, for example for philosophical books. Translations of literary non-fiction are more often carried out by fiction translators, Ubbink explains, since the style and tone are often more important. They are all offered the same contracts.

Literary non-fiction can be defined by the style and the way in which information is presented, Ubbink says. Information is not presented as straightforward as in 'regular' non-fiction; the reader is seduced by the literary style and it sparks curiosity. Like De Bezige Bij editor Leonoor Broeder, Ubbink considers literary non-fiction a more personal non-fiction.



The example he gives is the novel *Stranger to History* by Aatish Taseer, which is a personal account of the author's travels through the Middle East, and his relationship with his father. In 2007 and 2008 only three applicants translating Ambo/Anthos titles were awarded a grant at the FvdL, and one application was denied.

Prometheus/Bert Bakker

The title list of Prometheus/Bert Bakker features 299 fiction titles and 302 non-fiction titles. Of those non-fiction titles, only 48 are translated. With only 16%, this publisher has the fewest translated non-fiction titles of this study. The categorisation is as follows:

- cultural history (translated: 11 of 60 titles)
- philosophy, (translated: 5 of 16)
- history, (translated: 7 of 64)
- classical, (translated: 8 of 9, particularly because of Plato series)
- literature, (translated: 0 of 4)
- people and society, (translated: 1 of 59)
- people and science, (translated: 4 of 19)
- politics, (translated: 0 of 16)
- psychology, (translated: 1 of 11)
- travels, (translated: 3 of 14)
- spirituality, (translated: 3 of 9)
- memoires (translated: 5 of 21)

'People and society' is, together with 'history', the largest category. 'Classical', 'philosophy' and 'spirituality' have the highest ratio of translations.

Prometheus/Bert Bakker was the only publishers whose non-fiction editor was not interviewed in the study. Two applicants were awarded a FvdL translation grant in 2007 and 2008.



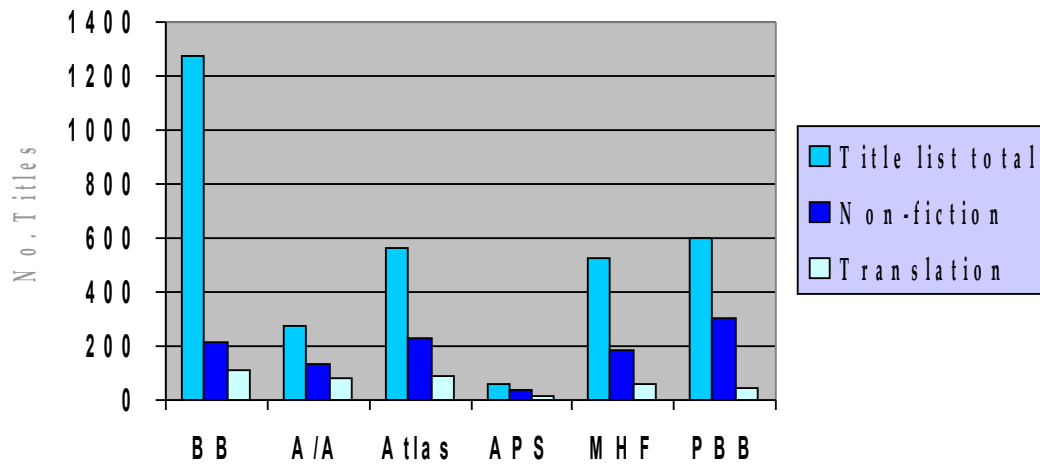
Comparing these publishers and considering the interviews with the non-fiction editors of Atlas, De Bezige Bij, Ambo/Anthos, De Arbeiderspers and Meulenhoff, it can be concluded that non-fiction takes up a large part of every publisher's lists. This is especially true for De Arbeiderspers, where 59% of all titles is non-fiction. For Atlas, Prometheus/Bert Bakker and Ambo/Anthos, the ratio fiction/non-fiction is almost 50/50. At Meulenhoff, non-fiction takes up 35% of all titles, and De Bezige Bij has the fewest non-fiction titles: 20% of all titles.

The ratio of translations differs from 40% of all non-fiction titles for both Atlas and Meulenhoff, 46% for De Arbeiderspers, 65% for Ambo/Anthos and only 16% for Prometheus/Bert Bakker. Publisher De Bezige Bij translates about 50% of their non-fiction titles, according to Leonoor Broeder. A development to which the editors at Atlas, Meulenhoff, De Arbeiderspers and Ambo/Anthos refer, is that the publishers want to reduce their translated non-fiction. The reason is that the writing process of originally Dutch works is more interesting, the process can be assessed more easily and there is a promotional advantage. Also, the authors could have a professional network of writers or journalists who could be useful for the publisher. All editors mention they offer their non-fiction translators the model contract for literary translations, which is identical to fiction translations. They also mention that despite the fact that although some literary translators have a preference for fiction or non-fiction, they are all regarded highly qualified to translate both.

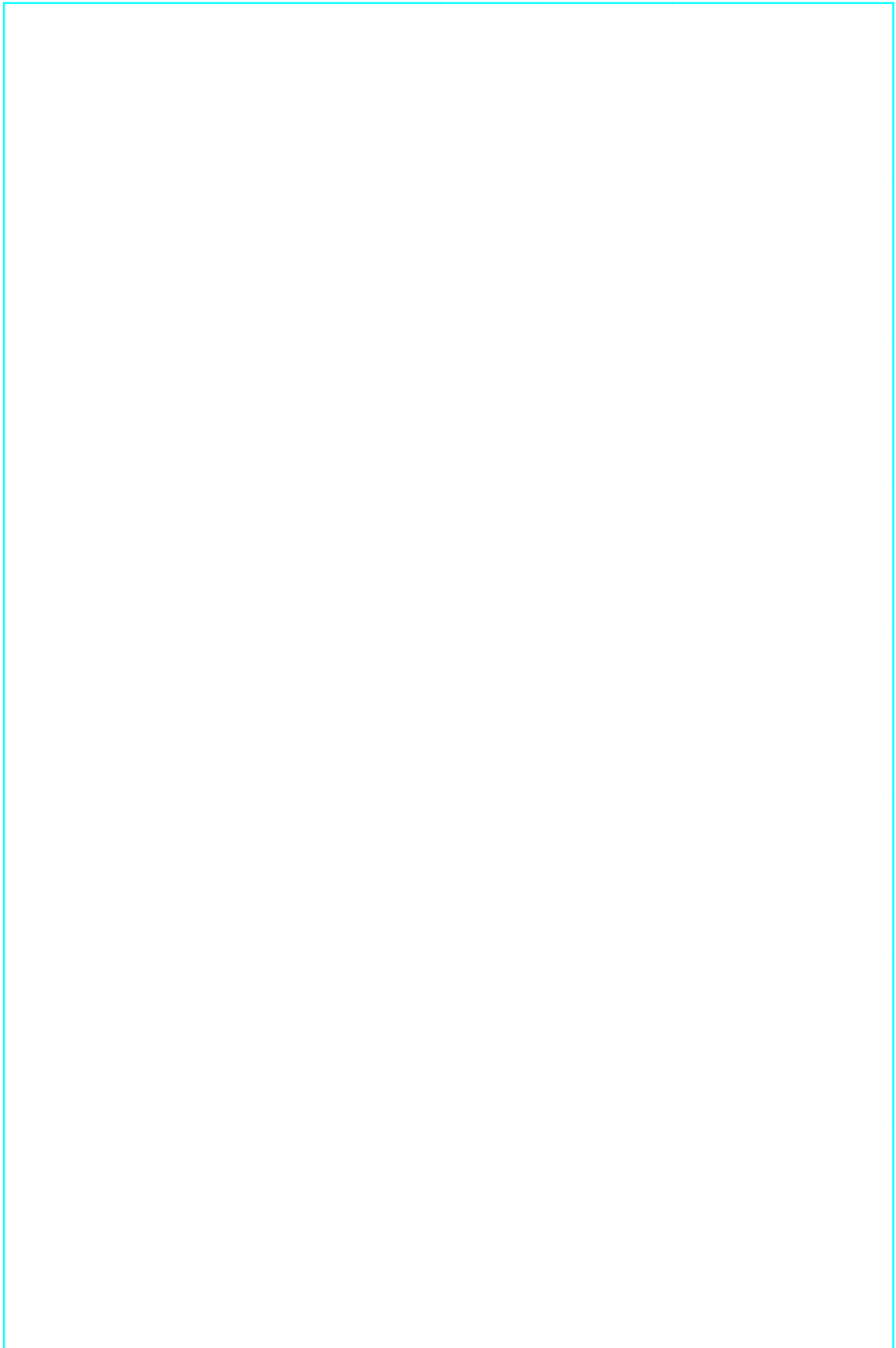
The chart below visualises the ratio fiction/non-fiction and translation/originally Dutch non-fiction.



Non-fiction ratio Dutch Publishers



A complete overview of all publishers is presented on the next page.





As shown, the ratio translated non-fiction differs from 8% to 30%. The average is 16.9% for all six publishers. At the FvdL, 13.7% of all titles awarded a translation grant are non-fiction titles, which is rather close to the average ratio translated non-fiction at these six literary publishers. These numbers, however, are not really representative because there only six publishers were incorporated in this study, and their percentages differ from 8 to 30%. Also, the numbers of the FvdL are based on the total number of applications in a two year-period (2007-2008), while the title lists of the publishers feature titles which could be published ten years ago. This information, however, cannot be verified. Like sales figures, numbers about the amount of titles or the year of publication are hard to get by. All six publishers did not have easy access to information about year of publication, if the title was a translation, and if so, who the translator was. This does not only demonstrate an unsystematic approach to the way in which the publishers present their titles, but also a limited recognition of the cultural importance of literary translators by the publishing industry.



Translators

When a publisher acquires a foreign manuscript, the editors decide who they prefer for the translation of the text. Usually, the publisher works with a selection of translators who have worked with the editors before, and the translators often have their own speciality. This is usually the case with non-fiction, since it can be highly specialised. This was also acknowledged by the non-fiction editors in the five interviews, but they also referred to personal preference of literary translators. Some translators prefer non-fiction to fiction. Kris Humbeeck and Francine Smink carried out a study for the Dutch Language Union titled: “Literair vertalen: van twee kanten bekeken” (“Literary translation: a two-sided observation”), in which they asked nine publishers in the Netherlands and Flanders and several literary translators about the relationship between the publisher and translator. They mention that for non-fiction: “the quality and reputation of the translator is for non-fiction titles of less importance, as opposed to fiction” (Humbeeck, 20).²⁵ In the study of the FvdL, this could not be concluded. It has to be pointed out, however, that the study of the FvdL only focuses on five publishers of literary work, while other publishers who publish non-literary work may treat their translators differently. No other reference is made to the translation of non-fiction in the study of Humbeeck, since its focus is the translation of fiction.

The degree of difficulty for translating non-fiction is often the same, or even higher than for fiction. Non-fiction editor Laurens Ubbink at Ambo/Anthos mentions that in non-fiction many facts have to be checked, or the use of language influences the degree of difficulty, for example with philosophical texts. Ubbink mentions that for narrative non-fiction, he often

²⁵ “Voor non-fictie geldt dat de kwaliteit en ‘naam’ van de vertaler minder belangrijk is dan voor literaire titels.”



contacts a literary translator who usually translates fiction, because style and tone are important in narrative or literary non-fiction. All editors mention that every translator receives the same payment, as set in the model contract for literary translation. An important observation is that the editors are often confronted with translators declining non-fiction translation projects – despite being offered the model contract for literary translation – because they fear they will be denied a grant at the FvdL. This was pointed out by editors at De Bezige Bij, Meulenhoff and Atlas.

The model contract for literary translations was initiated by the VvL (The Dutch Writers' Guild) in the mid eighties, and was set as a criterion when applying for a translation grant at the VFL and the FvdL. Usually, when the literary quality of the text is acknowledged, the translator receives this standard contract, in which the minimum word-rate in a literary translation is set at 6,2 eurocents. However, when there is doubt about the literary quality of the text, the publisher can offer the translator a much lower word-rate. In this case, the translator is often in no position to negotiate. If they do not accept the contract, the publisher will find someone else.

The Expertise Centre Literary Translation (ELV) mention on their website that these practices occur regularly. They say that the word rate, which is a required minimum as set by the funds, is often used as a maximum by the publishers in the Netherlands and Flanders. When there is doubt about the literary quality of the text, the translators are offered a significantly lower rate. This could often be the case with non-fiction.

Since the editors of the five publishers mention that they offer the model contract for literary translation to their literary translators, the FvdL was very curious if the translators provided the same answer. Twenty-two translators were contacted via correspondence information on the website of the VvL and information of the FvdL itself. The study did want to target translators who were unfamiliar with the FvdL, but their correspondence



information was unavailable, or these translators did not return the questionnaire. Twelve literary translators eventually returned the questionnaire, of whom eleven had ever applied for a translation grant for a (non-fiction) project. Their answers offer the following information:

The translators were all established translators, with over six years of experience. All translators except one have translated both fiction as non-fiction. One translator has not yet translated fiction, only non-fiction. One translator mentions that he considers literary translating a specialty, while fiction and non-fiction are just different genres, which explains the ‘partly’ in the first row of the table. Several translators mention assessing the literary quality of their non-fiction project themselves before applying for a grant, and some mention that this has led to refraining from application.

The degree of difficulty does not differ between fiction and non-fiction, according to five respondents. Seven respondents mention that translating non-fiction is different or even more difficult than fiction, because non-fiction often features a lot of facts and jargon and all sources have to be checked. This sometimes even leads to the identification of faults in the source texts, one translator mentions. Turning a highly specialised text into a stylistically beautiful and accessible text is the major challenge when translating non-fiction, one translator explains. The FvdL should also subsidise non-fiction which has a particular value to the Dutch (literary) culture and which makes scientific information available for a broad audience. The content should



provide a “new insight or surprising point of view”,²⁶ according to a respondent.

Comparison publishers and translators

The most important observation is that both literary translators as publishers – despite having appointed non-fiction editors – do not approach fiction or non-fiction differently. All translators except one have translated both fiction and non-fiction, and publishers have only a slightly different approach, or no different approach at all when acquiring non-fiction titles. The editors of the five publishers mention they all provide their translators with a model contract for literary translation. This leads to the re-evaluation of the three hypotheses by the FvdL:

- the publishers fail to provide their literary translators with a model contract for literary translations, so these translators cannot apply for a subsidiary at the FvdL
- the publishers use different translators for the translation of non-fiction than for fiction, and these translators are unaware of the possibility to apply for a grant at the FvdL
- the publishers use the same translators for both fiction as non-fiction, but translators are unaware they can apply for a grant for non-fiction.

The first two hypotheses do not seem to hold up for these particular five publishers and twelve literary translators. Both the editors in the interviews, as the literary translators in the questionnaires, mention working with the model contract, and editors often ask fiction translators for non-fiction translations and the other way around. All translators but one have also translated fiction. There are signs that some translators are indeed unaware of the possibility to apply for a grant for non-fiction, and those who are aware of the possibility assess the literary quality of their projects themselves before

²⁶ “(...) de nieuwe inzichten of het verrassende perspectief”



starting the application process. When the translators refrain from applying for a grant it is unclear whether these applications would pass the criteria as set by the FvdL, or whether these translators do indeed assess the (lack of) literary value of their projects correctly.

It has to be mentioned, though, that the publishers in this study were well-established, literary publishers, who focus on quality both in the production of literary texts as well as their translations. The translators were all well-established professional translators, who may have worked without a model contract in the past, but are now experienced enough to have a strong negotiation position. Literary translators who do not work for well-established publishers, or publishers who focus on non-literary texts, and translators who are not experienced enough to have a strong negotiation position, often have no other option than to work for a word-rate which is often 30% below the minimum word-rate as set in the model contract. It can not be said that the three hypotheses can be rejected completely, since the scope of this study was limited. The monitoring of the quality and cultural value of literary translators should also focus on these translators and these publishers. Publishers should be made aware of the importance of quality translations, for both fiction and non-fiction, and the need for improved working conditions for literary translators.



Recommendations non-fiction policy

The FvdL has trouble defining their policy for the subsidisation of culturally important non-fiction. The criteria for non-fiction at different literary funds show that good non-fiction is considered innovative, investigative, and creative and shows a high level of involvement of the author to his or her subject. The FvdL also wants to keep focussing on the literary value of culturally important non-fiction when assessing the source texts. Advisers regard the criteria as vague and applicants express that assessment comes across as arbitrary, which displays a need for a more clear definition of the criteria for non-fiction. The criteria of several literary funds can be combined to help a more clear definition of the criteria and an inventory of the opinions of literary critics, non-fiction editors and literary translators can also be used to specify the criteria of the FvdL. These criteria should be communicated to both advisers, but also to literary translators and even to publishers, since they are often confronted with translators declining non-fiction projects because they fear they will be denied a grant. The criteria should also be published on the website of the FvdL.

The border between literary non-fiction projects and journalistic non-fiction projects is often not clear. Many literary critics reflect on the journalistic properties of many works of literary non-fiction and the question is why these fields are kept separate. The FvdL communicates with the FBJP where biographies are involved, since biographies of literary figures are subsidised by the FvdL, while biographies of literary figures who were also active in other cultural fields are subsidised by the FBJP, but the biography might not be the only genre in which overlap is seen between literature and journalism. The FBJP does not subsidise translations, so the FvdL should perhaps be more flexible in the subsidisation of a more journalistic non-fiction.



Conclusion

When assessing the non-fiction policy of the FvdL, the notion non-fiction has to be examined to understand the problems involved in defining a clear a manageable policy for the subsidisation of translation projects. This manageable policy is for a large part based on setting clear criteria for culturally important non-fiction. The quality of culturally important non-fiction is mostly based on the literary value, since the FvdL wants to stimulate the quality and availability of Dutch and Frisian literature. When assessing the literary value of non-fiction, the scope can be quickly limited to literary non-fiction. This genre, however, also causes confusion.

Many different terms surround literary non-fiction. Literary non-fiction seems to originate from *new journalism*. New journalism focuses on the development within journalism from the sixties onwards, when authors began displaying fictional devices such as an elaborate narrative or dialogue in non-fiction texts – journalistic articles and non-fiction novels. This development was seen as a reaction to the incomprehensibility of reality: fact was sometimes stranger than fiction. This was for example the case with Truman Capote's *In Cold Blood*, a popular non-fiction book, written in 1966. New journalism lead to the recognition of the non-fiction novel, which is presented as one of four genres within the literary non-fiction. The other three are the essay, the biography and the autobiography.

In the non-fiction novel, journalists and authors alike focus on a more personalistic mode of writing. The stories are about reality, but in a way which was unprecedented. These new novels were not realistic novels, but almost autobiographic. The literary development of writing personalistic books was noticed in both journalistic as in literary circles. In the seventies, many literary scholars paid attention to this new mode of literature, and all



seemed to be searching for a manageable term for this new genre. This search for a manageable term is still visible. Definitions like narrative non-fiction and creative non-fiction are often used when speaking of literary non-fiction. Three subgenres that are a bit less ill-defined within the genre literary non-fiction are the essay, the biography and the autobiography, although both the essay and the biography also often cross the boundary between journalism and literature. All four genres display the problematic hybrid nature of literary non-fiction and their strained relationship with the truth. The ill-fixed boundary between fiction and non-fiction could be seen as a characteristic of literary non-fiction.

The problems surrounding the definition of literary non-fiction form the backdrop of the Dutch study for the Foundation of Literature, in which the non-fiction policies of five literary funds and six publishers were evaluated. The problematic nature of literary non-fiction creates problems when defining the subsidisation policy of the FvdL for both original work and translation, while the interest in non-fiction in the Netherlands is growing. All six publishers display a substantial interest in non-fiction, and at four of those six publishers, translated non-fiction takes up 50% of all non-fiction titles. Although non-fiction translation projects are subsidised at the Dutch Foundation of Literature, it seems that translators are unaware that this is the case. This conclusion can be made after interviews with non-fiction editors at five publishers and the analysis of twelve questionnaires sent to literary (non-fiction) translators.

By clarifying the criteria of the subsidisation of translation projects for non-fiction, the problem is only partly solved. A more important aspect is the communication of those criteria, perhaps not only to (future) applicants, but to (non-fiction) editors at literary publishers as well. Another field of attention is the cooperation with other Dutch funds, like the NLPVF and the FBJP. Since the FvdL merges with the NLPVF in 2011, cooperation with this fund is being



developed, but the FBJP and the FvdL should also reassess the boundaries of their subsidisation scope. Since the FvdL is the only Dutch fund that subsidises the translation of non-fiction texts into Dutch, the subsidisation of translation projects should also include a more journalistic non-fiction.

Cultural classification is an ever changing process and our opinion of what defines literature does not consist of a stable set of criteria. This is what makes the development of policy within the cultural field a difficult process. There are many external factors that have to be taken into consideration when assessing the functionality of a particular policy. In the case of the FvdL, the factors include whether the non-fiction translators receive a model contract for literary translation, whether the publishers use translators for non-fiction projects who are familiar with the possibility of applying for a translation grant, and whether these translators are also aware of the possibility of applying for a translation grant for non-fiction projects. Although the first two did not appear to influence the functionality, all factors should be included in the re-evaluation of the translation policy of non-fiction projects. The rejection of the first two hypotheses can perhaps only be concluded after the assessment of the five publishers and twelve literary translators in this study, but other less-established publishers who focus on non-literary work may work differently and the answers of literary translators with less experience may have given a different image.

In general, the formulation of a clear and manageable policy will benefit from insight in the developments of actors within the field, such as other literary funds, literary publishers and the literary translators themselves. Communication with and to these actors can benefit the quality of literary translation in the Netherlands and the cultural and financial position of literary translators of both fiction and non-fiction.



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