



**Utrecht University**

**Marketing Dutch Translations of Anglophone Young Adult Literature**

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## **Abstract**

This thesis explores the marketing strategies that are used by Dutch publishers of Young Adult Literature (YAL) originating in English-language countries. It does so through qualitative research, with information extracted from interviews with six Dutch publishing houses and analysed thematically with the aid of key theoretical concepts. These are derived from scholarship on central and peripheral reading cultures and marketing as paratext, zooming in on the use of branding and shared reading experiences. The most important marketing strategies used to combat the encroaching threat of English-language counterparts to the sales of Dutch books are the creation of limited editions and community building, both on social media (which in 2022 is mostly Instagram and TikTok) and at literary events. However, as marketing is constantly changing, publishing houses will have to continue innovating. Although ample scope remains for a more complete overview of the Dutch YAL field, the thesis contributes to filling a niche in scholarly research on marketing strategies used to sell translated YAL in the Dutch context, and offers insights into the world of publishers, editors and marketers, partly in their own words.

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## Chapter 1: Introduction

### 1.1 YAL and Dutch Publishing Houses

Alice Oseman, Jenny Han and Sarah J. Maas are common names on both foreign and Dutch bestseller lists. Although authors like these write in different genres, ranging from graphic novels and romance to fantasy, their books can all be categorised as Young Adult Literature (YAL). The meaning of YAL is a complex matter: some consider it a genre; others see it as an age category (for ages around 14-20); while yet others define it as a market segment (Ackermans, “Een decennium” 52). The concept has also been challenged by the emergence of the more clearly age-related categories of Middle Grade (for ages 10-13) and New Adult (18+, including explicit sex scenes and violence), as YAL appears to fill the gap that falls in between these two defined categories. Moreover, the existence of crossover books, which have multigenerational appeal (Cart, “Restless Art” 5), blurs the notion of YAL even more. In this thesis, YAL is considered to be a label, tag or concept that acts in two ways. On the one hand, it functions as an age border to separate children’s literature from books for older audiences, starting with young adults. On the other hand, it is a useful marketing concept for publishing houses, as the tag is strongly associated with particular bestseller authors.

S.E. Hinton’s *The Outsiders*, published in 1967 in the USA, is considered by some scholars the first YAL book (Ackermans, “Een decennium” 50; Cart, “Restless Art” 2), although there already existed novels before that would now be categorised as YAL, such as J.D. Salinger’s *The Catcher in the Rye* (1951). Throughout the years, the idea of YAL evolved, continuously altering which books were considered to pertain to the category, as discussed in section 1.2. However, in the twenty-first century, most young readers associate YAL with authors such as Stephenie Meyer (*Twilight* series, 2005-2008), John Green (*Looking for Alaska*, 2005; *The Fault in Our Stars*, 2012), or Suzanne Collins (*The Hunger*

*Games* series, 2008-2010). These titles pertain to what has been referred to by scholar Michael Cart as the Second Golden Age of YAL (6), in which popular novels are accompanied by movie and series adaptations, merchandise and large (online) fan communities.

In the Netherlands, YAL started developing from 2009 onwards. Many Dutch writers of YAL have appeared since, including Floortje Zwigman (*Een groene bloem* series, 2005-2010; which was marketed as YAL after 2009), Natalie Koch (*De verborgen universiteit* series, 2011-2016) or Stefan Raatgever (*De jongen die van de klif sprong en zacht terecht kwam*, 2022). Although these writers can be found in the YAL sections of most Dutch bookstores, they have to share shelf space with foreign YAL authors. Although Dutch translations of these books are mostly available, researchers and journalists have found that the youth is frequently more attracted to titles in their original languages, which in the case of YAL is often English. In 2019, journalist Enno de Witt wrote that “the Dutch youth is increasingly directly buying English-language editions” (qtd. in Ackermans, “Een decennium” 58).<sup>1</sup> This is confirmed in a study that was highlighted by Dutch news channel NOS in April 2022: Dutch young people widely prefer English-language books, and in 2021 one in six sold books was in a foreign language, an increase of 50 percent since 2017 (“Engels”). According to market research institute Gfk, most readers of books in languages other than Dutch are under thirty-five (qtd. in Dessing “English Please!”), thus including the target audience for YAL.

The preference for English-language books is considered by YAL researcher Linda Ackermans to be an important aspect for further research (“Een decennium” 58-9) and this thesis partly touches upon this point in section 4.4. The reasons why the Dutch youth is

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<sup>1</sup> “In toenemende mate kopen Nederlandse jongeren meteen de Engelstalige uitgaven.”

attracted to English-language publications are examined extensively in chapter 4, and they are of both practical and abstract nature. English titles are often cheaper, as they are not subject to the *Wet op de vaste boekenprijs* ('Law on the Fixed Book Price'), which is further explained in chapter 4, and readers do not have to wait for the translation to appear on the market.

Blossom Books' publisher Myrthe Spiteri suspects that it also has to do with prestige: English is seen as cool, while Dutch is perceived to be ugly (qtd. in De Witt "Hype voorbij").

Furthermore, the Gfk study referenced above has shown that many young people now have good English language skills because of internet culture (qtd. in Dessing "English Please!"), although this extends to the prevalence of globalised Anglicised media in general. The Dutch education system may also be part of the reason for the growing preference for English books. In the study published by NOS, a teenager mentioned: "[w]hen I read in Dutch, I feel like I am working on the *leeslijst*" ("Engels"),<sup>2</sup> a mandatory reading list that teenagers have to read books from before they graduate from high school. This has been confirmed by a 2019 study by PISA (Programme for International Student Assessment), which revealed that Dutch young people score low on reading pleasure in comparison to other countries. The director of the CPNB, a Dutch organisation that stimulates reading pleasure, sees the *leeslijst* as the reason for this (NOS "TikTok").

The preference for English-language publications might seem benign, but it poses a danger to Dutch YAL publishers. Dutch publishing houses invest time and money in developing and promoting Dutch YAL authors and translating foreign bestsellers, but how long will this model remain sustainable if the sales of English-language titles keep growing? Publishing translated YAL has its advantages, as publishing houses can profit from the fame and cultural capital that foreign authors already have, instead of having to build and develop it themselves, as is the case with Dutch authors. Nevertheless, high translation costs and

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<sup>2</sup> "Als ik in het Nederlands lees, voelt het alsof ik voor de lijst moet kiezen."

competition with their English-language counterparts are risk factors for translations to be profitable. Marketers are thus constantly working on strategies to stimulate the consumption of Dutch translations of YAL, focusing on aspects such as design or online communities, because, as scholar Antonio García writes: “[h]ow readers foster relationships with their books is something that is intentionally crafted and honed ... through design, marketing, and online engagement” (20). Although there exists scholarship on general marketing strategies, discussed in section 1.3, at the moment there is not yet specific research on YAL marketing strategies in the Netherlands. This thesis considers this question in combination with the menace of the dominance of English-language literature by using theoretical concepts such as the concept of central and peripheral reading cultures and Gérard Genette’s notion of the paratext, explained in chapter 2. The research question of this thesis thus is: What strategies are used by Dutch publishing houses of YAL to stimulate the sales of translations of English-language YAL?

The thesis is divided into six chapters, with different sections. In section 1.2, I discuss the concept of YAL and its history, both in the USA and the Netherlands, more thoroughly. In the rest of chapter 1, I give a summary of the existing research on YAL and marketing strategies in the Netherlands (section 1.3) and briefly explain my theoretical framework and methodology (section 1.4.), which are explored further in chapters 2 and 3, respectively. In chapters 4 and 5, I analyse information from interviews that I held with Dutch publishing houses with the help of key concepts from chapter 2. Firstly, in chapter 4 I analyse information about the YAL phenomenon in the Netherlands, including conceptions of publishing houses on YAL (section 4.2) and its future (section 4.6), their Dutch YAL production (section 4.3), their views on the domination of the English language (section 4.4) and the importance of the theme of diversity in contemporary YAL (section 4.5). Next, in chapter 5, I focus on marketing strategies. This is done by means of a thematic analysis of the

interview data, and my findings are divided into the different categories of product-based (section 5.2) and community-based marketing (section 5.3), with a subdivision of online and offline strategies in each case. My thesis ends with the conclusion in chapter 6, where the limitations of this study and ideas for further research are also presented. In the appendix, the list of questions that were posed during the interviews can be found.

## 1.2 Contextualisation

In this section, I examine the concept and origins of YAL. I explore the benefits of this kind of literature, how it has changed through different decades and what it looks like in 2022, and highlight some of the important moments for the recognition of the label. Next, I turn to YAL in the Netherlands. I analyse how the label has been introduced into the Dutch market and mention some of the publishing houses that at the moment focus on YAL. This contextualisation will be useful to better understand the information presented in chapters 4 and 5.

### 1.2.1 The Importance of YAL

Reading fiction is important for the transformation of children and teenagers into adults. Beyond helping in the development of literacy skills, it can also contribute to growing empathy and raising cultural sensitivity (Stichting Lezen qtd. in Ackermans, “Vakoverstijgend lezen” 258; Mar et al.; Vezzali et al.). As Cart explains, one of the positive aspects of YAL is

Its capacity for fostering, in its readers, understanding, empathy, and compassion by offering vividly realized portraits of the lives – exterior and interior – of individuals who are unlike the reader. In this way young adult literature invites its readership to embrace the humanity it shares with those

who – if not for the encounter in reading – might remain forever strangers.

(“Restless Art” 11)

Scholars also emphasise the importance of YAL in helping young adults give meaning to the world in which they move on a daily basis (Ackermans, “Vakoverstijgend lezen” 256-7), “stag[ing] an up-to-the-minute confrontation with a mirror [they] can’t look away from, and thus mak[ing] moral, social, and cultural problems both accessible and urgent” (Coates 318). Literary scholars Alleen Pace Nilsen and Kenneth L. Donelson’s argument adds to this point: “Teenagers face the tremendous responsibility of assessing the world around them and deciding where they fit in. Reading at this level allows [them] to focus on their own psychological needs in relation to society” (16). YAL publications are usually centred on characters who develop into adulthood through a search for their identity. Characters are, at the beginning of these stories, “emphatically not able to see beyond their own age” (Ackermans, “Een decennium” 53),<sup>3</sup> and the plots include themes such as forming relationships, accepting (physical) changes, and running into conflicts that you encounter as you grow (Ackermans, “Branded Readers” 239-40; Nilsen and Donelson 35-6). Using language that is recognisable to young readers (Ackermans, “Vakoverstijgend lezen” 256), YAL covers a wide range of genres, from chick-lit and historical fiction to thrillers and fantasy. Scholar Roberta Seelinger Trites also argues that YAL novels interrogate social constructions and offer the possibility of change happening from inside social institutions (qtd. in Coates 322). In recent years, YAL has become an important platform to question topics of social inequality. There is an abundance of stories with LGBTQ+ themes, such as Benjamin Alire Sáenz’s *Aristotle and Dante Discover the Secrets of the Universe* (2012) and Aiden Thomas’ *Cemetery Boys* (2020). There are also many books addressing the themes of

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<sup>3</sup> “Een formeel kenmerk is een perspectief dat ligt bij de adolescenten protagonist, die nadrukkelijk niet over zijn eigen leeftijd heen kan kijken.”

race and racism, such as Elizabeth Acevedo's *The Poet X* (2018) or *The Hate You Give*, by Angie Thomas (2017). This is especially important when taking into account the white, heterosexual and cisgender origins of YAL, explained in section 1.2.2.

Beyond the level of personal development, YAL is important because it has given youth culture a place in public spaces such as bookshops and libraries (Ackermans, "Branded Readers" 240), further discussed in section 1.2.2. One of the catalysts for this was J.K. Rowling's *Harry Potter* series (1997-2007) (García 15-6). Although there is continued discussion about its status as either children's or YA literature because of the originally intended target audience for the first few books,

[o]ver time, Harry Potter's foibles became the fodder of a teenage audience less interested in troll boogers and more interested in the responsibilities of individuals, the labor rights of elves, and accepting loss and responsibility ... it was largely the transitional nature of the prose and content in J.K. Rowling's books that helped turn young adult literature into something that even adults openly embrace. (García 16)

That adults sometimes read YAL is one of the reasons why the concept is under constant criticism. Journalist Ruth Graham published an article in online magazine *Slate* stating that "[a]dults should feel embarrassed about reading literature being written for children. Life is short, and the list of truly great books for adults is so long" (qtd. in Cart, "Restless Art" 9). According to scholar Karen Coates, many consider YAL to only be a bridge between children's literature and adult literature, describing it as a gateway drug: "a transitional rather than a destination literature" (qtd. in Cadden 302). Coates is critical of this tendency to dismiss YAL:

Young adult literature exerts a powerful influence over its readers at a particularly malleable time in their identity formation ... we still pay more critical scholarly attention to *Antigone* ... and *The Great Gatsby* ... than we do to the potentially life-changing books our teens read on their own. (Coates 315-6)

In the Netherlands, YAL is almost completely excluded from the *leeslijst*, mentioned in section 1.1, showing its lack of recognition as serious literature. However, while many of the same themes and styles that are found in adult literature can also be found in YAL, “[t]he major difference seems to rest in the assignation of cultural value to certain texts and genres and not others” (317).

### 1.2.2 Born in the USA

YAL originated in the USA. Although S.E. Hinton’s *The Outsiders* is considered by various scholars as the starting point for YAL, in the years leading up to its publication there already existed titles that would now be categorised as YAL. In the 1940s, these were called ‘junior novels’ and they were mostly romantic or coming-of-age stories (Cart, “Restless Art” 1).

Although junior novels were initially considered to be for girls, in the 1950s themes such as sports and adventures were introduced, attracting a male public as well (2). These stories were not yet inclusive, as they gave the impression that “every teenager was white and lived in a small middle or upper middle-class hometown filled with white picket fences” (2). Around the 1970s, when the YAL tag was already in use, People of Colour (POC) and the theme of sexuality started to be included. In the same decade, taboo topics such as (drug) abuse, depression and abortion also became popular topics for YAL (2).

An important moment for the recognition of YAL came in 1973, when the Young Adult Library Services Association (YALSA) included three YAL titles on its ‘Best Books

for Young Adults'-list. The list had existed since 1966 but had until that moment only included books that were primarily targeted at adults (Cart, "Romance to Realism" 34). The next defining moment was the establishment of separate YAL departments at American Barnes & Noble stores in 1997 (Ackermans, "Branded Readers" 50). Separate YAL imprints, such as Simon and Schuster's Pulse started to emerge around 1999 (Cart, "Restless Art" 4), and the Michael L. Printz Award, the first prize for YAL, appeared in 2000 (Ackermans, "Branded Readers" 50). After the first Golden Age of YAL in the 1970s, various scholars and literary critics have declared the 2000-2020s a Second Golden Age of YAL (Cart, "Restless Art" 6), with the explosion of series such as *Divergent*, written by Veronica Roth (2011-2013) and the aforementioned *Twilight* and *The Hunger Games* series. While YAL novels typically used to be around two hundred pages because of the idea that "teens had an attention span no longer than that of a hummingbird on twelve cups of coffee" (Cart, "Restless Art" 8), the *Harry Potter* series changed this idea, and it is now commonplace for YAL titles to be a minimum of three hundred pages and to be part of a series (8). This is also positive from a marketing sales perspective, as

[i]nstead of getting a sense of resolution at the end of a 300+ page reading excursion, the readers that eagerly plunked down \$17.99 dollars to engage with this book are compelled to wait and buy the next in the long series of books ... strung along for another profitable journey. (García 30-1)

Currently, YAL sales are rising, along with the number of events focused on the concept that are being organised, both by bookstores and literary institutions. New imprints focusing solely on YAL are also being founded, and there is an innovative group of young authors who are experimenting with form, language, and themes. This is all accompanied by an explosion of merchandise and the selling of subsidiary rights to turn one story into multiple formats (Ackermans, "Branded Readers" 51), described by professor Simone Murray as

‘synergy’; “the idea that a single media property or brand [in this case, originating as a novel] can be parlayed across multiple platforms simultaneously, all of which cross-promote one another” (60). A story is thus often not only contained in a book anymore but rather excels when it can be turned into a film, merchandise and even a brand for readers to “consume a large range of products related to a particular series” (Martens 56). In addition, publishing houses often recycle brands, as

contemporary teen readers are increasingly more likely to seek out sequels, series, parodies, and books with familiar plot lines to meet their media-saturated libidinal needs. If you liked *Twilight* (Meyer, 2005), here are five books just like it, and they are overtly marketed that way. (Coates 324)

Branding is one of the main concepts in the thesis, as presented in chapter 2.

### 1.2.3 YAL in the Netherlands

In the Netherlands, YAL was introduced in 2009: after witnessing the popularity of the concept in the USA, a group of Dutch publishing houses created a bookcase with suitable titles for young readers, which they subsequently raffled during the Manuscripta book fair in Amsterdam. In the same year, publishing house Lemniscaat issued a separate offer brochure for YAL, expecting to grab the attention of bookstores. In it, they stated that YAL was “[a] new book genre in the Netherlands – for an audience that we thought didn’t read and buy books. What a great challenge to make something of it all together! Are you in?” (qtd. in Ackermans, “Een decennium” 54).<sup>4</sup> Although Lemniscaat has published some bestselling YAL authors in translation, such as John Green, its focus is currently more on children’s books. At the time, however, their status as an important publishing house must have helped in convincing bookstores to buy their YAL titles, ultimately contributing to the growth that

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<sup>4</sup> “Een nieuw genre boeken in Nederland – voor een publiek waarvan wij dachten dat ze geen boeken lezen en kochten. Wat een geweldige uitdaging om daar samen iets van te maken! Doet u mee?”

can be observed in recent years. Slowly, Dutch institutions have started acknowledging the importance of YAL. These days, there are specific bookcases for YAL in almost every library and bookstore and also awards specifically aimed at it, such as the *Beste Boek voor Jongeren* ('Best Book for the Youth'). Literary events focused solely on the label, such as YALFU (Young Adult Literature Festival Utrecht) or the *Boekenweek voor Jongeren* ('Book Week for the Youth') have also emerged, which will be explored more in depth in chapter 5.

Furthermore, after the success of book adaptations in the USA, Dutch titles also started to be made into movies, such as Jan Terlouw's *Oorlogswinter*, written in 1972 and released as a movie in 2008, or the stories of popular youth author Carry Slee (Brouwers 457-8).

Dutch publishing houses focusing specifically on YAL have appeared (and later disappeared), and the two that currently remain are Blossom Books and Best of YA. While Best of YA forms part of the bigger corporation LannooMeulenhoff, Blossom Books is exceptional in the field by being the only Dutch independent publishing house that focuses on YAL. In addition, many other publishing houses have departments devoted specifically to children's and YA literature. Besides producing original Dutch YAL, these publishing houses also invest in translations of foreign YAL bestsellers. In the market, Dutch YAL thus has to compete against two other attractive choices for the reader: stories from foreign countries and their translations into Dutch. However, from a marketing perspective, Dutch authors also present advantages over foreign authors, as is further explored in chapters 4 and 5.

### 1.3 Overview of Existing Research

The topic of this thesis is so specific that there is almost no existing literature that is directly related to it: the Netherlands is a relatively small country and YAL a relatively small segment of literature. There is therefore not much existing research on book marketing in the Netherlands or YAL marketing. This fact does, however, allow for the thesis to contribute to a largely unexplored niche in research on the Dutch publishing field.

Most of the existing literature on YAL discusses it as a general concept or a phenomenon in the USA (Cart; García; Pace and Donelson). It is more difficult to find literature about YAL in the Dutch context, although there is one prominent scholar in the field that has been useful for the thesis: Linda Ackermans. Ackermans has studied the phenomenon and growth of YAL in the Netherlands (“Branding Books”; “Een decennium”), along with the use of YAL in education (“Vakoverstijgend lezen”) and the use of brands by publishing houses (“Branding Books”). The only other scholar active in this field is Rita Ghesquiere. Although she mostly studies the Belgian context and focuses on youth literature, one of her edited books, *Een land van waan en wijs: Geschiedenis van de Nederlandse jeugdliteratuur* studies the Dutch field. However, only one chapter in it, written by Anke Brouwers and exploring movie adaptations, has been useful for this thesis, as the rest mostly centres on very specific themes, like fairy tales or historical fiction, or explores parts of YAL history that are not relevant for this research. However, there are plenty of recent Bachelor’s and Master’s theses that focus on the Dutch YAL field, including research on Christian YAL (Kok), YAL book covers (Heppenhuis) and readers of YAL (Schreurs). Specific Dutch publishing houses such as Blossom Books (Linders), Best of YA (Linders), Van Oorschot (Veen) and Lebowski (Veen) have also been analysed. Although some of these theses share parts of their contextualisation and theoretical concepts with this thesis, their topics are not directly related to this research.

In a similar vein, while there is substantial scholarship on book marketing strategies, it is mostly centred on the publishing industry in English-speaking countries, with the exception of *Branding Books Across the Ages*. This essay collection focuses on the marketing of translations into Dutch, although it mostly centres on specific cases that are not YAL. The texts do, however, use the concept of branding, one of the main theoretical lenses used in this thesis, although it is mostly authorial branding, while this research focuses more on the

publishing house as a brand. Moreover, despite the fact that Saskia Veen's thesis, referred to above, focuses on Dutch online marketing strategies, the publishing houses she focuses on do not publish YAL, leaving marketing strategies for this particular publishing sector largely unexplored. Some other scholars have coined concepts that can be applied to the study of YAL, although they all write about English-language contexts: Cat Yampbell's research on book covers introduces the concept of grabability, which is further explained in section 2.3, and focuses on what attracts young readers in terms of design. Claire Squires outlines the concept of a market-based approach, useful for my description of literary events in chapter 5. In addition, Marianne Martens has done research on how marketing has changed throughout the years, focusing on the use of brands and affective relationships as marketing strategies. Martens also focuses on digital marketing, although her research is from 2016 and thus treats channels such as Facebook, Twitter and blogs, which are obsolete in the publishing industry by now. Furthermore, there is a growing body of research on Instagram and TikTok and online reading cultures (Dane and Nolan; Jerasa; Reddan), although abundant information about them can also be found on online platforms such as *Boekblad* or *ILFU*.

#### 1.4 Theoretical Framework and Methodology

To find an answer to my research question, I conducted interviews with six different publishing houses in the Netherlands that either focus solely on YAL or have a separate department devoted to children's and YA literature. The information that I extracted from these conversations was analysed qualitatively and is interpreted in chapters 4 and 5 through a thematic approach, using the set of concepts that inform my theoretical framework, explained in detail in chapter 2. These concepts include the division of literary cultures as pertaining to the core or the periphery, Gerard Genette's notion of the paratext, brand building as a marketing strategy and the concept of shared reading.

## Chapter 2: Key Concepts

### 2.1 Introduction

This chapter contains an exploration of the theoretical concepts that frame and inform the findings introduced in chapters 4 and 5. In section 2.2, the concept of core and peripheral literary cultures is explained, which is useful to understand the dominance of English-language literature in the Dutch market, discussed in more detail in section 4.4. In section 2.3, I present Gérard Genette's notion of the paratext, considering how social media has become a focal element in the determination of the value of literary texts. In this discussion, I specifically focus on two concepts: branding and the creation of communities. Branding is used in the literary field to present an author or publishing house in a specific light. To understand the publishing houses' use of branding, Yampbell's notion of grabability is introduced, further explored in section 5.2. Publishing houses often use these brands to achieve and strengthen a sense of community. Within these communities, readers can profit from shared reading experiences, both offline and online, as explored in section 5.3.

### 2.2 Transnational Literary Flows

In the current globalised world, books travel with increasing ease between countries and languages. This translation flow is, however, "highly uneven" (Van Es and Heilbron 297), as the literary world is based on "hierarchy and inequality" due to an "unequal distribution of literary resources" (Casanova 282) rooted in economic and political reasons. Van Es and Heilbron categorise literary cultures into two groups: those belonging to the centre or core, from which most literature is translated, and those belonging to the periphery, which have difficulties in being translated and also receive many foreign titles for translation, which then often dominate the market (297). English-language countries pertain to the core, in what Nicky van Es and Johan Heilbron denominate a "hypercentral position" (297): in fact,

“English has become the most translated language worldwide, but ... it is one of the least translated into” (Venuti qtd. in Lathey 43). The Netherlands, however, “[i]n the global literary field ... may legitimately be considered to have a peripheral status” (Van Es and Heilbron 298). Indeed, in 2020, 4.200 titles, or 35 percent of the releases in the Netherlands were translations into Dutch (KVB Boekwerk), while that same year only 559 Dutch titles were published in all other countries (Nederlands Letterenfonds). Especially the YAL market “has been dominated by English translations for some time now” (Van Coillie 143). These dynamics have a profound impact on the marketing of translated YAL in the Netherlands: in a context where YAL originally written in Dutch and translations of YAL into Dutch compete not only with one another but also with the original English-language books for the attention of readers, marketers have to give particular thought to how to leverage innovative marketing strategies to maintain the position of Dutch translations against a growing preference for English books. The following section considers how such forms of marketing can be read within the frame of paratextual materials.

### 2.3 New Forms of Marketing as Paratext

Literary scholar Gérard Genette coined the concept of the paratext, “the means by which a text makes a book of itself and proposes itself as such to its readers, and more generally to the public” (261). The paratext is composed of the peritext and epitext. The peritext includes elements that are attached to the physical book, such as the title, cover or possible preface and illustrations. The epitext exists outside of the printed book in the form of, for example, advertisement posters or authorial interviews. All of these components help to shape the reader’s perception of a story. As Genette explains, “[t]he ways and means of the paratext are modified unceasingly according to periods, cultures [...]” (262). New marketing strategies that are now being used, such as online marketing, can affect the meaning of the text and could thus be considered part of the paratext. However, which parts of the digital world are

included in Genette's definition of the paratext remains a subject of scholarly debate, as some of his requirements for being considered part of the paratext are sometimes not met. For example, according to Peter Freeth,

the existence of eBooks and digital literature challenges Genette's taxonomic delineation of the paratextual space by freeing the literary text from the constraints of physical manifestation in the form of a book ... Furthermore, the fluidity and ephemerality of digital paratextual spaces undermines Genette's requirement for paratexts to be "more or less legitimated by the author" by allowing anyone to create materials that "ensure the text's presence in the world". (6)

This thesis extends the concept of paratext to such digital paratextual environments, where the text is no longer only contained within the physical pages of a book and the author and their intentions are dead.

Genette briefly considers translations in his definition of the paratext: they "serve as commentary on the original text" (qtd. in Tahir Gürçağlar 114). However, this definition reinforces the subordination of the translation to the original text, as the first cannot exist without the second (Tahir Gürçağlar 114). In the case of English and Dutch, this idea once again reinforces the attraction power of the original title for the reader.

### 2.3.1 Branding

Branding influences both the peritext and the epitext of books. According to the introduction to *Branding Books Across the Ages*,

Writers, literary works, oeuvres, genres, publishers, movements, and trends can ... be conceived of as products that function in a certain way and gain meaning within the literary field via 'identity myths', which are (at least

initially) intentionally constructed for this purpose ... signs with ‘a set of regimented associations’ (Moore 2003: 339) that together constitute a story or, even better, a collection of stories ... in the words of Tom Peters (1997), ‘a brand is a promise on the value you’ll receive’. (Van den Braber et al. 12-5)

As is further discussed in section 5.2.1, Dutch publishing houses use branding in creating attractive packaging for their limited editions, thus shaping the book’s peritext. Yampbell’s notion of grabability is useful to further understand the importance of book design, defined as the attention that is raised by a cover that makes the potential buyer reach out to a book on a shelf (349). Covers should possess “a form of hidden eroticism, connecting with some undefended part of the personality in order to say “take me, I am yours” (Powers qtd. in Yampbell 349) and should “reflect current trends and tastes” (Martens 50-1). At the moment, “YAL book covers are becoming more abstract, sensational, unusual, and eye-catching to allure one of the most elusive audiences—teenage readers” (Yampbell 348). The effort put into designing them seems justified, as “[i]n the world of publishing ... many industry people argue that the cover is the foremost aspect of the book. Regardless of the quality of the literature, its cover often determines a book’s success” (348). Indeed, in a study named by Yampbell, “[f]ifty-seven percent of the teens agreed that the book’s cover is the greatest influence on their choices” (354). Other than covers, peritextual elements such as the title, format, paper texture or font are the subject of careful thought during a book’s production process. While in the USA and UK limited editions often exist in collaboration with specific bookstore chains, such as Waterstones or Barnes & Noble, in the Netherlands many publishing houses are investing in limited editions for their translations of English-language YAL, to distinguish themselves from the original and stimulate the sales of translations.

Considering the epitext, it is important to remember that “[t]he reputation of a publishing house is now often based upon its marketing power” (Mourits 355-6). Brands can

appear in the form of renowned authors, series, genres or publishing houses themselves, perpetuating certain ideas, often of prestige, and promising certain qualities or values that will be awarded to the reader upon buying a title. While the audience mostly sees books as individual products (Baverstock 8), building a brand offers the possibility of selling more. Including online communities in this brand strategy also allows for strengthening the relationship with the reader, as analysed in section 2.3.2.

Another way of building a brand is associating the publishing house with certain moral values. YAL is a literature segment where diversity and inclusion have become very important in recent years: contemporary YAL often no longer centres around white, cis, rich, male, heterosexual and able-bodied characters, but rather explores a multitude of identities and experiences. This can, in part, be attributed to the age of the target audience, as many are struggling to define their identity during their teenage years. Research from the CPNB has concluded that “young people are looking for themes with which they can identify themselves” (NOS “TikTok”).<sup>5</sup> However, it can also be considered a marketing strategy on the part of publishing houses. In an age when social media gives bigger visibility to movements such as #MeToo or #BlackLivesMatter and LGBTQ+ Pride parades have become major events in many Western cities, “major media corporations can no longer evade the forms of visibility-based politics being mobilized against them. Some are learning to capitalize on this demand for diversity” (Saha and Van Lente, “Racial Capitalism” 217-8). Publishing houses have the curious position of being “site[s] where culture and commerce converge” (Brown qtd. in Martens 56). Rather than only focusing on their commercial gain, publishing houses are also often expected to act as cultural institutions and gatekeepers of morality (Bourdieu; Murray 131; Saha and Van Lente, “Rethinking” 34). This is especially important in the case of YAL, as “children’s [and YA] fiction belongs firmly within the

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<sup>5</sup> “... jongeren zoeken thema's waar ze zich ... mee kunnen identificeren.”

domain of cultural practices which exist for the purpose of socializing their target audience” (Stephens qtd. in O’Sullivan 452). Kanai and Gill’s research on ‘woke capitalism’ has indeed shown that “brands are increasingly making explicit commitments to social justice issues as part of how they sell their products and services ... Diversity ... becomes how a publisher looks good and gets ahead” (Saha and Van Lente, “Racial Capitalism” 227-8). As “artistic work is not just contained within an organization, but is influenced by broader, [sic] social, economic and political contexts where aesthetic judgements are made and cultural hierarchies established” (Negus qtd. in Saha 126), positioning a publishing house as diverse can alter how a brand is seen, ultimately also influencing how the book’s paratext is constructed.

The industry’s sudden interest in diversity and inclusion seems to be led by commercial values: although many publishing houses are trying to incorporate policies for making the working field more diverse, the publishing industry has been recognised as the “whitest and most privileged in the creative sector” (224), where mostly white people publish mostly white authors. Saha and Van Lente discuss many possible reasons for this in their 2020 study on diversity in the UK publishing field. These include assumptions that their audience is mostly white and less interested in books about communities other than their own, preconceptions about the quality and themes of writers that are not white and publishers’ lack of creativity in finding them (“Rethinking” 1-2). As is seen in the answers to my interviews as well, Saha and Van Lente report “very little denial that the publishing industry lack[s] diversity or [that it is] only of minor concern (though ... defensiveness around the issue emerged in subtle ways)” (“Racial Capitalism” 226). In their interviews with publishing houses in the UK, they

found a tension in that publishers want to publish more “diversely” but not if it disrupts their sense of what is quality or what is fair. As much as the respondents ... were somewhat unashamed in their desire for more writers of

colour – especially those respondents specializing in genres where such writers are least represented, at times there was discomfort expressed at such a trend – sometimes by the same respondent. (231)

These days, stories with a diverse cast of characters thus become an extra reason for acquiring a book, as publishers know that these themes sell well (231-2).

### 2.3.2 Communities and Shared Reading Experiences

Communities are vital for the maintenance of brands' status in the literary field. As Gaston Fransen mentions, “a brand is not merely a marketing tool employed by a particular company, but a dynamic, collaborative construct constituted through cross-field reactivity – that is, through an ongoing interaction between the cultural fields of creation, production, and reception” (“Allegories” 134). Brands can be strengthened through communities, which are in current times both online (as explored in section 2.3.2.1) and offline (section 2.3.2.2). This information is useful for understanding the findings in chapter 5.

#### 2.3.2.1 Social Media

According to scholars Sybil Nolan and Alexandra Dane, social media marketing emerged as a specific field around 2008, as the appearance of smartphones showed the potential that channels such as Facebook or Twitter could have in the future (153). By then, research on customer reviews on online retailers such as Amazon had already shown that online interactions between readers that were visible to the general public could influence book sales (Chevalier and Mayzlin qtd. in Nolan and Dane 155). A key factor about social media is that it “presents an advantage in information dissemination, because news is pushed to the consumer, instead of waiting for consumers to log in and then pull that information off the website” (Martens 70). These days, online marketers use online platforms and communities by investing in relationship marketing, where the focus is on the “promotion of customer

satisfaction and hence retention, rather than focusing on shorter-term sales transactions ... [and] the longer-term value of customer contact” (Baverstock 18). Ian Spero and Merlin Stone consider that

[a] brand will not succeed unless young people connect with the brand emotionally, allowing them to trust it ... To develop an emotional connection, a brand must allow young people to interact with it. This is where digital channels come to the fore. They allow interaction with an immediacy and vividness that no other channel can offer.

Social media is especially important for YAL, as its target audience is often found on these channels, currently especially on Instagram and TikTok, as is discussed in section 5.3.2. As an example, in 2021, over 60 percent of TikTok users belonged to Gen Z, those aged between nine and twenty-four (Doyle qtd. in Jerasa 220), thus including the target audience for YAL. TikTok is one of the newest additions to the publishing field and is considered to be a major innovation in online marketing. BookTok, the bookish community on TikTok, has caused sales of certain books to skyrocket. For example, in March 2021 Madeline Miller's *The Song of Achilles*, which was first published in 2011 and won the Woman’s Prize in 2012, sold 1.500 copies in one week in the UK after it became popular on TikTok. Compared with that same week in 2020, this reflected a 240 percent increase in sales (Roberts). While TikTok was first especially important for backlist titles, in the Netherlands new releases have gained traction on BookTok as well. According to De Witt, the power of TikTok is that it works as a pitch for a book, which stands out more than a static website or synopsis (“Zelf beslissen”). Another one of its advantages is that

it can take a month until you see a TikTok appear [on your feed]. In this way, the effect on sales is more timeless than with promotion in newspapers or

media appearances. Books continue selling well over a longer period. (qtd. in Dessing “BoekTok-evenement”)<sup>6</sup>

Some bookstores even have sections dedicated to popular books on BookTok. In April 2022, the first BoekTok event in the Netherlands was held in bookstore Donner, and the three hundred available tickets were sold incredibly fast (“BoekTok-evenement”).

The lines between reader, marketer and publisher have been blurred by the possibilities offered by social media. While traditional ways of marketing were formerly restricted to one-way traffic and catered to an anonymous, general reader, in these times publishing houses hold close connections with the public. Before digital technologies, librarians were a key nexus of connection between publishing houses and the consumer audience (Martens 49). Magazines that were popular among teenagers, such as *Seventeen* or *Boy’s Life* were often approached by publishing houses to advertise in them (Martens 50). Around the 1990s, it became a practice for publishers to turn to chains like Barnes & Noble for advice on their titles or covers (Cart, “Restless Art” 7), as booksellers had direct contact with the publishers’ target audience and knew what they wanted to buy. In 2016, the Dutch Council for Culture issued a statement saying “developments within digital culture impose ... new conditions on the way in which we create and share texts” (qtd. in Tazelaar 21).<sup>7</sup> The connection between marketers and readers has changed from a “top-down and publisher-led” model to a “new marketing model which is collaborative, community-focused” (Martens 50).

Online communities also act as places where readers can meet each other and have shared reading experiences. As Sarah Jerasa states, “[w]e often think of reading as a solitary

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<sup>6</sup> “Als een filmpje verschijnt, kan het zomaar een maand duren voor je die ziet. Zo is het effect op de verkoop tijdlozer dan een stuk in de krant of een tv-optreden. Titels blijven over een langere tijdspanne goed doorlopen.”

<sup>7</sup> “Ontwikkelingen binnen de digitale cultuur stellen ...nieuwe voorwaarden aan de manier waarop we teksten maken en delen.”

act, but ... it does not have to be. It can be [a practice] that is marked by the community” (221). While finding a community is now easy thanks to social media channels, reading communities have always existed:

When literacy rates were low, members who could would read aloud to others. As literacy rates increased ... from the mid-nineteenth century onward, people from nonelite groups began to use study clubs, reading groups, and debating societies as a means of self-education, and political empowerment. (Fuller and Sedo 29)

More recently, book clubs have become part of mainstream entertainment, with Oprah and her book club, which started in 1996, as a prime example. In 2011, the book club was rebooted to incorporate the use of several types of social media. Around the same time, BookTube, a segment on YouTube where enthusiastic readers make videos about books, exploded (Perkins; Reddan; Tolstopyat). Although many BookTube channels are still active, publishing houses no longer use them to promote their books, as they have moved on to newer types of social media.

#### 2.3.2.2 Literary Encounters

Literary events are spaces where readers can meet each other and share reading experiences. According to Frank Tazelaar, artistic director of literary festival Wintertuin, the popularity of literary events for readers in their twenties has positively changed the image of literature for the outside world (23). The LiteraTour was the first big event for YAL in the Netherlands, launched in 2015 after an online petition started by Lisa Snijders. Snijders intended to show that many people really care about YAL (Romeny) and demanded that YAL should also get its celebration week, similarly to genres such as historical or children’s literature also do in the Netherlands. In 2018 the LiteraTour was transformed into the *Boekenweek voor jongeren*,

similar to the more famous *Boekenweek* ('Book Week') that is dedicated to adult literature. The focus of the *Boekenweek voor jongeren* is broader than only YAL, promoting reading for youth in all genres. The week includes different events, amongst which a ceremony in which the prize for the *Beste Boek voor Jongeren* is awarded. There was some controversy around it in the first year it was awarded, as the shortlist contained almost no YAL titles (Spiteri) or even books directed at the target audience (De Witt "Officieel Boekenweek"). This shows that even though there was a week specifically oriented towards youth literature, it was still not taken seriously by many.

Another form of literary events is literary festivals. The most important ones for YAL in the Netherlands are YALTIVAL, YALFEST and YALFU, although fantasy YAL titles and authors are also often included in fantasy festivals such as Castlefest or Elfia. For literary festivals, publishers use a market-led approach, a term used by Squires to explain situations where the focus is not on particular books, but rather on the general perception of a genre, or, in this case, the YAL brand, by the public (qtd. in Ackermans, "Een decennium" 57). Although certain books are always highlighted because of the themes that are treated in each festival, the main objective of literary festivals is to strengthen the YAL community and to allow for readers to meet each other and authors, as will be discussed in section 5.3.1.

Against the background of the theoretical constructs set out in this chapter, chapter 3 briefly explains the methodology I used to find an answer to my research question.

### Chapter 3: Methodology

To explore how Dutch publishing houses stimulate the readership of translated YAL, I conducted interviews with six different publishing houses. I chose to interview publishing houses that either focus solely on the publication of YAL or have a separate (children's and) YAL department. For the latter group, it was specified that the interviews were solely about their YAL titles. Furthermore, I also interviewed a publishing house that only occasionally publishes YAL, as they are forerunners in the Netherlands with different YAL marketing strategies, as is outlined in detail in chapter 5. Although I would have wanted to interview more publishing houses to get a complete overview of the Dutch YAL field, not all of them were available at the time of data collection.

The interviews were held with the publisher or editor and (online) marketer and were semi-structured: there was a set list of questions about the concept and future of YAL and YAL marketing strategies, but answers also often led to new topics. This was one of the reasons why I chose the interview format, as I believe that a questionnaire, even if with open questions, would have imposed a more rigid structure on potential answers. Moreover, as every publishing house focuses on specific marketing strategies, the interview format allowed me to direct my questions toward those strategies. An overview of the list of questions can be found in the appendix. The interviews were held with both participants at the same time to allow them to complement each other's answers, as they work together on the same products. Prior to the interviews, the interviewees were asked to read an information letter about the research and to sign an informed consent, agreeing with the fact that the information shared in the interviews would be used for this thesis.

I conducted and recorded the interviews between March and May 2022. Afterwards, the conversations were transcribed and analysed qualitatively, interpreting the interviewees' answers by using key concepts from the theoretical framework, outlined in chapter 2. This was done through thematic analysis, as it allows for highlighting both the key themes of the interviews and the similarities and differences of the given answers. While sometimes respondents added to each other's points, they also often expressed different opinions, which reflects the richness of experiences in the Dutch publishing field. One disadvantage of this method is that the results are subject to my interpretation, and this inescapable subjectivity might introduce an element of bias.

Chapters 4 and 5 present the findings of the analysis, along with a discussion against the background of the contextualisation and theoretical framing presented in chapters 1 and 2. To ensure anonymity, the names of the publishing houses have been replaced by the letters A-F in the reporting of results. The interviews were conducted in Dutch; in chapters 4 and 5 quotations from the interviews have been translated into English, with the original Dutch transcriptions available in the footnotes.

## Chapter 4: The Phenomenon of YAL in the Netherlands

### 4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the first part of the findings from the interviews by focusing on a contextualisation of the used marketing strategies. Chapter 2 emphasised the interwoven relationship between (unequal) patterns of translational exchange, and the way marketing strategies are embedded in paratextual materials. Against this background, section 4.2 first describes the publishing houses' conceptualisation of YAL and why they believe that it is important. In section 4.3, the production of Dutch YAL is analysed, briefly focusing on the thriller genre, in which Dutch YAL writers excel. In this section, the advantages and disadvantages of translating English books are also outlined. In section 4.4, a discussion on the role of English language publications is presented, intending to answer the question of why English-language publications are dominating the Dutch market. Section 4.5. focuses on the theme of diversity in YAL, which is a prominent part of YAL in these times and can be seen as a branding strategy, as discussed in chapter 2. The chapter concludes with a summary of how publishers view the future of YAL in the Netherlands in section 4.5.

### 4.2 On Defining YAL

In the Netherlands, YAL officially appeared as a concept in 2009, after which it quickly started gaining popularity. Of the interviewed publishing houses, E has been the last one to join the trend, as they only started publishing YAL in 2020. While E is officially focused on adult literature, some of their titles can be considered YAL, as they are read mostly by a young audience. This started with one of their series, and they are currently focusing on this audience for their fantasy fiction. However, they only do this with authors whom they have

already published before, because “[y]ou mostly build upon the popularity of the author”.<sup>8</sup>

B’s marketer remembers that she was working at a bookshop at the time YAL became popular: suddenly shelves had to be freed for these titles, as there had been no place for the youth in bookstores before. In fact, D confesses that before the term arrived in the Netherlands, their publications stopped at the age of twelve, after which books for adults were the next age category. As C’s publisher argues,

[i]t is all marketing ... *The Catcher in the Rye* is the prime example of YAL, but it was published as an adult book. Now we would market it as YAL. It is artificial ... at a certain moment, everyone started going with it, also publishing houses that normally only publish for adults, because they thought ‘hey, this is a new source of income’.<sup>9</sup>

Considering the age of the YAL audience, it is best to see the label as an age border that separates YAL from books for a younger audience (C). This border is set by most publishing houses at around fifteen, although sometimes books that are produced for a somewhat younger public are also labelled as YAL because of its marketing potential. However, giving a book the YAL tag is occasionally also detrimental to sales, as “sometimes you have a book that is truly for everyone, also for adults of forty or fifty, but when you market it as YAL there are many adults that think ‘this is not for me’” (C).<sup>10</sup> Although in its name, the label primarily seems to target young adults, most publishing houses notice that

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<sup>8</sup> “... dan bouw je vooral op die naamsbekendheid van de auteur.”

<sup>9</sup> “Maar het is natuurlijk allemaal ... marketing. *The Catcher in the Rye* is hét voorbeeld van YA, maar is als een volwassen roman uitgegeven. Nu zouden we dat als YAL uitgeven. Het is kunstmatig ... op een gegeven moment dook iedereen erbovenop, ook uitgeverijen die alleen voor volwassenen uitgaven, want ze dachten: ‘Hé, dat is een nieuwe bron van inkomsten’.”

<sup>10</sup> “... dat is echt ook een roman voor iedereen, echt ook voor volwassenen van veertig of vijftig, maar als je het als YAL betitelt zijn er echt veel volwassenen die dan denken: ‘Dat is niet voor mij’.”

many adults are reading YAL (B, C, D and E), sometimes “along with their teens” (B) but also on their own.<sup>11</sup>

Publishing houses’ decision to invest in YAL shows both the commercial and moral role of the industry. While the label has the potential to generate generous amounts of money (A, F), this is not the main reason that is named for investing in these stories. C’s publisher shares why reading YAL is important for teenagers:

YAL is principally a coming-of-age story ... which gives you the skills to transform from a child into an adult, and which shows you that you are not alone ... There are many transformations in your life: your body changes and you start to invest your time in other things. A lot is coming at you ... many problems. Knowing that you can read about it can help you.<sup>12</sup>

D’s editor also believes that “it is important to publish for both young and somewhat older children, so there is something for every age”.<sup>13</sup> A and F’s marketer considers YAL “a very good way to introduce people to reading”.<sup>14</sup> Indeed, D’s publications focus on reading pleasure, which “at that age is quite difficult, as there are many other interesting options”,<sup>15</sup> referring to other types of media. By stimulating reading pleasure, they hope that teenagers will continue reading as they grow up. Their titles are also meant to contrast the *leeslijst* and show how fun reading can be: “Literary titles are beautiful, but sometimes you are not ready for them, or you get the feeling you must read them because of school and the *leeslijst*. But

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<sup>11</sup> “Maar je merkt nu al dat heel veel ouders meelesen met hun tieners.”

<sup>12</sup> “YAL is in principe coming-of-age ... dus het geeft jou ook handvatten om van kind naar volwassene te transformeren, en dat je daar niet alleen in staat ... Er gebeurt natuurlijk ontzettend veel in je leven, je lichaam verandert, maar ook waar je mee bezig bent. En er komt ontzettend veel op je af ... allerlei problemen. Dat je gewoon weet dat je daarover kunt lezen, dat kan je gewoon helpen.”

<sup>13</sup> “Wij vinden het belangrijk om boeken te publiceren voor jonge kinderen en oudere kinderen, zodat er voor elke leeftijd wat is.”

<sup>14</sup> “Dit is ook een hele goede manier om mensen te introduceren met lezen.”

<sup>15</sup> “... dat is in die leeftijdsgroep op zich best een lastige, omdat er ook zoveel andere dingen interessant zijn.”

there is so much more than that!” (D).<sup>16</sup> Their books thus include flowing plots and try to stay close to the language and experiences of the target audience. Even in their books with more serious themes, they try to introduce some humour “so that the heavy themes are still bearable” (D).<sup>17</sup>

### 4.3 Dutch YAL

To consider translations of English-language YAL in the Netherlands, it is relevant to know what type of YAL is produced locally. Besides translations, all publishing houses except for A also publish Dutch YAL, or, at least, books that can be read by this audience as well. One of the areas where Dutch YAL excels in is producing crime fiction (Franssen, “Travel” 181), for which the audience usually starts at the age of thirteen. D’s editor finds it remarkable that while YAL crime fiction in Dutch has been popular for around ten years, it is “only becoming hot [in the rest of the world] now it has become popular in the USA”,<sup>18</sup> although she thinks that the popularity of thriller movies and series on platforms such as Netflix also plays a big role in making these titles so popular. However, this can also be associated with the aforementioned hypercentral position of English and peripheral status of Dutch. C notices that many crime fiction titles are very slim, and targeted to lower education levels. In this way, publishers reach a new audience that will hopefully stay on for other publications. The advantages of these stories are that they are exciting, accessible, and often set in high schools, so “the identification factor is big” (C).<sup>19</sup> C’s authors often mix the crime plot with current topics such as sexting or grooming, packaging deeper messages in the crime fiction format.

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<sup>16</sup> “Literatuur is ook prachtig, maar soms ben je daar helemaal nog niet aan toe, of krijg je teveel een gevoel van moeten door school en de verplichte boekenlijsten. Er is zo veel meer!”

<sup>17</sup> “... heel vaak zit er toch ook wat humor in, en een kwinkslag, waardoor het zware ook genoeg lichtheid heeft.”

<sup>18</sup> “En eigenlijk nu pas ... is die YAL thriller helemaal *hot* ... die is toen in Amerika helemaal *hot* geworden, en nu verspreidt het zich.”

<sup>19</sup> “Zelfs de boeken van [auteur] spelen zich altijd af op middelbare scholen, dus de identificatie is groot.”

Other genres in Dutch YAL are chick-lit (D) and fantasy (C, D). Although they have published some Dutch fantasy, C's publisher believes that English-language fantasy is better:

Why does so much fantasy come from the UK and USA? Because they are real storytellers ... It has to do with your background, the culture where you grow up. In the UK everyone grows up with Shakespeare, *Alice in Wonderland*, *Winnie the Pooh*... but in the Netherlands, we do not.<sup>20</sup>

When asked to choose between Dutch originals and translations in terms of profitability, most publishing houses struggle to give a definitive answer. E mentions that while working with Dutch authors requires a considerable time investment, translation costs are also high and there is competition with the original language as well. D's editor says that it is better for the marketing when the author is Dutch and can easily visit high schools and literary events. Nevertheless, "[i]t is also very intensive work, as you want to give authors enough attention... So you can only have a certain number of Dutch writers".<sup>21</sup> F indeed publishes more translations than books by Dutch authors, in part because they can profit from the pre-existing fame of books written originally in English. However, they do not earn significantly more money with translated titles. B, however, does remark that while their Dutch authors are very successful, their biggest successes are translated books.

Although Dutch publishing houses produce sufficient YAL, they still encounter competition from YAL in the hypercentral language: English, which is discussed in the next section.

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<sup>20</sup> "Kijk, waarom komt dat al veel uit Engeland en Amerika? Omdat daar echt verhalenvertellers zijn ... Het is ook een beetje de achtergrond, de cultuur waarin je opgroeit. In Engeland groeit iedereen op met Shakespeare, *Alice in Wonderland*, *Winnie de Poeh*, wij in Nederland niet."

<sup>21</sup> "Aan de andere kant is het ook hartstikke intensief, Nederlandse auteurs, dus je kunt er ook maar een bepaald aantal doen, want je wilt ze graag veel aandacht geven."

#### 4.4 The Big Dominator

As has already been suggested, the consequences of globalisation and international exchange have led Dutch young adults to read more in English, and less in their own language (De Jong; NOS “Engels”; NOS “TikTok”; Van der Werf). There are several reasons for this, ranging from practical ones to more abstract ones.

Regarding practical reasons, English books are easily accessible to Dutch readers who are also proficient in English. English titles arrive in Dutch bookstores almost at the same time they are released in English-language countries, while translations often appear later than the original because of their intensive and costly process: “Many people do not realise ... what the process of making a book entails. From the manuscript until it lies in the bookstore, it is an outstanding performance to release on the same day as the original country (B)”.<sup>22</sup> On top of that, English books are not subject to the *Wet op de vaste boekenprijs*, a law that regulates the price of books to “avoid price competition [between bookstores] and promote the wide availability of a diverse range of books” (Commissariaat voor de Media).<sup>23</sup> This law establishes strict parameters for the price and discounts of Dutch books, which are, as a result, often more expensive than their English-language counterparts, which are not included in the law. Translations are thus not always profitable for publishing houses, as the English originals often dominate the sales.

The level of English taught in high schools is on the rise as well (B, C, D, E). As B states: “education is becoming more international and we are becoming more Europe-minded,

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<sup>22</sup> “Ook omdat mensen in het algemeen, ook gewoon volwassenen, zich soms niet realiseren hoe de weg van een boek is. Van manuscript tot het boek uiteindelijk in de winkel [ligt], dan is het echt al een topprestatie om zo’n wereldwijde release op een dag voor elkaar te krijgen.”

<sup>23</sup> “De vaste boekenprijs is sinds 2005 bij wet geregeld om prijsconcurrentie te voorkomen en daarmee een brede beschikbaarheid en een divers aanbod van boeken te bevorderen.”

so we want to be able to speak English well”.<sup>24</sup> C points out how the hyperfocus on English is also evident in Dutch culture more broadly:

Our language is full of English terms, and it has only gotten worse because of social media. We have always been focused on the UK and USA. We have subtitles, no dubbing. We look much more at the West than countries such as France or Germany, which do dub. They consider their language to be the most important.<sup>25</sup>

However, A and F’s marketer warns against seeing a high level of English as the standard:

[While English is becoming very important,] it is a privileged thought that everyone is able to read in English. There are still many young people who find it very difficult. I know that BookTokkers and book bloggers often read in English, but we are not only trying to reach a highly educated group of readers. We also try to publish for those that might have a lower level. I think that must be the objective of a publishing house. So you can say [that English is on the rise and dominating the market], but BookTok and book bloggers also make it seem that way.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> “Ik heb het idee dat het onderwijs echt heel goed is, en ook steeds internationaler wordt, dat we heel Europa-minded zijn, dus echt gewoon het Engels onder de knie willen hebben.”

<sup>25</sup> “Onze taal is doordrenkt met Engelse woorden, en door sociale media is het alleen nog maar erger geworden, maar wij waren altijd al gericht op Engeland en Amerika. Wij hebben ondertiteling, wij hebben geen nasynchronisatie ... we kijken altijd naar het Westen, veel meer dan Duitsland of Frankrijk, die wel nasynchroniseren. Hun eigen taal is gewoon veel belangrijker.”

<sup>26</sup> “Alleen, wat ik ook denk is dat die uitspraak wel een beetje een ‘zeven vinkjes uitspraak’ is, om het zo maar te zeggen. Want er zijn ook nog heel veel jongeren die eigenlijk best wel veel moeite hebben met het lezen van Engels. Ik weet dat BoekTok en boekbloggers heel veel in het Engels lezen, maar dan heb je het wel over een hoger segment lezers, dus dat is niet het enige segment dat wij proberen te bereiken. Wij proberen ook gewoon een mbo’er te bereiken die er misschien wat meer moeite mee heeft. En dat moet denk ik ook het doel zijn van een uitgeverij. Ik denk dat je het wel zo kan zeggen, maar ik denk ook dat het komt doordat het met al die boekbloggers en TikTokers het een beetje zo lijkt.”

More abstract reasons to read in English include prestige and demotivation. As E believes, reading English-language titles and in English is associated with a degree of status. It shows how capable and international young adults are, and, according to E's marketer, it is typical for their age: their reactions to Dutch titles are "[e]w, this one is in Dutch, do you also have one in English?"<sup>27</sup> and "[o]h, I can read in English, so I do not want to read in Dutch" (E).<sup>28</sup> E's editor believes that there is a stigma associated with Dutch books, as "young people assume that the Dutch translation is going to be bad".<sup>29</sup> B's marketer adds: "many young adults are now very good at reading in English, are very interested in it, but also want to show that they can read a book in its original language".<sup>30</sup> This can again be linked to the prestige associated with the central status of English and the peripheral status of Dutch, as discussed in section 2.2. Furthermore, D's editor notices that sometimes young people find reading for high school so demotivating that they reach out to English books to relax, "as if it were Netflix".<sup>31</sup> She thinks this is very regrettable, especially if it continues in the future, and sees the solution in changing the education system and having enthusiastic teachers. Noah De Campos Neto, a famous Dutch BookTokker, did not know Dutch YAL existed until he discovered it on TikTok: "In the period where you are in the exact audience for YAL, you are mostly busy with the *leeslijst* ... the bridge to Dutch YAL was not there because it was not discussed enough at school",<sup>32</sup> and adds that the reading list can be "enormously demotivating" (qtd. in Hafsauoui "Boekenfilmpjes").<sup>33</sup> D's marketer considers that the media

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<sup>27</sup> "Jeuw, deze is in het Nederlands, heb je het ook in het Engels?"

<sup>28</sup> "Oh, ik kan in het Engels lezen, dus ik wil ook geen Nederlands."

<sup>29</sup> "... er hangt een soort stigma op bij jongeren, dat het bij uitstek betekent dat de Nederlandse vertaling niet goed is."

<sup>30</sup> "Nu merk je gewoon dat de *young adults* van nu gewoon heel goed Engels lezen, en die vinden het ook echt interessant en willen daar ook mee laten zien dat ze een boek in de originele taal kunnen lezen."

<sup>31</sup> "Ik hoor dus ook veel dat Nederlands lezen voor de lijst zo demotiverend is dat mensen een Engels boek pakken, want dan voelt het als ontspanning, alsof ze Netflix kijken."

<sup>32</sup> "In de periode waarin je eigenlijk de leeftijd hebt voor YAL ben je vooral bezig met 'De Lijst' ... dat bruggetje naar YAL was er niet omdat het gewoon heel weinig aan bod kwam op school."

<sup>33</sup> "Lezen voor de lijst kan een enorm demotiverende uitwerking hebben."

also plays an important role in motivating the youth to read, and refers to a recent discussion in the Dutch news critiquing the fact that young people read more commercial fiction than ‘real literature’. To D’s marketer, “[r]eading is reading, and the media also has a role ... in giving commercial authors a platform”.<sup>34</sup>

All of the interviewed publishing houses do mostly acquire their titles from the UK and USA, although they also receive manuscripts from other countries. E’s editor comments:

One time I got something sent ... from Japan. You have to consider whether it would fit the Dutch market, and for now, the books that speak to the interests of Dutch people are mostly books from the UK and USA, which is also where most books are produced ... that Japanese book was interesting and fun to look at, but it had a very different atmosphere than what we are used to in YAL or fantasy here.<sup>35</sup>

As mentioned before, an advantage for publishing houses is that many English-speaking authors already have big fanbases, so it is easy to build on their popularity. As D’s editor confesses, “the truth is that the power of everything that comes from the UK and USA is way bigger than that of products from other countries, and this also often benefits us”.<sup>36</sup> B gives a concrete example of building on an American author’s popularity in a campaign around a bestseller’s sequel:

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<sup>34</sup> “Lezen is lezen, daar vind ik dat de media ook een rol in heeft ... een podium te geven aan [paraplumerk] auteurs.”

<sup>35</sup> “Ik had een keer iets toegestuurd gekregen ... uit Japan, bijvoorbeeld. En dan is het gewoon heel erg kijken of dat zou passen bij deze markt, en voor nu is het vooral de VK en VS wat dan het beste bij de interesses past van mensen en waar het allermeeeste wordt geproduceerd ... het Japanse manuscript wat ik had bekeken is dan erg interessant en leuk om naar te kijken, maar daar zit een hele andere sfeer in dan wat wij hier gewend zijn met hoe wij naar YAL of fantasy kijken.”

<sup>36</sup> “... de waarheid is ook wel dat de kracht van alles wat er uit Amerika en Engeland komt vaak zoveel groter is dan alles wat er uit andere landen komt, dat dat vaak ook weer in je voordeel werkt.”

It was a worldwide release, so every country published the book at the same time ... Content was created for all of the countries, which we could download from a database, translate and edit, but we all had the same cover and title, so all of the material resembled each other. Sometimes we also just used the English content ... with a final shot that stated ‘Now available in bookstores’ in Dutch.<sup>37</sup>

In this way, readers could associate the Dutch translation with the English original, and, as they were released on the same day, B hoped that the youth would choose the Dutch version. D also often tries to use the same cover as in English and F sometimes makes reprints with the English title, instead of using a Dutch one. F’s marketer admits that

online, but also offline, we try to take over as much as possible from foreign and Dutch publishing houses ... you can quickly see what attracts the target audience and do not have to invent it yourself ... However, [Dutch publishing houses] are also competition ... so you are forced to be creative as well, so booksellers do not think ‘I have already seen this’. In that way, getting your ideas from foreign publishing houses is easier.<sup>38</sup>

All publishing houses agree that English will only keep growing. C expresses it in the most pessimistic manner: “Everyone reads in English when books are from the UK or USA.

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<sup>37</sup> “[Bestseller] was een wereldwijde release, dus wij publiceerden gelijktijdig met de Engelstalige, maar dat was in alle landen zo ... er werd content gemaakt voor alle landen. Dat konden we van een database downloaden en dan konden we dat bijvoorbeeld vertalen, onze eigen versie van maken of de plaatjes bewerken, maar we hadden natuurlijk allemaal dezelfde cover en titel, dus het materiaal leek allemaal behoorlijk op elkaar. En soms hebben wij ook de Engelstalige content doorgezet ... met de hele tijd een eindshot met een Nederlandse ‘Nu in de boekhandel’.”

<sup>38</sup> “... online, maar ook fysiek proberen we eigenlijk zoveel mogelijk over te nemen van zowel buitenlandse als Nederlandse uitgeverijen. Ik vind dat zelf ook heel makkelijk, omdat je dan heel snel kunt zien ‘oh, zij pakken het zo aan voor die doelgroep’. Je hoeft niet meer heel veel zelf uit te vinden ... [Alleen,] zij zijn ook concurrenten dus ... worden we ook gedwongen om creatief te zijn, anders denkt een boekhandel ook van ‘nee, dit heb ik eerder gezien’. Stelen uit het buitenland is wat dat betreft gewoon makkelijker.”

For Dutch publishing houses, it is actually impossible to still publish YAL from the UK and USA”.<sup>39</sup> C does still publish translations from English-language authors they have worked with before, but is for the rest expanding their acquisition to countries with less common languages, so the reader is forced to buy the translation if they want to read the book. For these titles, they often get subventions from different literary institutions, which also makes it more interesting to take financial risks (C). Although E believes that English will continue growing, they also think it is related to what publishers offer. With their limited editions, which will be highlighted in section 5.2.1, they have noticed that competition has become less of a problem.

#### 4.5 Diversity in YAL

As discussed in section 2.3.1, an emphasis on diversity has become a key concern (and perhaps a marketing strategy) for YAL. As B mentions, social and identity themes are logical in YAL:

It is remarkable how socially involved teenagers are now ... they are very busy with their own sexuality and places of birth. It is eminently the age where they are busy with these themes, where they want to read about them.<sup>40</sup>

The change of focus from white, cis, able-bodied, heterosexual, rich and male characters to more diverse identities has received a warm welcome from some but has also been unnerving for others. Although all publishing houses agree that diversity is important, they have different ways of introducing it in their books. B has a wide assortment of publications exploring social themes, including queer stories. As B’s marketer comments: “[o]ur

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<sup>39</sup> “... iedereen leest het in het Engels als het uit Engeland of Amerika komt. Het is voor ons, Nederlandse uitgeverijen, eigenlijk onmogelijk om nog YAL uit Engeland of Amerika uit te geven.”

<sup>40</sup> “Ik vind het echt opvallend hoe maatschappelijk geëngageerd tieners zijn ... daar zelf ook heel erg mee bezig zijn, met hun eigen seksualiteit en afkomst. Het is bij uitstek eigenlijk de leeftijd die daarmee te maken heeft, wanneer ze daarover willen lezen.”

publishing house is very focused on current affairs, not only in terms of diversity, but we are also alert to the discussions that are happening around us”.<sup>41</sup> They constantly pay attention to how diverse their publications are, both in the acquisition stage and later on, as when issuing reprints: some of their old children’s books are now being reprinted with a more diverse cast of characters, and illustrations are also recoloured to be more inclusive. The marketer proudly shares:

I am very satisfied with the fact that this publishing house works so thoroughly with reprints and invests money in contributing to change ... some books are very easily reprinted [without alterations], but that does not happen here, and I think that is very respectful.<sup>42</sup>

C discusses each acquisition in a weekly meeting, in which they also consider what both the publishing house and society need at the time. They will soon be publishing a translation of a Pakistani author who lives in Norway. His book focuses on themes of identity and immigration, but “[w]hat we notice is that bookstores are not really buying it. We all talk about diversity, inclusivity, sensitivity... which has to be offered, but bookstores always prefer traditional books” (C).<sup>43</sup> A and F see it as progress that “[p]eople who are not white now also appear on covers and fanart”,<sup>44</sup> and believe that

it is important to become more diverse, as society is also becoming more diverse. I think books should be representative of and give an insight into how

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<sup>41</sup> “... ik vind dus wel dat onze uitgeverij heel erg op de actualiteit zit en in alles, dus niet alleen op diversiteit, maar in elke discussie wel alert is.”

<sup>42</sup> “Dus ik ben echt tevreden dat dit bedrijf elke herdruk echt zo grondig aanpakt en er weer geld in stopt om ook echt met die verandering mee te gaan ... sommige boekjes zijn erg makkelijk in een snelle herdruk te zetten. Maar dat zie je hier dus niet gebeuren en dat vind ik heel respectvol.”

<sup>43</sup> “Wat mij wel heel erg tegenvalt is dat de boekhandel dit gewoon heel slecht inkoopt, we hebben allemaal een erg grote mond over diversiteit, inclusiviteit, *sensitivity*... En daar moet veel meer verscheidenheid komen, in het aanbod. En dan bied je het aan in de boekhandel, en zij gaan gewoon voor het traditionele.”

<sup>44</sup> “Mensen met een donkere huidskleur komen nu ook op covers en komen ook voor in *fanart*.”

society works ... If you do not become diverse, you would negate that basic trait of a story for me.<sup>45</sup>

D tries to look for diversity in a ‘natural manner’, although their editor notices the popularity of books with a diverse character cast on TikTok:

I am often looking for a balance: books where these themes are naturally included without it becoming an issue book ... It would be good to acquire such a book, though. The youth’s search for identity really fits the time and it is good to have diverse [characters and themes] in your books. It is also a question of luck: I need to find a book that talks about it, that fits our publishing house, and that I find nuanced enough.<sup>46</sup>

However, they do notice that their authors are aware of these themes and try to incorporate them by for example including homosexual couples in their stories. C does confess that they are sometimes bothered by how clearly one currently has to state that a book is diverse:

While in the USA you see that whole imprints are founded around these themes in order to normalise them, it is a pity that this has to be the case. In our [series] there is one black kid and another one who is adopted. It is a representation of society, but we do not focus on that, so it does not stand out. Now you have to put it very clearly on the cover ... A few years ago we published [title] by [author], and we used the USA cover ... it is about a black

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<sup>45</sup> “Ik denk ook dat het heel belangrijk is dat wij steeds diverser worden, want ik denk dat de maatschappij ook steeds diverser wordt, maar ik denk ook dat een boek een representatie moet zijn van de maatschappij, verdieping geven en een inzicht op de maatschappij ... En ik denk dat als je niet diverser zou worden, dat basisenmerk van een verhaal, van een boek, volledig zou negeren.”

<sup>46</sup> “... ik ben vaak op zoek naar de balans, dat het een natuurlijk boek is en waar de issues wel in voorkomen zonder dat het een issue-boek wordt ... die hele zoektocht naar identiteit ... Ik voel wel dat dat heel erg in deze tijd past, en het is ook goed om die diversiteit in je boeken te hebben. Maar het is eigenlijk ook meer een kwestie van ‘wanneer kom ik het goede boek tegen’ wat dan ook binnen ons fonds past en dat ik het ook genuanceerd genoeg vind.”

girl with a white mother and you can guess the father is black, but the protagonist knows nothing about him. He was shot ... At a certain moment, our publishing house decided to reprint it and focus more on this theme, but I think this is weird. We bought it because it is a beautiful and necessary book, but now you specifically need to name [the race and violence themes]. You have to mention you do it, while you were actually already doing it the whole time. I also think it is very important to remark, as these themes should be normalised and everyone should accept that we need to respect each other. That even if we have a different background, skin colour, religion or views, we should let each other be free.<sup>47</sup>

Some of the publishing houses' answers show the tension that is named by Saha and Van Lente in their research on diversity in the publishing industry. The question that was posed to them during the interviews was "Does your publishing house adopt specific measures to ensure that you publish diverse YAL books?"<sup>48</sup> While some could simply have answered 'not really', the ones that were not (yet) taking specific measures felt the need to justify themselves, while also acknowledging that having diverse publications is important.

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<sup>47</sup> "Kijk, in Amerika worden er bij uitgeverijen hele imprints opgericht, het is nodig om te laten normaliseren, maar ik vind het eigenlijk heel zonde dat het nodig is. Want met alles, kijk, zelfs een [serie], daar zit een donker kindje in, er zit een kindje in de klas die geadopteerd is. Het is een afspiegeling van de maatschappij, alleen de nadruk wordt daar niet bijzonder op gelegd, dus men valt het niet op. Dus nu moet je het allemaal heel duidelijk op het omslag zetten ... Wij hebben [titel] van [auteur] een aantal jaar geleden uitgegeven, we hebben het Amerikaanse omslag gebruikt ... Dat meisje is zwart, en de moeder is wit, dan kun je ervanuit gaan dat de vader ook zwart was, maar ze weet niks van hem. Hij is vermoord, doodgeschoten ... Toen op een gegeven moment dachten we 'we moeten het opnieuw uitgeven en het meer benadrukken', maar eigenlijk vind ik dit gek. Wij hebben dit aangekocht omdat het een prachtig en noodzakelijk boek is, maar als je het niet heel erg benadrukt... Je moet bij dit soort dingen in deze tijd heel erg gaan zeggen 'wij doen dit', terwijl, wij doen het al heel lang ... Ik denk ook dat het heel erg nodig is om heel erg te benadrukken, zodat het weer heel erg gaat normaliseren en iedereen accepteert dat we elkaar respecteren. Dat we een andere achtergrond, huidskleur, geloof, denkbeelden kunnen hebben, maar dat we elkaar daarin vrijlaten."

<sup>48</sup> "Neemt jullie uitgeverij specifieke maatregelen om ervoor te zorgen dat jullie diverse YAL boeken uitgeven?"

When asked about the diversity of their translators, only E indicates that they sometimes specifically contact new translators because of their backgrounds, identities or expert knowledge on the book's themes: “[w]e look really carefully at what a story needs, who the audience is, which translator is available, whom we have already contacted before... purely to make the best translation possible and to make sure the background knowledge is good”.<sup>49</sup> B finds it difficult to find translators of colour that fit their requirements, as

[t]here are almost no [YAL] translators of colour with a translation certificate ... it is shocking that this is the case, the government should think about why that is and why people of colour do not feel attracted to these courses.<sup>50</sup>

They do, however, sometimes make translations in duos, combining someone who has a good feeling for language with someone who is officially qualified as a mentor. However, this second person receives no credit for the translation, so they both need to agree on this work method. B does add that sometimes “you just choose the best translator, but you need to think about it thoroughly and have an explanation for why you chose that person over others”,<sup>51</sup> although how they define quality is left unclear. B and C use sensitivity readers. B indicates using them mostly for fact-checking and to determine whether the story is realistic for those it represents, but also because they expect to be scrutinised by the press. D sees another problem: most YAL translators are women, and they would like to see more male YAL translators.

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<sup>49</sup> “... dat we nu echt heel erg goed kijken naar wat het verhaal nodig heeft. Voor wie is het verhaal, wie is er beschikbaar, wie staat er in ons bestand ... Dat doen we dan puur inderdaad om daarvoor de beste vertaling te kunnen maken en ook om die achtergrond te waarborgen.”

<sup>50</sup> “... er zijn bijna geen [YAL] vertalers van kleur met een vertalersopleiding ... het is schokkend dat het er niet is, daar zou gewoon ook de overheid moeten bedenken van ‘Waarom is dat er niet? Waarom worden deze mensen daar [cursussen] kennelijk niet naartoe aangetrokken?’.”

<sup>51</sup> “Nou ja, en soms vraag je ook iemand omdat die gewoon de beste vertaler is. Wat wij wel geleerd hebben: je moet in elk geval heel goed nadenken over wie je vraagt, en daar argumenten voor hebben.”

#### 4.6 The Future of YAL

Most publishing houses are positive about the future of YAL, stating that it will continue to exist in the future, although not without obstacles. D's statement describes this feeling best: they are "cautiously positive" about it, as "we see the difficulties, but also believe in a future, although it will not be easy".<sup>52</sup> B's marketer shares:

I am not as gloomy as those news releases stating that 'the youth does not read anymore' ... especially because we are increasingly publishing pretty editions ... but it will become more expensive, as paper is becoming more costly and scarce.<sup>53</sup>

A, E and F realise that at the moment the popularity of YAL is still on the rise, but that there will not be eternal growth. However, that does not mean that it needs to decline, so they intend to work hard to keep producing YAL that is loved by the public. C's publisher is more negative about it: she believes that although the audience is now very visible and active, eventually YAL will become less popular.

All publishing houses agree on the fact that while English-language YAL will keep growing, Dutch production will continue to be important. They believe that there will always be people who prefer reading in Dutch either because of dyslexia (E), because they understand books better in their mother tongue (A, E, F), or because they want to keep their own language alive and maintain their proficiency in it (D). However, E's marketer adds that "[t]he Dutch publishing market is not one of the pioneers in online marketing innovations",<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> "Wij zijn dus voorzichtig positief, we zien wat beren op de weg, maar geloven ook in een toekomst. Het is alleen niet makkelijk."

<sup>53</sup> "Ik ben dus helemaal niet zo somber als sommige krantenberichten van 'jongeren lezen niet meer' ... het ziet er ook steeds fantastischer uit ... Het zal wel duurder worden, de boeken, want het papier wordt gewoon steeds duurder door de papierschaarste."

<sup>54</sup> "Het Nederlandse boekenvak staat niet bekend als voortrekker op innovatief gebied qua online marketing."

so they will have to keep focused to promote reading in Dutch. One of the dangers she envisions is that English-speaking countries start making even bigger print runs, as English-language books are read everywhere around the world, which would also make the prices of these books lower and the competition tougher. Another danger is social media. Even though, as is shown in section 5.3.2, social media has many benefits and is successfully used for marketing by all publishing houses, “there is a big degree of Americanisation [in the Netherlands], also because of all of the English that can be heard on YouTube, social media, Netflix... This will have an effect” (D).<sup>55</sup> However, D’s marketer does hope that after people are stimulated to pick up an English book via TikTok, they might realise that reading is relaxing and subsequently return to titles in their own language. This is indeed what happened to De Campos Neto, who has now returned to Dutch YAL (Hafsaoui “Boekenfilmpjes”). Thus, although English poses competition as a core literary culture, in the Netherlands it has not yet completely dominated the YAL market, although publishing houses will have to keep innovating and work hard to prevent this from happening.

When thinking about possible future changes in the field, B wants to reach the male audience more, which is at the moment difficult. A total of eighty-five percent of the respondents to a questionnaire they shared on their social media platforms, discussed in more detail in section 5.3.2, were women, which is an accurate representation of their reading public (B). One of the options the marketer envisions to attract more men to their books is making their editions a bit more unisex, as she believes many of their books look quite ‘feminine’. She adds that publishing house Blossom Books is already experimenting with this, playing with different covers and looks. B’s marketer also wonders whether YAL will continue being primarily in print and what extras they will need to include to keep the paper

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<sup>55</sup> “... maar ik vrees dat ... er toch een hoop Amerikanisering is. Met al het Engels wat ze om de oren krijgen op YouTube, alle sociale media, Netflix, alles, denk ik dat daar wel nog meer verschuiving in komt.”

version attractive. In this day and age, alongside e-books, audio collaborations are becoming important too. D's editor appreciates the development of TikTok, as she notices that people outside of their normal reading public are picking up books as well. As a bookseller told her, they now suddenly have new customers in the store who want to buy books they have seen on TikTok. A and F's marketer especially hopes that YAL will keep growing in those segments where readers have difficulties reading. As she declares, "YAL is for me the bridge to people who say that reading is not for them, especially because it is so much about their experiences ... if it keeps growing ... it should reach this group as well".<sup>56</sup> Publishing houses will thus have to continue innovating. As C's publisher mentions, "[y]ou are continuously trying things, there is not a blueprint that allows you to sit back and relax".<sup>57</sup> A and F's marketer's comment adds to this point: "It is not as if we have designed the ultimate marketing strategy ... we are still growing. But that is always the case with marketing".<sup>58</sup>

In this chapter, I have established the general view of publishing houses on Dutch YAL, helpful for understanding the marketing strategies that are used by Dutch marketers in the context of their language's peripheral status. These strategies are discussed in chapter 5.

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<sup>56</sup> "YAL is echt een beetje voor mij dé brug naar die mensen die zeggen 'lezen is iets voor iemand anders dan ik'. Zeker ook omdat het over hun wereld gaat ... als het zou blijven groeien ... zou het die doelgroep ook moeten bereiken."

<sup>57</sup> "Je bent altijd continu in beweging, het is niet zo van 'dit is de blauwdruk, zo is het voor alle YAL en verder gaan we in de zon liggen'."

<sup>58</sup> "... het is niet alsof wij het ei van Columbus hebben uitgevonden met onze marketingstrategie, dat is denk ik wel goed om even te zeggen, dat we zelf ook nog erg groeiend zijn. Maar dat is altijd met marketing."

## Chapter 5: Marketing Strategies for Dutch Translations of YAL

### 5.1 Introduction

This chapter presents findings about the marketing strategies that are used by the interviewed publishing houses. These findings are presented in two sections, focusing on product-based strategies (section 5.2) and community-based strategies (section 5.3). Within each of these two broad categories, both offline and online paratextual materials exist, which are discussed in detail. For both strategies, the concept of branding that is presented in chapter 2 is relevant, along with the idea of communities as a form of paratextual space.

### 5.2 Product-Based Strategies

Product-based marketing focuses on the physical book. In section 5.2.1, I discuss offline strategies using the concepts of the epitext and peritext. The application of NURs and book prices and the use of newsletters and the press are discussed as part of the book's epitext in section 5.2.1.1. Limited editions are analysed as part of the peritext in section 5.2.1.2, along with publishing houses' use of branding for these titles. The online strategies that are discussed in section 5.2.2 are few, as most online strategies focus on community building, and are thus explored in section 5.3. However, in section 5.2.2, the use of paid advertising and SEO (Search Engine Optimisation) are discussed as part of the book's epitext.

#### 5.2.1 Offline

##### 5.2.1.1 The Epitext

One of the publishing houses' strategies for selling more YAL is making strategic use of NURs, codes that are used in the Netherlands to classify books. Putting a certain NUR on a book allows it to be automatically listed in searches on online retailers or library systems. As E publishes fantasy that can be read both by adults and a YAL audience, they always use two

NUR codes, so they do not lose any part of their audience. B also often uses two NURs, as their titles sometimes combine two genres, such as chick-lit and YAL. A difference between these two publishing houses is that E positions the adult NUR first, while B gives preference to the YAL NUR: “the first NUR for us is really a YAL NUR because we are a YAL publishing house, and want to reach that audience first”.<sup>59</sup>

Most publishing houses use newsletters and the press for their marketing, although “the press does not really exist for this genre. You hope that the normal press will pick up a YAL title” (B),<sup>60</sup> and “[w]ith the regular press, such as newspapers, you do not really get into contact with fifteen, sixteen and seventeen years old” (C).<sup>61</sup> This is thus mostly done to reach parents. D still does some research through newsletters, asking, for example, which cover is preferred by the public. More effective offline strategies include organising pre-order campaigns with gifts at pick-up points, which are usually bookstores; sending books for review and advance reader copies (ARCs); or making advertising material for bookstores, such as bookmarks or posters. D uses umbrella branding so they can have year-round campaigns, creating brands focused on genres or general ideas, and smaller titles especially profit from the popularity of these brands.

Another strategy for making the Dutch translation attractive to young adults is experimenting with book prices. B always considers the price of the original title in the UK and USA, and tries to get below that. However, this is not always possible, “especially when you publish the book somewhat later, because in the UK they will already have made smaller, cheaper editions”.<sup>62</sup> This is one of the reasons why at bids B often demands to publish

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<sup>59</sup> “... de eerste NUR is dan bij ons echt een YAL NUR, ook omdat wij gewoon een YAL uitgeverij zijn, en dat publiek gewoon als eerste willen bereiken.”

<sup>60</sup> “... de pers bestaat op dit gebied niet zo heel erg. Het is gewoon een beetje de gebruikelijke literatuurpers waarvan je dan hoopt dat ze het oppakken.”

<sup>61</sup> “In de reguliere pers, kranten en zo bereik je echt niet de vijftien-, zestien- en zeventien-jarigen.”

<sup>62</sup> “Zeker niet als je later publiceert, want dan hebben ze in Engeland al kleinere, goedkopere versies gemaakt.”

simultaneously with the original book. In a strategy to boost the pre-order campaign of a bestseller's sequel, B experimented with introduction prices: for three months, the hardcover edition was sold for the price of a normal paperback. Partly because of this, the pre-order campaign was fairly successful.

#### 5.2.1.2 The Peritext

As mentioned in chapter 2, limited editions are used for Dutch translations of English-language YAL to distinguish them from the original titles and boost their sales. For these editions, marketers intend to create grabability: as B describes, the target audience wants “something special, something that surpasses the English edition”.<sup>63</sup> A consumer study by the Gfk confirms this, showing that specifically YAL readers are attracted to limited editions with bonus content (qtd. in Dessing “English Please!”).

E is one of the most important publishing houses in this area, releasing the biggest number of limited editions per year in the Netherlands. As they say, “marketing starts at the design of the book, which is also [in this case] the focal point of our marketing”.<sup>64</sup> Their use of grabability succeeds, as they notice that while “the popularity of our limited editions is mostly related to their appearance”, when people read it, they “also get positive feedback on the translation, as if it is an eye-opening discovery that the Dutch language can also be very beautiful”.<sup>65</sup> Thus, while some readers buy the books for how they look, in the process they also come to enjoy the translation. As E started with their limited editions in 2020, they have

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<sup>63</sup> “Maar ze houden gewoon ontzettend van iets speciaals, iets dat de Engelse editie overtreft, zeg maar.”

<sup>64</sup> “In principe begint de marketing al bij de aankleding, dat is namelijk al het verkooppunt waar je het meeste op gaat focussen.”

<sup>65</sup> “Gelukkig merken wij met de bekendheid die wij krijgen bij onze edities, wat vooral om het uiterlijk gaat, dat ze het lezen en dat we ook de feedback krijgen dat de vertaling erg goed is, alsof hun ogen geopend worden dat Nederlands ook heel mooi kan zijn.”

by now built a loyal audience for these editions, a big breakthrough in the competition against their English-language counterparts:

We are now in a position where people are willing to wait. And they are also willing to pay what we ask, as their previous knowledge serves as a guarantee that it is going to be a beautiful edition. That also helps us to keep it going, as we know that we can make a print run [and that it will be sold].<sup>66</sup>

Even though producing limited editions is a costly process, both in terms of time and money, and the publishing house does not make much profit out of the first print run, it is a good way to keep the audience engaged and for the publishing house to become popular, even among readers who do not normally buy YAL. E's limited editions are, under a pretty dust jacket, bound in linen with engraved illustrations and usually include specially designed flyleaves and endpapers, a letter from the author, fanart and sprayed edges. Subsequent reprints are still bound in linen and have coloured flyleaves and endpapers, so "it really remains a book you want to have" and "it is still a good option to choose our edition instead of the English one" (E).<sup>67</sup> It is only with these reprints that the titles start to become economically profitable for the publishing house:

It is a long-term game you are playing, as you never make the first print run for the purposes of gaining money. They are passion projects, and it is only when word of mouth begins to play a part and you can make subsequent print runs, that you finally start getting some profit out of it.<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> "... we zijn nu in de positie dat mensen wel bereid zijn om te wachten. En omdat ze gegarandeerd weten dat het mooi gaat worden zijn ze het ook eens met de prijs die wij ervoor vragen, en dat zorgt er ook voor dat wij het zo kunnen houden, omdat we weten dat we een bepaalde oplage kunnen drukken."

<sup>67</sup> "... het blijft wel een echt boek wat je wilt hebben ... dat het nog steeds gewoon een goede keuze blijft om die van ons te kiezen ten opzichte van de Engelse editie."

<sup>68</sup> "Het is een lange-termijnspel wat je speelt, want je maakt die eerste mooie [oplage] niet omdat je denkt dat je er veel winst op gaat maken. Het zijn ook echt passie-projecten, eigenlijk. Als *word of*

While these editions are mostly revered on social media channels such as Instagram or TikTok, even bookstores have started noticing and requesting these titles. E's editor remembers a comment made by a bookseller: "So many people came to ask about the book that I became curious about it. I read it and find it amazing!" (E).<sup>69</sup> This is especially powerful because, as E's editor says, many bookstores did not even recognise YAL when the concept appeared. However, she believes that booksellers are now finally enthusiastic about limited editions because "at heart, they are very touched when you show love for the product".<sup>70</sup> E's limited editions are also praised by teachers, who sometimes mention that these books prompt teenagers in their class to want to pick up a book (E).

After E's success, other publishing houses in the Netherlands have started experimenting with limited editions as well. This is mostly done in the fantasy genre, and they all really benefit from the interaction between these titles and social media channels. Before B started with their production, they contacted another publishing house in their same publishing group that is experienced in making limited editions, which shows how publishing houses sometimes collaborate despite being each other's competition. When B announced their first limited edition in their offer brochure, they were immediately flooded with reactions and requests to get the book for free in return for a review, showing the popularity of these editions amongst readers. C also started producing limited editions for a popular fantasy writer in 2021, stating

with commercial fantasy YAL we really have to give all to seduce the reader into buying the Dutch version ... the target audience really likes these editions

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*mouth* dan een rol gaat spelen begint het balletje te rollen, en met al die herdrukken ga je uiteindelijk iets doen."

<sup>69</sup> "Er kwamen zo veel mensen om vragen dat ik toch wel benieuwd was waar het over ging, toen heb ik het gelezen en ik vind het geweldig!"

<sup>70</sup> "... ik denk dat in de kern het ze ook altijd heel erg raakt als je liefde laat zien voor het product."

and is ready to pay for them when you make something that really is beautiful.<sup>71</sup>

Instead of a complete limited edition, some publishing houses include small special elements in their books, such as a bookmark (C, E, F), a signed letter from the author (C), goodies around the book's theme (D), an unusual layout (D) or extra colours (D). This is normally done when books are not in the fantasy genre but publishing houses want to experiment with extras nonetheless.

All publishing houses agree that the key factor that has aided the success of limited editions is the audience's "urge to collect" (B).<sup>72</sup> C's publisher observes: "They are very drawn towards this kind of editions, they really want to keep them. On Facebook groups you see they often sell books, but they want to keep these editions in their bookcases".<sup>73</sup> E's comment adds to this argument:

More than older audiences, [young adults] buy books as products in themselves, rather than only for the story. If they have already read a story but like the product, they do not hesitate to buy a new copy solely because it looks beautiful.<sup>74</sup>

De Campos Neto shares in an interview that he has multiple versions of different titles, including Alice Oseman's *Heartstopper* graphic novels and Nicola Yoon's *Everything Everything* (qtd. in Hafasaoui "Boekenfilmpjes"). Indeed, E remarks that when they announce

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<sup>71</sup> "... met commerciële fantasy YAL moeten we echt van alles uit de kast halen om die Nederlandse lezer te verleiden tot het kopen van Nederlandse YAL in vertaling ... Ik heb ook wel het idee dat die doelgroep het echt leuk vindt en bereid is om daar voor te betalen, als je echt iets moois maakt."

<sup>72</sup> "... de verzameldrang bij YAL."

<sup>73</sup> "Daar zijn ze gevoelig voor, ze willen het ook bewaren. Je ziet ook dat ze op die Facebook-groepen heel veel verkopen, maar dit willen ze dan wel echt in de kast houden."

<sup>74</sup> "Eigenlijk veel meer dan oudere doelgroepen, kopen zij echt boeken als product op zich en niet alleen voor het verhaal wat erin zit. Als zij een verhaal al hebben gelezen en het mooi vinden, draaien ze er hun hand niet voor om om nog een exemplaar te kopen puur omdat het zo mooi is."

new limited editions, they often receive comments such as “I already ordered the English version, but now I want this one as well”.<sup>75</sup> F, however, remarks that “[s]ome English-language YAL readers hate everything that is Dutch, so they also do not buy it when it is in limited edition”.<sup>76</sup>

### 5.2.2 Online

Although most online marketing strategies are described in section 5.3.2, as they are community-based, publishing houses also make use of certain product-based strategies. They all use paid advertising through channels such as Google Advertising and SEO (Search Engine Optimisation). For SEO, F focuses on authorial name and tries to push the Dutch translation to appear when readers search for the book with its English title. B sometimes also prints QR-codes in their books, leading to fan pages. While they have noticed that these websites are well-visited and that it is an excellent way to communicate with the target audience, it is also a substantial time investment for marketers, as they constantly need to keep these pages up to date.

## 5.3 Community-Based Strategies

Community-based marketing focuses on the target audience of YAL. Both offline and online strategies pertain to the book’s epitext, and are used to establish and strengthen a relationship with the audience and to create opportunities for readers to meet each other and authors.

Section 5.3.1 discusses the main offline strategy in this area: literary events. Section 5.3.2 focuses on social media, specifically on Instagram and TikTok. In this section, I also analyse the symbiotic relationship between publishing houses and their audience on these channels and the use of influencers. For this chapter, the concepts of the paratext, branding, shared

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<sup>75</sup> “Ik heb hem al in het Engels besteld, maar nu wil ik deze ook hebben.”

<sup>76</sup> “Sommige lezers die Engelse YAL lezen hebben echt een hekel aan alles wat Nederlands is, dan gaan ze het ook niet kopen voor de *limited edition*.”

reading experiences and market-led approach, presented in chapter 2, are relevant, while also keeping in mind the position of English and Dutch languages as respectively part of central and peripheral cultures.

### 5.3.1 Offline

The main focus of community-based offline marketing is YAL literary events. Dutch literary institutions, publishing houses and bookstores work together to organise events such as YALFU, YALFEST and YALTIVAL, the three biggest Dutch YAL literary festivals.

Publishing houses are encouraged to provide authors who want to give a lecture, be interviewed or sign their books, along with content for goodie bags. In these events, both bookstores and publishing houses benefit from having stands with books to be sold. Besides celebrating the phenomenon of YAL through a market-led approach, publishing houses have different priorities regarding these events. The two main ones are selling (translations of) books and strengthening the community, by allowing for interactions with authors and fellow readers. F also sees events as a chance to boost the popularity of certain authors. C is one of the publishing houses that mostly focuses on selling, but believes that it is more efficient when they invite an author from a non-English-speaking country:

When [author] came to YALTIVAL, three hundred English and three Dutch books were sold. This is very discouraging. I was at YALFU when V.E. Schwab was there, and ... in the queue for their books, everyone was holding the English version. The funny thing was, [Italian author] was there at the same time, and his books were sold out as, fortunately, [almost] no one reads in Italian and the books were not there to be purchased [in Italian].<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>77</sup> “Dat hebben wij zelf gemerkt met [auteur], die kwam op YALTIVAL en er werden driehonderd Engelse boeken verkocht en drie Nederlandse, dan zie je het verschil dus, dat is erg droef. Ik was ook op YALFU toen V. E. Schwab er was, ja, dan staat er door heel Tivoli Vredenburg een rij voor haar handtekening en iedereen heeft het Engelse boek in hun handen. Het grappige was, [Italiaanse auteur]

B mostly focuses on interaction, and values festivals because they are very well attended and draw exactly the intended audience. They are usually approached to be included in goodie bags, although this contribution is quite expensive:

With the upcoming YALFEST, you can deliver some material, for example, [series] bookmarks, but you have to pay per bookmark ... It is marketing ... It costs a certain amount of cents per bookmark in a goodie bag ... but you are right in the middle of your target audience.<sup>78</sup>

Additionally, it is an effective way of promoting titles, as “[i]n bookstores you never know whom your material is reaching, or whether [booksellers] will throw it away in the end, but people who buy a ticket for a festival are the ultimate target audience” (B).<sup>79</sup> It is thus expected that the audience appreciates the goodies and that they are perhaps attracted to the advertised products or the publishing house. D does not often participate in festivals, as they consider the costs to be too high and the work too intense while it only reaches a relatively small audience. The marketer even says that if you use the same money for simple advertising, you could get more profit. However, they do often include something in goodie bags so they remain visible to the public. The high costs are especially problematic when inviting a foreign author, as then “you have to pay for plane tickets, accommodation, etc. We would need a whole week of author events to make it financially viable for us” (F).<sup>80</sup> C and D

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was er tegelijkertijd, en alle boeken waren uitverkocht, omdat gelukkig niemand in het Italiaans kan lezen, en het lag er ook niet.”

<sup>78</sup> “Wij hebben nu bij YALFEST bijvoorbeeld, dan kun je goodiebag-materiaal aanleveren. Dus boekenleggers van [serie], bijvoorbeeld, maar dan moet je wel betalen per boekenlegger ... Ja, het is gewoon marketing ... het kost zoveel cent per boekenlegger voor een tasje ... Maar je zit wel midden in de doelgroep.”

<sup>79</sup> “In de boekhandel weet je soms niet bij welk publiek het materiaal uitkomt, en of het gewoon uiteindelijk ook weer weggegooid wordt, en hier zijn mensen die een entree-ticket voor een festival kopen wel de doelgroep.”

<sup>80</sup> “... als je een buitenlandse auteur naar binnen haalt, dus naar Nederland haalt, heb je vliegtickets, heb je verblijfskosten, et cetera. Als we dat zouden doen, zouden we daar een hele week aan auteursbezoeken aan moeten vastkoppelen om het voor ons rendabel te maken.”

instead often invest in high-school visits for Dutch authors, where they also give goodie bags to teachers, including reading questions or teaching suggestions.

Publishing houses also often organise their own events, considered by E as essential for keeping in close contact with the audience. These events either focus on an overarching genre or a single author, so they are not market-led. Because of COVID-19, in 2020 and 2021 most events had to be cancelled, although all publishing houses want to start organising them again in 2022. During the various lockdowns, however, publishing houses sometimes organised online reading clubs and meetings with authors, and some of them have even decided to keep a hybrid format for further events (B, D, E), while this was before COVID-19 not perceived as desirable. E is one of the publishing houses that organised online reading clubs during the lockdowns. Some of their participants joined several editions and built a connection with the editor and marketer. This is also a form of relationship marketing: as E remembers, “when they [finally] came to the publishing house, they did not perceive it as a scary, big company. It was instantly a very open, informal and nice atmosphere”.<sup>81</sup> E also attributes this to the effort they have put into being approachable to the community on Instagram, as will be discussed in next section. Other types of recurrent events are signing sessions and interviews with authors in bookshops and meetings with influencers.

### 5.3.2 Online

As mentioned in section 2.3, social media has evolved into an essential tool for publishing houses, especially in their interaction with the YAL audience. Although every publishing house uses social media in its own way, many are aligned in their strategies across different channels and often use them to build communities. As A and F’s online marketer shares:

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<sup>81</sup> “Je merkte dat degene die [naar de uitgeverij] kwamen, niet kwamen met het idee ‘oh, ik kom nu naar deze grote en enge uitgeverij’, je merkte dat het gelijk heel open, heel informeel, heel fijn was.”

With online marketing, you always have to choose a goal: reach or conversion? With YAL I always choose for reach ... you want to constantly broaden the audience and ... keep their interaction going ... also to bind people to the publishing house so our translations are received with more love.<sup>82</sup>

The different social media platforms that are used replace each other quickly. At the moment, Instagram is the most important channel for all publishing houses, although TikTok is quickly growing in popularity as well. These two channels are explored in depth later in the section. Facebook was a key tool in the past, but is now, especially for this age category, receding in terms of popularity. Many publishing houses still have their Twitter account, which is mostly used to share links to interviews, articles or their websites, and their YouTube channels, which are mostly used for book trailers. As E's marketer mentions,

before COVID-19 I was working on a plan to start a YouTube channel [to continue building on the community], but then the pandemic and TikTok came... As a publishing house you need to make decisions about what you are investing your time in ... TikTok is replacing YouTube, so we immediately need to drop that social media channel, all in the time span of a year and a half ... we need to move on and look ahead.<sup>83</sup>

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<sup>82</sup> "Als je online marketing opzet, moet je altijd kiezen voor een doel: is je doel conversie of is je doel bereik? En bij YAL is mijn doel altijd zo'n groot mogelijk bereik ... Dat is dus voornamelijk mijn insteek, om sowieso de doelgroep steeds verder te vergroten, en ... de interactie van deze doelgroep gaande te houden ... En nu vind ik interactie zo belangrijk omdat ik daarmee dus ook de mensen aan de uitgeverij kan binden, dan kan ik mijn vertalingen ook wat warmer, wat zachter laten vallen."

<sup>83</sup> "... ik was toevallig voor corona bezig met een plan om een YouTube-kanaal te beginnen [om verder aan de community te bouwen], maar toen kwam corona, en toen kwam dus TikTok. Als uitgeverij moet je toch een beetje kiezen waar je je mee gaat bezighouden ... Ik verwacht dat TikTok Youtube een beetje gaat vervangen, is eigenlijk al soort van gebeurd. Dus dat moeten we dan ook gelijk laten vallen, en daar is hoelang over heen gegaan? Een jaar, anderhalf? ... we moeten ons omdraaien en vooruitkijken."

Social media is seen by all publishing houses as a way to interact with the audience. Although Dutch readers often also follow the social media of English-language publishing houses, Dutch publishing houses try to bond with their audience through their own platforms to create a connection with readers and perhaps have some advantage over the English-language reading preferences of many. They also try to turn their channels into communities for readers to meet and talk about books, sharing reading experiences. All publishing houses notice that it is often the same group of people who react to posts, which is, on the one hand, proof of loyalty, but, on the other hand, also evidence of publishing houses not reaching new audiences.

The community has benefits for all of its participants. As E's marketer declares, communities "provide us with a lot, not only in terms of sales but also in terms of input ... we have a kind of feedback group there ... which can always help us".<sup>84</sup> B's online marketer adds that they have "a very reactive community ... young readers are quick to send a direct message and often comment on our posts".<sup>85</sup> Wanting to launch their TikTok channel, B published a questionnaire on their Facebook and Instagram, in order to check whether their vision for TikTok aligned with the wishes of their audience. Two days later, they had to close the questionnaire, as five hundred reactions had already come in. While they know that readers are always eager to share their opinion, they were surprised that "they had even answered the open questions, which are the ones you normally skip or answer with two words".<sup>86</sup> Another way in which readers provide their opinion is by responding to offer brochures via comments or direct messages. These catalogues offer conceptual covers and

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<sup>84</sup> "[Communities] leveren ons ontzettend veel op, niet alleen qua pure verkoop, maar ook qua input ... Dus wij hebben een soort van live feedback-groep daar ... die ons altijd kan helpen."

<sup>85</sup> "... het is een heel erg reagerende community ... de jonge lezers, die sturen heel snel een MD of geven veel commentaar onder posts."

<sup>86</sup> "En zelfs ... de open vragen werden ingevuld. Terwijl dat toch iets is wat je vaak bij enquêtes een beetje overslaat, of gewoon twee woordjes schrijft."

synopses of the titles that are to be published in the following months and are an effective way of getting feedback before books are printed. Sometimes, publishing houses also directly ask for their audience's opinion through posts or polls on Instagram. This helps the publishing house in knowing their public's taste better, but also helps in backing their own opinion with facts, as they have proof that "eight hundred people voted and that eighty percent of the audience prefers that cover" (B).<sup>87</sup> In the same way, E says that when they post an update and receive almost no reply, "we know we need to work harder".<sup>88</sup> Readers also unconsciously act as marketers in producing peer-to-peer advertising by talking about their favourite books or making their own content in the form of fanarts or fanfiction. In turn, E sometimes includes fanart in the flyleaves and endsheets of their limited editions. In this way, "[b]y establishing an affective relationship between producer and consumer, producers win consumer affect, which in turn attracts immaterial labour of the consumer" (Martens 63). When publishing houses use the reader's input, the audience feels seen. This is especially important for teenagers, as it "speak[s] to this audience's desires for autonomy (and for being treated like adults), and [it] flatter[s] them by providing a space where their opinions are influential and respected" (Martens 74). These are all examples of the new model of community-based marketing that exists through social media, focused on relationship marketing, and the approachability of the publishing houses is also part of their branding strategies.

Another benefit of these interactions is that the public is closely involved with the processes and people working at the publishing house, so they are more eager to listen and try to understand when something in the production process goes wrong (E), such as publication delays. Ackermans has indeed found that readers feel more connected to the publication of

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<sup>87</sup> "En dan kan je ook gewoon zeggen '800 mensen hebben meegestemd, en daar is gewoon tachtig procent voor dit omslag'."

<sup>88</sup> "Als we op [community] een aankondiging plaatsen en er wordt nauwelijks op gereageerd, dan weten we dat wij moeten gaan bijspijkeren."

books when they have had a say or look into how these are produced (“Branded Readers” 246). C and E are very transparent on social media. When something goes wrong, they explain it earnestly, as the bond with the reader “is also based on trust, both in the publishing house and the product ... because they have constant contact with us, they know they can trust us” (E).<sup>89</sup> This also allows the publishing house to ask for favours:

[Title] has been postponed, so we will not be able to release it at the same time as other countries do. The editor will type a text asking for people to wait for our edition, for which they get many benefits in return [in the form of a pretty edition]. (E)<sup>90</sup>

E’s editor adds:

I think it is very logical to tell people that we are only able to make limited editions because they buy them. With that, it is important to share that it takes time and money to translate into Dutch.<sup>91</sup>

A key element of social media is the interaction with bookish influencers, “passionate readers who use social media platforms to share their love of books and connect with fellow readers” (Reddan 1), which can be found on all channels, although the interviewed publishing houses mostly collaborate with them on Instagram and TikTok. As journalist Samya Hafsaoui states, influencers are “the at-home advertising agencies that turn good books into bestsellers

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<sup>89</sup> “... dus ook het vertrouwen, zowel in ons als uitgeverij als in het product, omdat zij gewoon weten: dit is iets van [community], die kennen wij en daar hebben wij veel contact mee, dus hier hebben wij vertrouwen in.”

<sup>90</sup> “[Titel] is uitgesteld, waardoor we niet meer tegelijk verschijnen met de Amerikaanse editie en internationaal. [Redacteur] typt dan wel een tekstje met ‘goh, als je geduld hebt hebben wij dit, dit, dit en dit voor je’.”

<sup>91</sup> “Ik vind het heel erg logisch om tegen mensen te communiceren van ‘jullie zijn zo fan van onze edities, en jullie vinden ze zo mooi, en de enige reden waarom wij ze kunnen maken is omdat jullie ze daadwerkelijk kopen’. Ik vind het heel goed om daarbij te vermelden dat het veel tijd, veel investering, veel geld kost om zo’n Nederlandse vertaling te maken.”

through their social media” (“Heel goed”).<sup>92</sup> Indeed, A and F’s online marketer considers that having good content from influencers means “already winning half of the battle”.<sup>93</sup> Most of the collaborations are not paid with money, but as these content creators are also fans, they profit from being in close contact with the team, being able to visit the publishing house and getting goodies, ARCs or exclusive opportunities, such as meeting authors or having their reviews featured on book covers.

### 5.3.2.1 Instagram

For all of the interviewed publishing houses, Instagram is their most effective and most used social media platform, both by themselves and their target audience. Bookstagram, the bookish community on Instagram, is characterised by “its luxurious aesthetic celebrating the materiality of books ... developed in posts that feature beautifully styled books and bookish objects as well as posts that celebrate reading as desirable activity” (Reddan 6). To receive bookish content, readers only have to follow the publishing house’s account, after which they encounter their publications and stories (posts that disappear after twenty-four hours) on their feeds. Besides sharing their own publications, publishing houses often also repost influencers’ content.

The content on the publishing houses’ Instagram pages is varied. Besides pictures of books, common types of posts include insights into the team, videos from authors, memes and giveaways. F tries to stimulate interaction in the comments by asking questions such as ‘Have you read this already?’ or ‘What does your bookcase look like?’. They also often create reading challenges such as book bingos to encourage their public to read and organise reading groups for which they give participants free (e-)books. This is often done with the backlist in

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<sup>92</sup> “De slaapkamerreclamebureaus die van een goed boek een bestsellersucces maken via hun social media.”

<sup>93</sup> “Dat is al zo’n beetje de helft van de strijd.”

order to create a fanbase for certain authors, which may later be profitable for new releases. E's platform is an example of a tight-knit Instagram community, in part because of the attention that is given to followers by the publishing house. At an event, a reader said to E's editor that they appreciated them always trying to answer direct messages or comments. The consequence is that "there is a real connection, and we are human, rather than nameless and faceless".<sup>94</sup> However, E's marketer believes that this is only possible because of the relatively small community they have had until now. If it were to become much bigger, they would simply not have enough time to answer all comments, and then you "risk losing the loyalty of the reader"(E).<sup>95</sup>

Concerning advertising strategies, publishing houses that also have an adult channel sometimes cross-promote, such as D. In this way, they reach a bigger audience and get through to adults as well, who, as stated in chapters 1 and 4, often read YAL. Instagram also offers an easy way to include links to websites in posts: F's Instagram is the channel through which most people access the website. F also highlights their extensive use of hashtags. D has implemented a specific tactic for Instagram in 2022: they are focusing on advertising on authorial names instead of on specific titles. In the same way as their umbrella brands allow less well-known books to profit from the marketing potential of the brand, this strategy helps in promoting an author's backlist.

Bookstagrammers have different roles depending on the publishing house, although they all share the task of promoting books. E does this in the form of ambassadors, a group of popular bookstagrammers that the marketer has assembled and with whom she has frequent contact concerning fantasy titles. Ambassadors promote books and organise giveaways in

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<sup>94</sup> "... er is daadwerkelijk een lijntje en we zijn niet naamloos of gezichtloos, wij zijn heel menselijk."

<sup>95</sup> "... de kracht van [community] ligt daarin: als we dat kwijtraken denk ik ook dat we weer een deel van de loyaliteit kwijtraken."

return for free copies and close ties with the publishing house. E's marketer considers that an important advantage of the collaboration is that as influencers are also part of the community, they contribute to creating a feeling of trust for the rest of the audience. For every important book, F and A organise big marketing campaigns, working with bloggers who can request books for review. Subsequently, they have 'blog tours' and 'blog days', during which they repost influencers' content: "[D]uring a series of days, there will be good content for our socials ... you send a book to a blogger and a date ... they share their content on that day and we share it [on our story]" (B).<sup>96</sup> While their own social media works quite nicely, they still profit from bookstagrammers' bigger reach. B and C usually make special packages including goodies for influencers to unbox (i.e. open) in front of the camera, which is subsequently shared on the publishing houses' own stories or posts as well.

### 5.3.2.2 TikTok

As mentioned in chapter 2, TikTok has surfaced as one of the most important social media channels in the publishing industry. Proof of this is that all of the interviewed publishing houses have joined this new trend. E's marketer states:

I think that ... it is very important to keep an eye on the development of TikTok and BookTok, as I think it has been, on a marketing level, one of the biggest changes in online communities ever, especially because of how quickly it has grown and the gigantic impact it has on sale numbers.<sup>97</sup>

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<sup>96</sup> "... zodat er dan gewoon in een reeks van dagen ook goede content te zien zal zijn ... Dan stuur je [een boek] uit naar een blogger en dan koppel je daar een datum aan ... Zij delen dus per dag, en wij delen die content dan ook meteen weer."

<sup>97</sup> "Ik denk dat het heel belangrijk is om ... even goed te kijken naar TikTok en BoekTok en hoe zich dat ontwikkelt, want dat is echt, ik denk op online marketing gebied, een van de grootste omslagen in, in ieder geval, online communities geweest ooit, vooral in hoe snel het is gegaan, hoe groot het is geworden en wat voor gigantische impact het platform heeft op verkoopaantallen."

C's publisher agrees, stating that although BookTokkers, the name for TikTok influencers, are not more active than influencers on other social media, "people are more eager to buy things [they saw on TikTok] than on Instagram".<sup>98</sup> The force of TikTok can also be seen in bookstores, where books are now often placed on tables with the label 'popular on TikTok'. A similar message appears on stickers that B and D are developing with the TikTok logo.

BookTok is characterised by having videos with a "playful, unrehearsed aesthetic ... They are short, fast, and loud ... These features contribute to the establishment of an unfiltered, messy, chaotic aesthetic, which is more 'relatable' than the carefully curated high-concept, glossy Instagram aesthetic" (Reddan 8). One of the advantages of TikTok is that its algorithm makes the search for bookish content almost effortless in comparison to other types of social media (Visser qtd. in De Witt "Zelf beslissen"). While on other platforms recommendations are based on the accounts that are followed by the user, the TikTok algorithm focuses on aspects such as video viewing time, hashtags, and sound trends, besides on individual actions such as likes, comments or shares (Klug et al. 84). For this reason, the recommendations provided by the TikTok algorithm are much more personalised than on other social media channels.

E's marketer started their TikTok account quite casually: as she saw that it was becoming a big trend abroad, she made an account just in case they would need it in the future. However, it quickly bloomed, as fantasy is incredibly popular on TikTok (E), so they immediately started using it for the promotion of their fantasy titles and limited editions. TikTok is mostly used by them for "many memes, many jokes and every now and then an informative TikTok",<sup>99</sup> also following popular trends. According to E, the main trait a TikTok

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<sup>98</sup> "Ik merk dat die BoekTokkers niet actiever zijn, maar dat mensen dan toch meer bereid zijn om dingen te kopen. De bereidheid is groter dan op Instagram."

<sup>99</sup> "TikTok is veel memes, veel grapjes en ook zo nu een dan een informatieve TikTok."

should have is showing what one should read and why, if possible following TikTok trends, and their main objective on the platform is to make their publications as visible as possible. While this is, at first, mostly their own work, later on, the book may gain traction on its own and become a TikTok sensation:

You can never get to the real source ... a book can suddenly become a hype ... a certain book could be lying on shelves for ages, and then just because suddenly the right person holds it for eight seconds at the right moment, it jumps to the top of the bestseller lists. (E)<sup>100</sup>

E's editor shares that in this way, thanks to TikTok, "books often get a second life, as it does not matter how long ago a book was written".<sup>101</sup> The latest publishing house that has joined TikTok is B, launching their account in May 2022. In their questionnaire about the kind of content the audience wishes to see on TikTok, referred to earlier in this section, readers mostly requested giveaways and sneak peeks of limited editions. However, B also wants to include videos that allow the public to take a look behind the scenes, even though there was not much demand for it, possibly to strengthen the bond with their audience and help them to understand the production process. D has only been using TikTok for a year, and besides their main channel, they are considering making separate TikTok accounts for their umbrella brands. Although it requires quite some time, the marketer expects to get "more engagement and response on your posts, as you are right in the target audience".<sup>102</sup> F mostly focuses on

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<sup>100</sup> "De bron kun je niet achterhalen ... zo'n boek kan zomaar een hype worden ... het zijn ook vaak dingen die al enorm lang op de plank liggen en dan ineens komt het omhoog omdat de juiste persoon het net acht seconden lang omhoog heeft gehouden, en daarom schiet het ineens naar boven in de lijsten."

<sup>101</sup> "Maar het maakt ook vaak niet uit hoe lang geleden het boek is geschreven, en dat vind ik er vooral erg interessant aan, dat dingen heel vaak een tweede leven kunnen krijgen."

<sup>102</sup> "... dan heb je toch meer *engagement* en *response* op je posts, omdat het dan toch heel erg recht op je doelgroep zit."

producing aesthetic TikToks and admits that their content is heavily inspired by the TikTok account of UK's Bloomsbury Publishing.

Publishing houses also work with influencers on TikTok, but for now, this is less developed than on Instagram. D notices that many BookTokkers are mostly engaged with English books, but they still try to collaborate with them so the audience eventually arrives at D's TikTok channel. B tried to collaborate with paid BookTokkers in the past, but besides it being expensive, they notice it is difficult to determine how far their content reaches and whether it has specific consequences for book sales. On top of that, the questionnaire they launched revealed that paid BookTokkers sometimes seem disingenuous to the audience. However, since the BookTok community is still relatively new, many publishing houses mention that they are still looking for ways to optimise their channels and interactions with BookTokkers.

### 5.3.2.3 Instagram Versus TikTok

When asked how publishing houses use Instagram differently from TikTok, most agree on the fact that Instagram is used informatively and TikTok comedically. As E's marketer puts it, "TikTok is for showing how entertaining books are and Instagram for showing how interesting they are".<sup>103</sup> While Instagram promotes a "filtered, picture-perfect view of reality, TikTok aesthetics are largely messy, chaotic, campy, and genuine" (Jerasa 220). As a consequence, "[t]he 'staging' of an 'Instagrammable' lifestyle that was aspirational and pristine, seem[s] to give way to the 'crafting' of a relatable performance that [is] entertaining and accessible' (Abidin qtd. in Reddan 8). However, there is some overlap between Instagram and TikTok in the form of Instagram's reels, which are almost the same format of short videos as TikToks. Some publishing houses even repost TikToks as reels.

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<sup>103</sup> "TikTok is wel meer om te laten zien hoe leuk het is, en Instagram om te laten zien hoe interessant het is."

Instagram is a good match with more serious information because of the possibility of combining static images or short videos with text (E). Short reviews can be posted under pictures, which allows for more in-depth content than snappy and fast TikToks about the same book (D). Instagram is also used more than TikTok to promote reading clubs, festivals or other events where the bookish community can meet. It also works better for campaigns, as it is easier to repost influencers' or authors' content than on TikTok (C) and it is used more often to access the publisher's websites (A and F).

On TikTok, entertainment is emphasised by most publishing houses. B mentions that “we want to become funnier [on TikTok], as we are quite serious on Instagram ... although we have many books that are excellent for entertaining content, which suits TikTok really well”.<sup>104</sup> D uses TikTok exactly in this way, trying to make fun and inspiring videos that hopefully guide the audience to their online store and steer conversion, as sometimes, “one TikTok goes really hard and you see that the sales come from this post”.<sup>105</sup> C observes that “TikTok works with nice music. When you use funny, popular English songs, you get more likes”.<sup>106</sup> This last comment shows how Dutch publishing houses are sometimes forced to promote English-language content to appeal more to the public. F is the only publishing house that reports using TikTok more informatively than their Instagram, although with this they refer to the fact that they do not make funny videos, but rather show their books. However, they do so by using popular trends, so the videos are still as entertaining as the ones made by the rest of the publishing houses.

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<sup>104</sup> “En we willen ook wel wat lossier, wat grappiger worden [op TikTok], want we zijn best wel ernstig op Instagram ... maar we hebben best wel boeken die zich ook lenen om wat lossere content bij te maken, en daar is dan bij uitstek TikTok wel heel geschikt voor.”

<sup>105</sup> “Soms gaat er eentje [een TikTok] opeens heel hard en zie je dat die omzet echt vanuit een bepaalde post komt.”

<sup>106</sup> “TikTok is echt met leuke muziek, ik merk dat als je een grappig, populair nummer in het Engels doet, veel meer likes krijgt.”

In this chapter, I have discussed the marketing strategies mentioned by the interviewed publishing houses to stimulate the sales of Dutch translations of YAL. These strategies are based both on the physical book and the reader community, using the notions of branding, grabability and shared reading experiences as marketing tools to stimulate the sales of the translations. In the conclusion, I sum up the general findings of the thesis and offer ideas for further research.

## Chapter 6: Conclusion

English-language publications are increasingly taking over the book market in the Netherlands. As discussed in section 1.1, Dutch readers younger than thirty-five often prefer to read in English. This demographic includes the target audience for YAL, the focus of this thesis. The concept of YAL as used in this study has two dimensions. Firstly, it functions as an age border that separates children's books from titles for older audiences, starting with young adults. Secondly, it acts as a brand, as YAL is often associated with bestselling authors such as John Green and Suzanne Collins. Originating in the USA, the YAL label started to appear in the Netherlands in 2009, and it has been growing since due to the work of Dutch publishing houses, authors and translators. In addition to competing with translations, locally produced YAL also has to compete with the original English YAL titles, which, as mentioned, are popular with audiences in this age group. To prevent English-language books from completely taking over the market, and, most importantly, to promote their own titles, Dutch publishing houses need to invest in specific marketing strategies to attract the YAL audience to buy books in Dutch.

This thesis has shed light on some of the most important marketing strategies used by Dutch publishers of translated YAL in 2022. The information has been extracted from interviews with six different publishing houses that focus on YAL. These publishing houses either publish only YAL or have a department devoted to it, although often shared with children's literature. One of the interviewed publishing houses does not specialise in YAL as such but is included in my analysis of the field because it is a pioneer in marketing strategies in this area. The interviews, with publishers, editors and marketers, were carried out in 2022. They were designed to be semi-structured to allow conversations to be dynamic and focus on the specific strategies of each publishing house, as they do not all have the same objectives.

The interviews provided valuable information on the ways in which the Dutch publishing industry works, as answers both converged and differed from one company to another. After transcribing the interviews, the data was analysed thematically through the lens of a set of theoretical constructs that highlight the complex relationships between the YAL label, paratext, branding and communities in an increasingly globalised publishing context, with literary cultures that are either central or peripheral.

In this thesis, a considerable amount of attention has been devoted to the contextualisation of YAL, both internationally and in the Netherlands, in chapters 1 and 3. This serves as background to understand what YAL exactly is and why publishing houses find it important to invest in it. Most publishers agree that YAL is a literature segment with publications that are suitable for readers aged fifteen and older. The YAL tag is useful for several reasons. Firstly, it attracts money, as it is often associated with bestselling authors or titles, such as *The Hunger Games* or *The Fault in Our Stars*. Secondly, it gives the youth a place in bookstores and libraries, turning it into an age group that is taken seriously. This has been confirmed in recent years with the appearance of YAL awards and festivals. Thirdly, YAL is especially important for readers in their teenage years. The characters and situations in these stories are mirrors for teenagers, and thus YAL books can be seen as tools to help readers give meaning to the world in which they grow up. Moreover, studies have shown that reading can help in developing empathy and understanding for others, as referred to in section 1.2.1. This is reflected in the importance that is in this day and age assigned to themes such as inclusion and diversity, with abundant YAL stories about LGBTQ+ or POC characters. Although this is a positive development, it can also be analysed as a marketing strategy employed by publishing houses. By associating themselves with inclusion in a time when traditional views on what society should look like are changing, publishing houses can be considered to use diverse publishing as a branding strategy. Thus, publishing houses choose

to invest in releasing stories with diverse casts of characters knowing that this will sell, as well as being perceived by many as morally correct, perpetuating the feeling that both company and consumer agree with this idea. At the same time, however, the publishing industry is still widely dominated by white middle-class workers, although many companies are implementing policies to make the workspace more diverse.

Publishing houses in the Netherlands have distinct ways of implementing diversity in their titles, although all of them agree that it is important to be inclusive: from revising reprints to include a more diverse cast of characters, to actively seeking out new titles aligned with the values of diversity and inclusivity. Some publishing houses also extend this diversity to trying to find translators that are not white or including sensitivity readers for fact-checking. Some publishers, however, also feel somewhat coerced to emphasise diversity. Even if many of their titles were already inclusive, these days it has to be flagged very overtly. The use of sensitivity readers is also sometimes seen in this light: it is prompted by concerns about the press scrutinising texts and mistakes potentially affecting a publishing house's image or branding.

Almost all publishing houses envision a successful future for YAL in the Netherlands. It is now growing exponentially, and although they all acknowledge that there will be stagnation at some point, they believe that it will continue to exist. Publishing houses are also positive about continuing to sell books in Dutch, even if they will need to continue innovating to attract readers to Dutch editions. English is a central literary culture that exports much of its production to other countries, while Dutch is considered to be peripheral. An example of this can be seen in the fact that while the Netherlands has been producing successful YAL crime fiction for around ten years, it has only started to become a trend in the rest of the world now the USA has started doing it as well. Because of the central position of English-language literary culture, many readers in the target audience for Dutch publishing houses of YAL also

follow English-language publishing houses and authors. It is thus often profitable for Dutch publishers to rely on the already acquired cultural capital of foreign bestsellers and to invest in translations instead of Dutch originals.

As a consequence of the central status of the English literary culture, English books are widely accessible to Dutch readers. They often arrive at bookstores quicker than their Dutch counterparts, which are held back by translation processes, and are often cheaper, as they are not subject to the *Wet op de vaste boekenprijs*. Furthermore, the English proficiency of young Dutch readers is on the rise, the consequence of both educational practices in schools and exposure to English-language media. It has been argued that the Dutch educational system may harm teenagers' desire to read in Dutch as a result of the emphasis on the *leeslijst*, which mostly includes books that are directed at an older audience. Reading in English is seen by many as cool and as a way to relax, as it is associated with media like Netflix, while Dutch is stigmatised as a boring language.

This thesis investigates the marketing strategies used by Dutch publishing houses for promoting translations of Anglophone YAL against the background of this challenging context. Genette's concept of the paratext is used to analyse the specific marketing strategies. Although Genette's definition of the paratext is challenged by developments in digital publishing, in the thesis I extend the definition to include digital paratextual environments, as I consider that social media greatly affects the meaning of a text. Within the paratext, marketing strategies both affect the epitext and peritext of texts. These marketing strategies can be divided into product-based and community-based strategies; the former focus on the physical book, whereas the latter rely on reading communities.

The most important product-based marketing strategy used by publishing houses is the production of limited editions, affecting the book's peritext. Limited editions also exist in

English-speaking countries, although there they are made in collaboration with book chains, while in the Netherlands they are created by publishing houses to attract the target audience. A useful concept for the analysis of limited editions is grabability, the attraction power that makes a reader reach out to a book on the shelf. Although initially coined to describe covers, the concept can be applied to the overall design of the book. The creative use of elements such as an engraved cover, illustrated flyleaves and endpapers, and a letter of the author, is so appealing to readers that they are often happy to wait for the translation of an English-language bestseller in return for a limited edition. Especially E profits from branding, as they have been producing limited editions since 2020 and have assembled a loyal public around them. The readers' previous knowledge of the quality of other limited editions serves as a guarantee for further productions and acts as branding for E. These editions are popular on social media and profit from the target audience's desire to collect beautiful items. Considering strategies that affect the epitext, publishing houses strategically use NURs to make sure that titles reach all of the possible audiences. In addition, publishing houses invest in SEO and advertising campaigns, experiment with book prices, try to reach parents through the press and newsletters, organise pre-order campaigns, send books out for review and create material to promote their titles in bookstores.

Publishing houses also invest in community-based marketing, both online and offline, which influences a book's epitext. Publishing houses try to transform their consumers into members of communities, where readers can share their love for books while receiving information about releases and meeting creators. Members of these communities can meet at literary events such as literary festivals, where different publishing houses work together focusing on a market-led approach: the goal is not to sell specific titles but rather to strengthen the community and their love for YAL. Publishing houses contribute by offering authors to give lectures, be interviewed or sign books and by including promotional elements

in goodie bags. However, not all publishing houses are positive about these festivals, as they are often expensive. Some publishing houses do see the benefit of being exactly in the direct presence of the target audience. Publishing houses also create their own events, focusing on a certain genre or author. These occasions serve to bind the reader to the publishing house, reinforcing the positive connotations readers have with the brand. This is also the case with online communities, where publishing houses try to seem approachable to the public and maintain good contact with the audience, also called relationship marketing. Social media is especially important for reaching young people, and its effects can be seen in the impact that TikTok has had on book sales.

The relevance of different social media channels is constantly shifting. In 2022, the main channels that are used by Dutch marketers of YAL are Instagram and TikTok. While Instagram is used more informatively, TikTok is used more for recreation, wanting to reinforce the idea of approachability. Both channels are spaces for online reading encounters, although mostly Instagram is also used to promote offline events. Users of social media (both readers and publishing houses) profit from a symbiotic relationship. Communities provide plenty of information for publishing houses, both in terms of data and input. The YAL audience is very reactive and eager to give their opinion, which is subsequently often used by publishing houses. This happens both unconsciously, through comments that are interpreted by marketers, and consciously, as when a specific question is asked to the audience. At the same time, when information shared by consumers is indeed used, readers feel appreciated and seen, something that is especially important in their teenage years, and their affection for the brand increases. Moreover, the close connection between the publishing house and the public allows the former to ask for favours, especially useful in the case of translations. On both Instagram and TikTok, publishing houses also work with influencers. Influencers do not usually receive monetary compensation but are compensated by receiving books for free,

having close connections to the publishing house, and occasionally meeting authors. As these influencers are also part of the community, they have a high degree of credibility for the rest of the readers, reinforcing the audience's trust in the publishing houses' brands.

YAL is an important segment in literature: besides validating young adults as a group that deserves attention, it also reminds its readers that they are never alone. Dutch publishing houses are actively searching for ways to continue translating and selling the books their audience wants to read, and, for now, it seems to be working. The two main strategies for this are producing limited editions, leveraging grabability and the collector's urge of the audience, and investing in close relationships with readers through (online) communities. The relationships in these communities are symbiotic, as all participants profit from the exchanges. In both strategies, branding plays an important role. Despite the current success of these strategies, marketers will have to continue innovating to keep the production of translations profitable in face of the menace of English-language titles taking over the Dutch YAL market.

Although this thesis contributes to filling a gap in the study of the Dutch publishing field, there is much that remains unexplored. As mentioned in section 1.3, there is almost no research on YAL in the Netherlands or Dutch book marketing strategies in general. A comparative study on marketing strategies for selling translations from English in different countries would be interesting. Further research could also include considering whether the strategies that have been flagged in this thesis are helpful for selling translated adult or children's publications as well, or whether the effects of English-language counterparts are less of a threat in these age categories. A topic that was raised in the interviews is how to attract more men into the YAL world, including people working at publishing houses and translators. One of the possible limitations of this research is indeed the lack of diversity of the respondents, as they are all (white) women; thus a study of the reasons for the lack of

diversity in the Dutch field might be useful to combat it. Another limitation is that not all of the big publishing houses that I reached out to were able to be interviewed, which would give a more complete insight into the marketing strategies for selling Dutch-language YAL in the Netherlands. Similarly, an in-depth study of locally produced YAL and its marketing would be useful to contrast with the results of my research. Building upon the findings of my research, it would also be interesting to examine these marketing strategies from the consumer's perspective.

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## Appendix: List of Questions

### YAL in Nederland

- Wat beschouwt jullie uitgeverij als Young Adult Literatuur? (voor welke leeftijds categorie/ doelgroep, wat voor boeken, etc.)
- Wanneer is jullie uitgeverij begonnen met het publiceren van YAL?
- Waarom publiceren jullie YAL? Wat zijn belangrijke aspecten van YAL voor tieners?
- Focust jullie uitgeverij ook op de productie van nationale YAL? Waarom wel/niet?
- Denken jullie dat Engelstalige YAL een steeds groter aandeel van de Nederlandse markt aan het innemen is ten koste van vertaalde en Nederlandse YAL? Denken jullie dat dit meer of juist minder wordt in de komende jaren?
- Hoe groot is het verkoopsegment van YAL voor jullie uitgeverij? Hoe interessant is het publiceren van vertaalde YAL voor jullie in financiële termen? Wat is voor jullie rendabeler: Nederlandse YAL produceren of het publiceren van vertaalde YAL?
- Uit welke landen wordt jullie YAL geacquireerd? Hebben jullie er ooit over nagedacht om jullie acquisitie uit te breiden naar andere landen?

### Marketing Strategieën

- Welke strategieën gebruikt jullie uitgeverij om de verkoop van Nederlandse vertalingen te stimuleren?
- Publiceren jullie ook *limited edition* vertalingen? Waarom? (Hebben jullie gemerkt dat dit goed werkt, kopen lezers ze als ze de Engelse versie al (gelezen) hebben?)
- Maken jullie actief gebruik van sociale media om in contact te komen (en blijven) met Nederlandse YAL-consumenten? Wat voor sociale media gebruiken jullie? Welke strategieën gebruiken jullie op deze kanalen om de verkoop van vertalingen te stimuleren?

- Hebben jullie ooit specifiek geprobeerd om aandacht te vragen voor het kopen van nationale en vertaalde YAL (in plaats van in het Engels)? Hoe hebben jullie dit gedaan?
- Neemt jullie uitgeverij deel aan literaire evenementen zoals literaire festivals? Met welk doel? Hoe zorg je ervoor dat de Nederlandse lezer na het festival alsnog de Nederlandse editie koopt?
- Wanneer zijn jullie begonnen met het gebruiken van deze strategieën? Of hebben jullie deze altijd al gebruikt voor YAL? Heeft een ander land als inspiratie gediend voor deze?
- Zouden jullie zeggen dat een van deze strategieën alleen of vooral in Nederland wordt gebruikt?

#### De toekomst van YAL

- Diversiteit is een belangrijk thema binnen de YAL. Neemt jullie uitgeverij specifieke maatregelen om ervoor te zorgen dat jullie diverse YAL boeken uitgeven? Vertaalt dit zich ook tot de vertalerslijst?
- Is er in de afgelopen jaren iets veranderd aan jullie vertalerslijst? Hoe zit deze verandering eruit? (diversiteit, nationaliteit, leeftijd, etc.)
- Hoe zien jullie de toekomst van YAL in Nederland? Denken jullie dat de consumptie van YAL in het Nederlands gaat afnemen?