

## How to Influence the Publishing World

Overview:

Couple issues came up in initially discussing the topic.

- 1) Big difference between how publishers in the US/UK markets need to be influenced (increase number of translations published) and Europe/World markets (increase number of translations from “smaller” languages, pay translators more). Recommendations are attempts to address both issues, but some are very English-market specific.
- 2) In addition to trying to increase the number of translations published, the other way that we’d like to influence the publishing world is to make publishers “better publishers.” To increase the sales levels of works in translations is equally—or even more—important to increasing the number of books published in translation. Possible that increasing the readership/demand for these works will in turn be an effective incentive to publishers to increase the number of translations they publish.
- 3) As a group we were also very concerned with sustainability, and the desire to identify best practices that would help increase the production and promotion of international literature well into the future. This is in contrast to the idea of simply saying that we can influence publishers by finding enough funding to support every translation at a level that will guarantee the publisher not lose money. (Include Boyd’s point that publishers—especially with blogs—need to take a long-term view to cultivating an audience for these sort of books, and generate communities (eg. around a particular list, eg. crime fans) rather than simply using the web as a place to make hard sales pitches.)

Recommendations are broken down into three main issues: information to publishers, funding and financial issues, audience development. Some recommendations cross over, but as a starting point, we looked to address these three issues.

- Network of well-funded translation centers around the world that will train translators, frequently in an academic setting;
- Funding for marketing given to publishers. Could be a certain amount of money for a specific work, could be a grant to market a series of titles;
- All publisher contracts should include royalty for translators so that translators can share the wealth if a book takes off (there are model contracts from certain translation agencies – should there be an ‘agreed international standard’ in some elements of them?);
- Increase exchange programs and editorial trips and share information about successes that resulted from these trips (e.g., *Omega Minor*);
- Funding agencies (esp. cultural centers like NORLA or the French Cultural Services) initiate projects that work directly with readers. These funding schemes wouldn’t

involve a specific publishers, but could be something involving cultivating reading groups, supporting festivals, library-wide projects, etc.;

- Publishers need to be more focused on early adopters, which could include booksellers, specific bloggers, other readers (e.g., LibraryThing Early Reviewers);
- Emphasis—both with publishers and funders—to promote backlist classics. Frequently these are translations, and frequently these are perfect book club books;
- Empowering translators to have the knowledge and tools to assist in promoting the books they translate. This can range from providing information about how to go about marketing a book, to making suggestions about how to arrange a reading, how to get in touch with specific communities, etc. Idea isn't that translators *must* help publicize a book, but after putting their heart and time into a book, translations should be able to participate in the marketing process if they choose. Main point: Translators can be best advocates for a book from start to finish;
- In terms of information for publishers, here's a laundry list of what we would like to see (although we have no idea of how this could come about and be maintained): sample translations of a wide range of books, smart reviews of untranslated titles, recommendations from around the world from reliable readers, step-by-step guide of how to publish a translation if you never have before (from how to obtain rights, to how to get funding, to how to market, etc.), all funding sources for translations.
- Chairs of important prizes should send letters to select publishers recommending the book they just awarded a prize to. Prize chairs are more objective and trustworthy, and a special letter to eight U.S. publishers from the chair of the Goncourt would be more effective than relying upon the French publisher/agent.
- All major prizes should provide 25-page sample translations of the shortlist. Cost would be minimal, but odds of getting publishers (around the world) interested in these books would increase greatly.

Places to send these recommendations (can be expanded and made more specific): select publishers, publishing organizations (AAP and AAUP in the U.S.), some press outlets, funding agencies, international cultural agencies (like NORLA).