

# LITERARY TRANSLATION BETWEEN ITALIAN AND ENGLISH

## Publishing trends in Italy, the UK and the USA

MARIA ELISA FINA  
UNIVERSITY OF SALENTO

**Abstract** – This study aims to investigate publishing trends in literary translation from English into Italian in Italy and from Italian into English in the UK and the USA over the 2000-2008 time span. The data were retrieved from the *Index Translationum*, an international bibliography of translations managed by UNESCO, and were then stored in three Microsoft Access databases, one for each country. The databases were analysed according to specific criteria, in order to determine trends concerning the amount of translated literature in the three countries, the main publishing houses dealing with translated works, and the most translated genres and authors. This paper is meant to provide a mainly descriptive, but necessary basis for future investigation of socio-cultural as well as market-led processes underlying publishers' choices and gate-keeping in literary translation.

**Keywords:** literary translation market; Index Translationum; most translated authors; most translated genres.

### 1. Mapping literary translation: *Index Translationum*

The *Index Translationum* (from now on IT) is an international bibliography of translations managed by UNESCO. It consists of a huge database listing books translated in about one hundred of the UNESCO Member States since 1979. The database includes translated works from a number of disciplines and lists around 2 million entries.<sup>1</sup> Bibliographic search<sup>2</sup> allows users to search for information on translated works according to specific criteria, e.g. source language, target language, country, author, subject. It also contains a 'Statistics' section<sup>3</sup> providing specific rankings, such as Top 50 authors, countries, etc.

<sup>1</sup> [http://portal.unesco.org/culture/en/ev.php-URL\\_ID=7810&URL\\_DO=DO\\_TOPIC&URL\\_SECTION=201.html](http://portal.unesco.org/culture/en/ev.php-URL_ID=7810&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html)

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.unesco.org/xtrans/>

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.unesco.org/xtrans/bsstatlist.aspx?lg=0>

The database is regularly updated by the Index staff, and particularly useful is the ‘Last Updates’ section,<sup>4</sup> which indicates last updates for each country.

Over the past years a few reports investigating trends in literary translation in Europe have been published. Among these are the Diversity Reports (Kovač et al. 2009; Kovač et al. 2010; Wischenbart et al. 2008). The Diversity Report 2008 provides figures on books in translation across Europe from 1979 to 2005 and in some aspects until 2008 by analysing data retrieved from both IT and separate national book market statistics. The Diversity Report 2009 analyses seven key European book markets in order to map individual fiction authors, and investigates whether and how they move across languages. The Diversity Report 2010 investigates how a representative sample of contemporary authors of fiction shape cultural identity across fifteen European markets.

There are also two reports produced by Literature Across Frontiers,<sup>5</sup> one of which (Budapest Observatory 2010) is entirely based on IT data<sup>6</sup> and investigates translation flows in Europe from 1995 to 2005, while the other (Donahaye 2012) examines information about literary translation in the UK and Ireland, the way it is collected, and gaps existing in data provision.

Particularly relevant to this study is the first of these two reports, primarily because it addresses issues related to the reliability of IT (Budapest Observatory 2010, p. 4), and secondly because it shows and discusses the dominance of English as a source language (Budapest Observatory 2010, p. 5). Obviously, the data provided by IT do not perfectly correspond to reality, and this is due mainly to slow or irregular submissions by national libraries. Furthermore, inconsistencies have been detected when its data are compared to those from other sources. However, these concern mostly individual numbers, while trends are fairly representative (Wischenbart *et al.* 2008, p. 3). Despite its likely inaccuracies, IT is still considered to be so far “the best available source for establishing major translation trends, especially in Europe, which is the most diligent data provider among world regions” (Budapest Observatory 2010, p. 4).

## 2. Three case studies: Italy, the UK and the USA

We will now carry out an analysis of the main trends in literary translation from English into Italian in Italy, and from Italian into English in the UK and in the USA since 2000.

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.unesco.org/xtrans/bscontrib.aspx>

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.lit-across-frontiers.org/about/>

<sup>6</sup> A list of independent articles based on the data provided by IT is available in the ‘Document Section’: [http://portal.unesco.org/culture/en/ev.php-URL\\_ID=22194&URL\\_DO=DO\\_TOPIC&URL\\_SECTION=201.html](http://portal.unesco.org/culture/en/ev.php-URL_ID=22194&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html)

The bibliographical data for each of the three countries were retrieved from IT through the ‘search database’ tool and were then stored in Microsoft Access 2007 databases. For practical issues, from now on we will refer to ‘Italian’, ‘British’ and ‘American’ databases.

Before proceeding with the analysis of the data, a few remarks are necessary. First of all, bibliographical references provided by IT are sometimes incomplete. More specifically, in a few cases the name of the author is not mentioned. However, this is limited to books for children written by little known writers, as well as to collections of works written by a number of authors and for which only the names of the editors are provided by IT. Omissions sometimes concern also original titles, but these were retrieved from the Web and, wherever possible, added in the databases. Finally, for all the three databases the selected subject category is ‘Literature’ which includes both fiction and non-fiction works.

As pointed out in the LAF report 2010 (Budapest Observatory 2010), the heading ‘Literature’ includes a variety of genres. The genre or subgenre to which each book belongs is not specified in IT. However, considering that this information is particularly helpful in determining specific trends, the specific genre for each book was retrieved from the book profile found on the publishing house website and added in the database.

Finally, for a better understanding of the generic trends, for all the three countries the flow of translated literature has been looked at including also the 1990s, while specific trends have been investigated in reference to the more recent 2000-2008 time span.

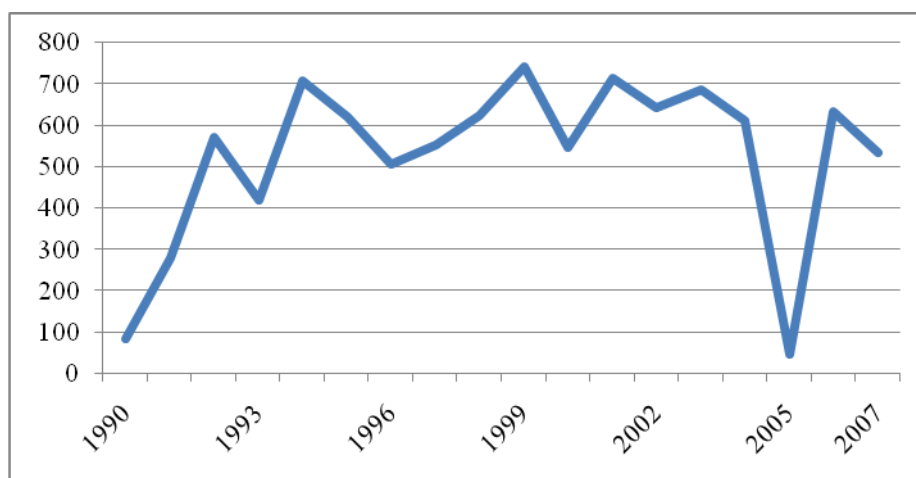
The three databases were analysed according to specific criteria, in order to shed light on the following aspects: number of translated titles per year, main publishing houses dealing with translated works, most translated genres and their distribution among the various publishing houses over the time span, the most translated authors and genres.

Due to the reliability issues discussed above, the figures provided might not be 100% precise, especially if we consider that IT very rarely provides information about reprints and new editions. However, we believe that the figures listed in this paper can help outline an overview of the recent situation in the three countries, and this is the core aim of this paper.

## ***2.1. Literary translation from English into Italian in Italy***

The dominance of the English as a source language – which has been highly criticised by Venuti (1998) – has already been mentioned and concerns also Italy. According to the LAF report (Budapest Observatory 2010, p. 8), over the 1990-2005 time span the average share of the English language in translated literature in Italy accounted for almost 60%, followed by French (13%) and German (7%).

The first trend we are going to analyse is the yearly number of translations from 1990 to 2007.<sup>7</sup> For this time span IT lists 5,133 titles, which are distributed over the years as represented in Graph 1:

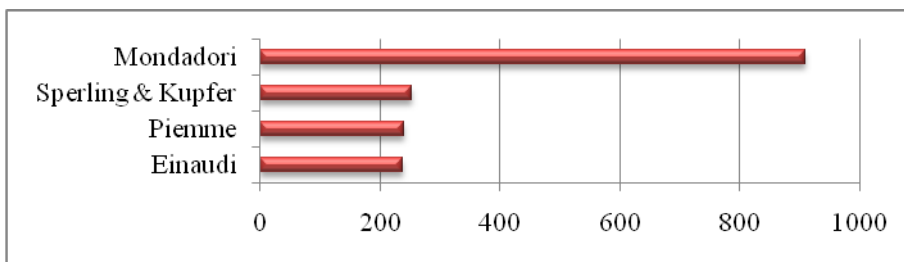


Graph 1.  
Production of translated literature from English in Italy.

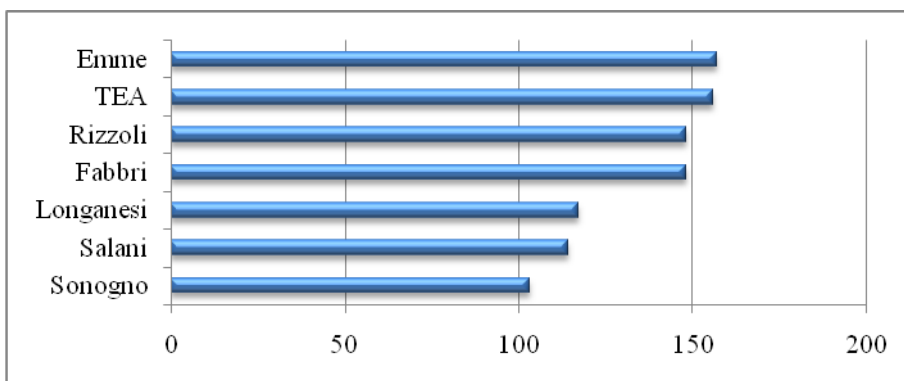
As can be seen, after a sharp increase between 1990 and 1992, the number of translated titles per year has fluctuated between 500 and over 700 titles, except for the year 2005, for which IT lists 47 translated titles only. We do not know whether this figure corresponds to reality or is due to incomplete submission of data to IT by the Italian National Library. The enquiries sent to the IT staff about this figure did not receive any reply, nor do available global reports help identify the reasons for such a low number of translations in 2005. However, the steady range of the fluctuation (between over 500 and 700 books) may indicate that the figure is probably due to incomplete submission of data to IT by the Italian national library rather than to a real dramatic decrease, and we may assume that the real number in 2005 would still remain within the 500-700 range.

We will now look in detail at the recent trends. For the 2000-2007 time span IT lists 4,424 translated titles. The publishing houses that produced these translations are overall 275 and are represented in Graph 2, Graph 3, and Graph 4:

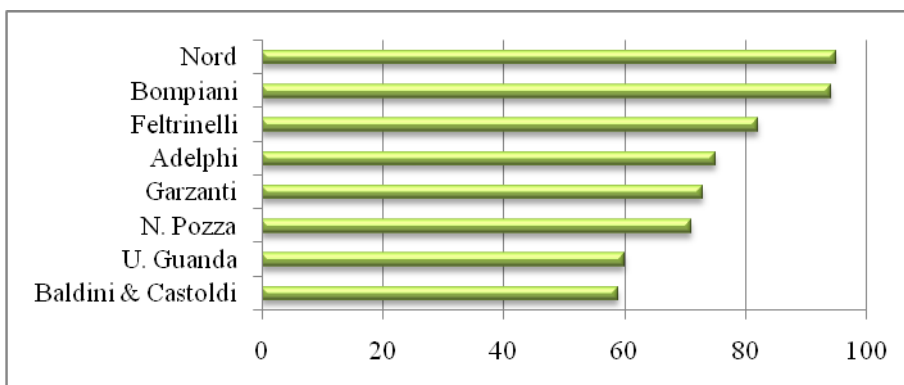
<sup>7</sup> The 'Last Updates' section (<http://www.unesco.org/xtrans/bscontrib.aspx>) shows that IT has received data until 2010 and that IT staff is currently processing data relating to years 2009 and 2010. No information on year 2008.



Graph 2.  
Publishing houses with over 200 translated titles.



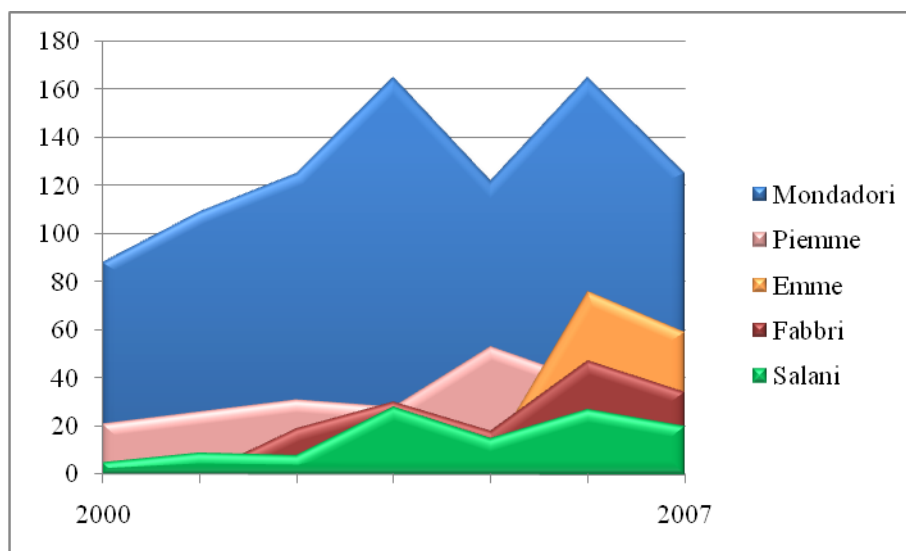
Graph 3.  
Publishing houses with 100 to 200 translated titles.



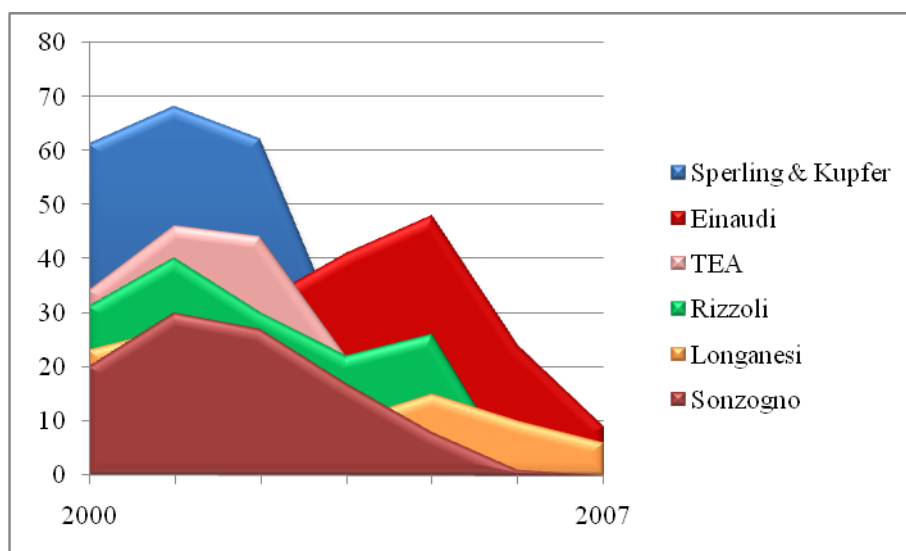
Graph 4.  
Publishing houses with 50 to 100 translated titles.

For space constraints, publishing houses with a number of translations below 50 are not represented.

Graphs 5 and 6 show the yearly flows of translated literature produced by the publishing houses with over 100 translated titles:<sup>8</sup>



Graph 5.  
Flow of translated literature: Italian publishers I.



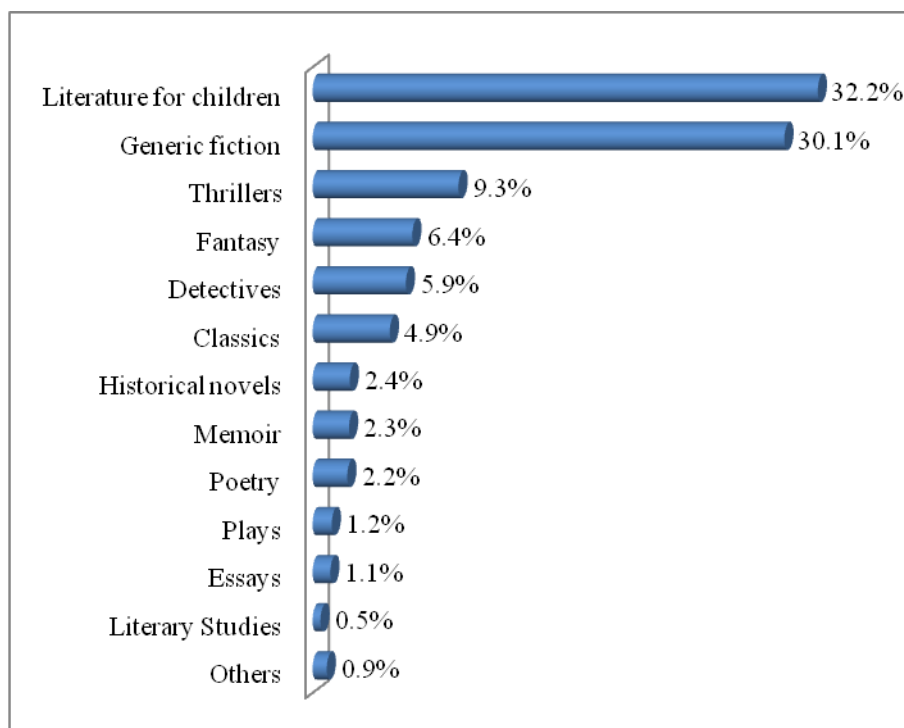
Graph 6.  
Flow of translated literature: Italian publishers II.

<sup>8</sup> The 'abnormal' year 2005 is not taken into account as it is highly probable that the very low number of translations displayed in the database is due to incomplete information. Even though this figure is missing, the graph still serves the purpose of this study, which is to look at the general trends to have an idea of the main publishing preferences in literature translated from English into Italian.

Graph 5 shows an overall increase in the translated literature produced by Piemme, Emme, Fabbri, and Salani. Graph 6 shows instead an overall decrease in the translated literature produced by Sperling & Kupfer, Einaudi, TEA, Rizzoli, Longanesi, and Sonzogno.

In order to understand the reasons underlying this pattern an investigation of genres was carried out.

The translated genres identified are fiction, non-fiction, and classics. Graph 7 shows the translated sub-genres involved:<sup>9</sup>

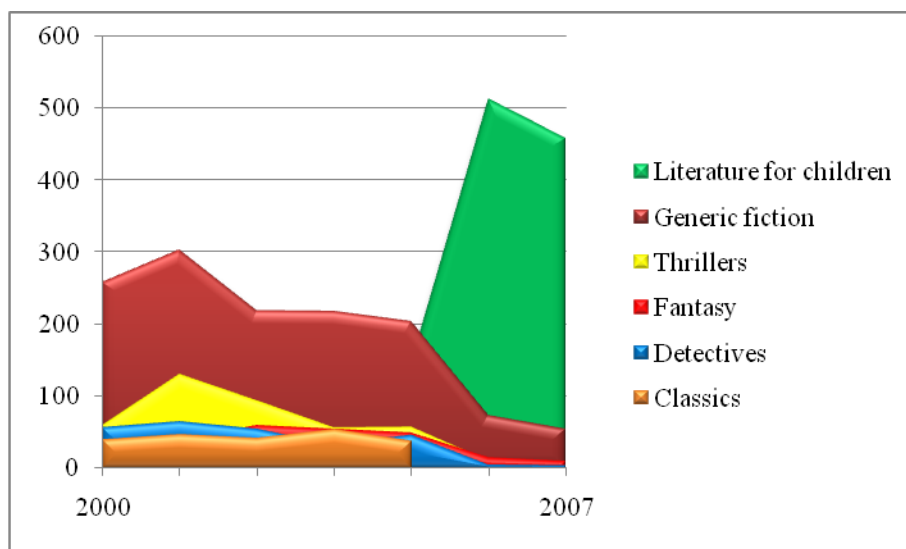


Graph 7.  
Translated genres in Italy.

The most translated sub-genres are literature for children and generic fiction with over 1,000 titles each, followed by thrillers, fantasy, detectives, and classics with numbers between 200 and 500 titles. As for non-fiction, the historical novel and memoir sub-genres exceed 100 titles by little. Sub-genres below 100 titles include poetry, plays, essays, and literary studies.

Translated sub-genres can be further investigated by looking at their trends over the time span. We will consider only the main ones, which are represented in Graph 8:

<sup>9</sup> Sub-genres of fiction include fantasy, detectives, thrillers, literature for children, and generic fiction. By 'generic fiction' we intend fiction-based novel writing not belonging to any of the above mentioned specific sub-genres. 'Literature for children' includes comic strips for kids, educational books, and fairy tales; 'fantasy' includes science fiction and gothic novels; 'detective' includes horror and noir. 'Memoir' and 'historical novel' are sub-genres of non-fiction, with 'memoir' including auto-, semi- and biographical works, and letters. 'Others' includes linguistics, philosophy, religion, manuals, etc.

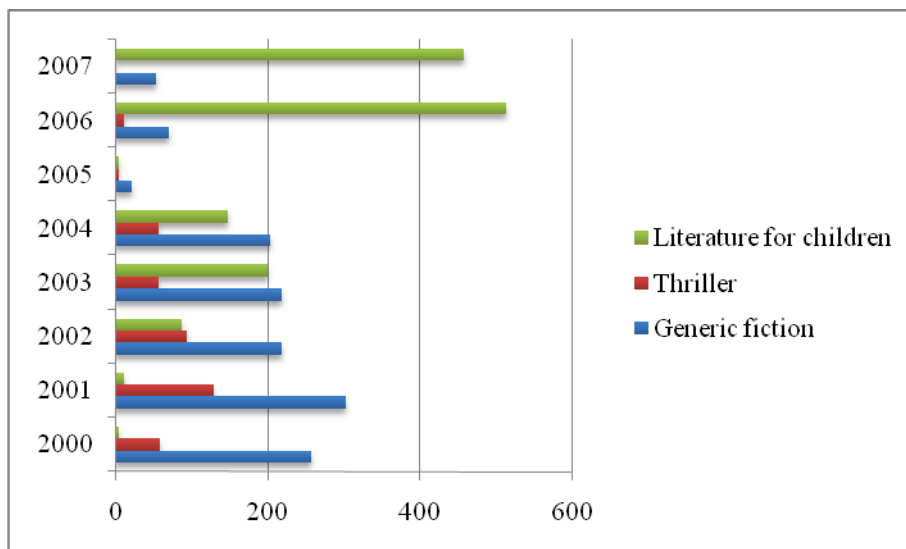


Graph 8.  
Trends of translated genres in Italy.

Interestingly, literature for children is the only subgenre experiencing a considerable growth. By contrast, the translation of all the other subgenres overall decreased. The trends of generic fiction and thriller are worth discussing. Translated fiction had a peak in 2001 and remained steady around 200 titles, but then decreased dramatically and in 2007 the number of translated titles was the one quarter of what it was in 2000. Translated thrillers had the highest number of titles in 2001, but then decreased considerably by more than 50% in 2003 and 2004, and was reduced to a few publications in the last year of the time span. Detective and fantasy subgenres have similar trends, with translations decreasing significantly in the last years. As for the other genres, the translation of classics stopped after 2004, that of plays in 2004, while the translation of poetry in 2006 and 2007 accounted for very few books.

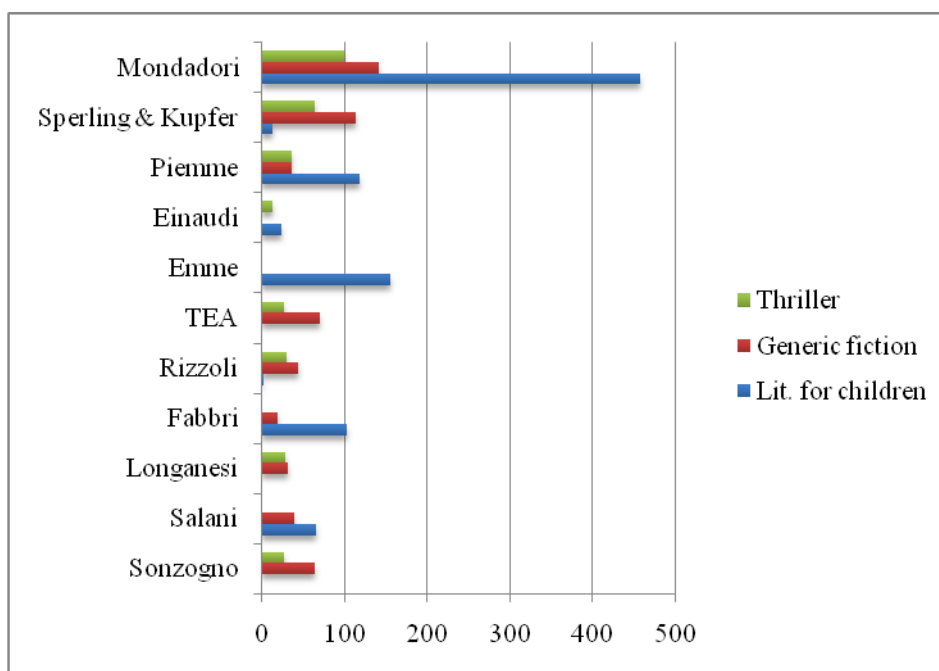
Clearly, over the years literature for children has gained ground in translation from English into Italian. This trend is more evident if we investigate what genres occupy the two top positions in each year (Graph 9). As can be noticed, from 2000 to 2002 generic fiction and thriller occupied the two top positions. In 2003 literature for children gained second position after fiction and maintained it until 2006, when it became the most translated genre. This might be an explanation to the fact that some publishing houses remained productive in 2006 and 2007, while others in the same years did not translate anything (see Graphs 5 and 6).





Graph 9.  
Most translated genres per year in Italy.

It would be now interesting to relate the top genres identified in Graph 9 to the publishing houses represented in Graphs 5 and 6 (Graph 10):

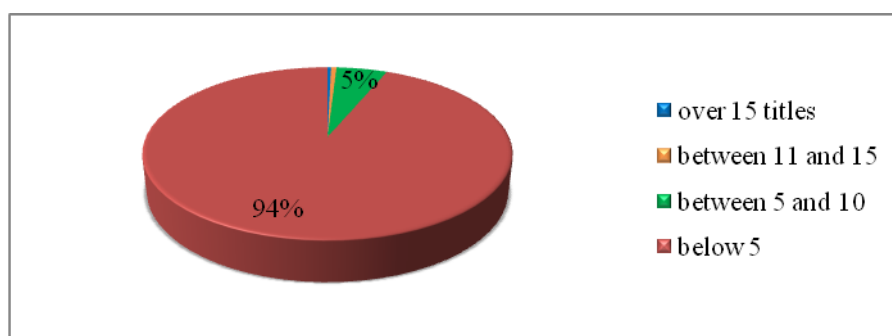


Graph 10.  
Italian publishers and their main translated genres.

As can be clearly seen, Mondadori, Piemme, Emme, Fabbri, Einaudi and Salani primarily translated literature for children. By contrast, Sperling & Kupfer, TEA, Rizzoli, Longanesi and Sonzogno translated mainly generic fiction and thrillers and have continued to do so over the years, without engaging themselves in the rising genre of literature for children.

Now that the most translated genres are identified, it would be interesting to see who the most translated authors are and the genres to which their translated works belong.

Before doing so, it must be said that for 102 titles it was not possible to identify the authors, while 36 titles consist of collections of works written by different authors, for which only the editors are mentioned in the IT database. Apart from these cases, the overall number of translated authors over the 2000-2007 time span is 2,292. Considering that the most translated author has 29 titles, authors were grouped into four sets according to the number of translated titles: over 15, between 11 and 15, between 5 and 10, below 5, as shown in Graph 11:



Graph 11.

Translated authors from English: level of diversification.

Due to space constraints, we will focus on authors with at least fifteen translated titles. According to this criterion eleven authors were identified: Robert L. Stine (29), Jan & Stan Berenstain (22), Stephen King (22), William Shakespeare (21), Charles Dickens (19), Cris Morrel and Gill Pittar (16), James Gelsey (16), Robert Louis Stevenson, Emma Thomson (16), Ann M. Martin (15), Daisy Meadows<sup>10</sup> (15). As can be clearly seen from the chart, the general strategy is towards a diversification of authors: translation is not restricted to complete series of works by the most popular authors, but also to a large variety of minor authors. And this explains why the most translated authors listed above account for only 7.9% of the total production of translated literature over the time span.

Unsurprisingly, the leading genre is literature for children with authors such as Stine, Berenstain, Morrel and Pittar, Gelsey, Thomson, Martin and Meadows, followed by the classics with Shakespeare, Dickens, and Stevenson. As for fantasy (dark fantasy and science fiction included), thrillers and horrors, King is the most translated author. It is not by chance that, according to the IT statistics, Stephen King is the ninth most translated author in the global Top 50,<sup>11</sup> and the eighth in the Top 10 authors translated in Italy

<sup>10</sup> This is a pseudonym used for a group of writers.

<sup>11</sup> <http://www.unesco.org/xtrans/bsstatexp.aspx?crit1L=5&nTyp=min&topN=50>

since 1979.<sup>12</sup> His translated works are mostly horror (9) and dark fantasy stories (7), but also include science fiction (2), gothic novel (1), and two essays.

Stine, Thomson and Meadows were published only by Mondadori; Gelsey and Bereinstain by Piemme; Thomson by Emme; and Morrel and Pittar by EDT. As for King, almost all his works were translated by Sperling and Kupfer, while the remaining works were published by Bompiani (2), Frassinelli (1) and Mondadori (1). The strategy changes when considering new translations of the classics: for example, Shakespeare, Dickens and Stevenson were published by a number of publishing houses, such as Mondadori, Garzanti, Einaudi, Feltrinelli. It is worth noticing that, despite the rise of 'lighter' genres, classics still survive thanks to retranslations. If, unlike classics, translations do age (Berman 1990), then the aim of retranslations is to bring new elements in the target system (Toury 1999, in Sangiorgi this volume) and to revitalise the classics for contemporary audiences intervening on both language and style (see Bacigalupo; Sangiorgi; Scarpa this volume). Other most translated authors are: Lucy Cousins for children's literature (14), Mark Twain (13) and Joseph Conrad (12) for the classics, Ellis Peters (11), Elizabeth George (11) and Micheal Connelly (10) for detectives, John Le Carré (13) for thrillers.

These data allow us to draw hypothesis on the preferred strategy of the Italian translation market: gate-keeping here seems to be genre-led rather than author-led. In fact, Italian most important publishing houses seem to make choices in relation to specific, emerging genres, and to focus on leading authors within those genres. Therefore, while popular, best seller authors like King are obviously translated, minor or little known authors are still given voice in Italy as long as they fall within preferred genres. And speaking of genres, the trends suggest, as expected, that Italy imports a variety of subgenres, in particular literature for children and fantasy books.

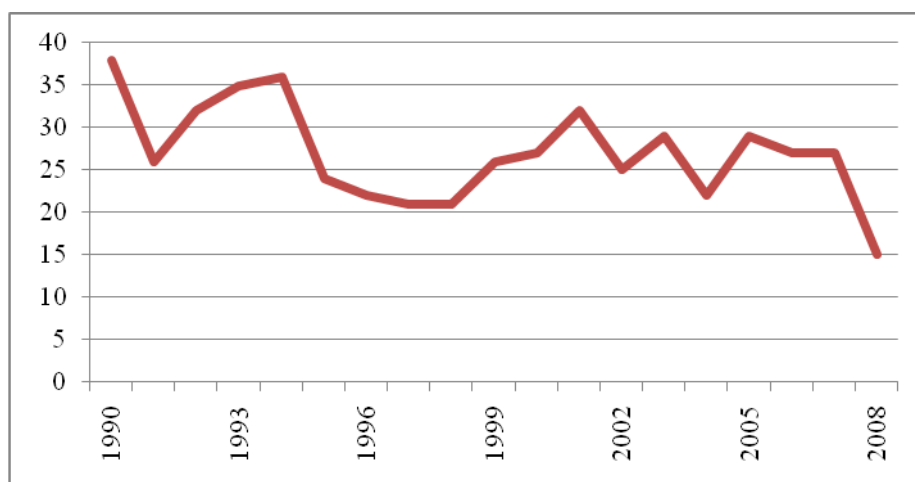
The spread of these subgenres might be related to ISTAT statistics, which report an increase in Italian young readership aged 6 to 14, from 47.4% in 2000 to 52.9% in 2006 (Morrone 2008, in Rotisciani 2010, p. 209). More specifically, readership aged 11 to 14 has increased from 53.3% to 59.8% (Morrone 2008, p. 47). This trend could have encouraged publishing houses to undertake the translation of literature for children. The interest in translating literature for children/fantasy is due not only to the popularity of books in the original language and country (e.g. *Harry Potter*), but also to screen adaptations of literary works which decades ago were very popular, e.g. *Le Cronache di Narnia (The Chronicles of Narnia)* and *Il Signore degli Anelli (The Lord of the Rings)* (Rotisciani 2011, p. 275). The success of the fantasy genre in Italy has been widely investigated. Even though fantasy

<sup>12</sup> <http://www.unesco.org/xtrans/bsstatexp.aspx>

books have been criticised in terms of both plots and style, often marked as trivial, (Ciccarone 2007; Citati 2012; Detti 2007), they embed features able to produce effects exactly when the reader wants to experience them (Eco 1964, in Rotisciani 2010, p. 213). However, as Rotisciani suggests (2011, p. 278) the popularity of this genre should be investigated looking at the interrelation between its evolution on the one hand, and the cultural-historical processes on the other. This raises further issues worthy of investigation, such as, for example, the way imported genres are received by the Italian audience, along with the socio-cultural reasons underlying specific preferences over others.

## 2.2. *Literary translation from Italian into English in the UK*

Data on IT for translated works from Italian into English in the UK since 2000 are available up to 2008.<sup>13</sup> For this time span 233 translated titles are listed, and are distributed over the years as follows (Graph 12):



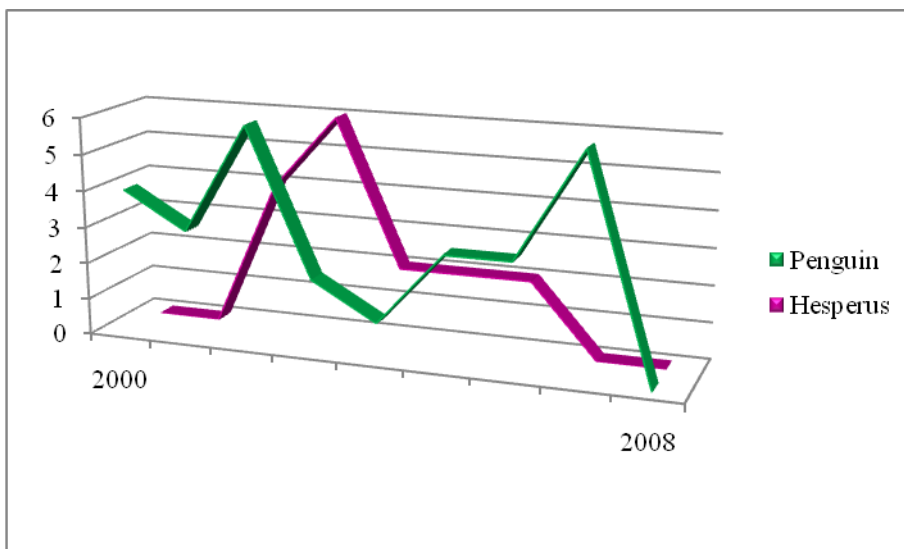
Graph 12.

Yearly number of translated books from Italian in the UK.

As can be seen, the flow of translations has overall decreased since the 1990. After a marked fluctuation in the 1990s, it has remained more or less stable around 30 titles per year until 2008, when it almost halved.

The publishing houses involved are 81. The most productive is Penguin with 28 titles overall, followed by Hesperus with 16 titles. Canogate, Scholastic, Vintage, Picador and Macmillan have 10 translated titles each, while Troubador and Harvill 7, Granta and Pan 6, Secker & Warbung 5. As we are dealing with low numbers, we will look only at the annual production of Penguin and Hesperus (Graph 13):

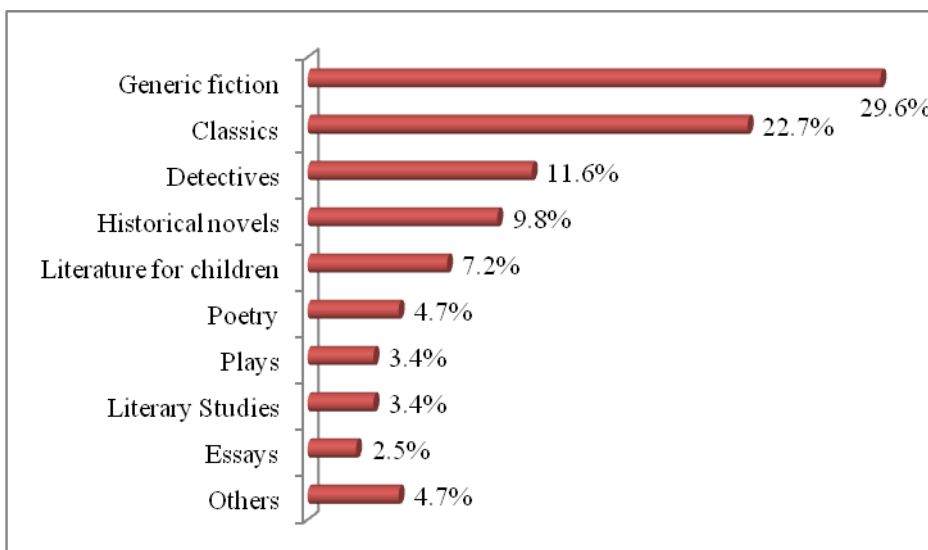
<sup>13</sup> The 'Last Updates' section (<http://www.unesco.org/xtrans/bscontrib.aspx?lg=0>) shows that IT has received data until 2012 and that IT staff is currently processing data relating to years 2009, 2010, 2011, and 2012.



Graph 13.  
Flow of translated literature: Penguin and Hesperus.

Penguin’s production of translated literature overall fluctuated, with peaks in 2002 and 2007. Hesperus started to produce translations only in 2002<sup>14</sup> and then stopped after 2006.

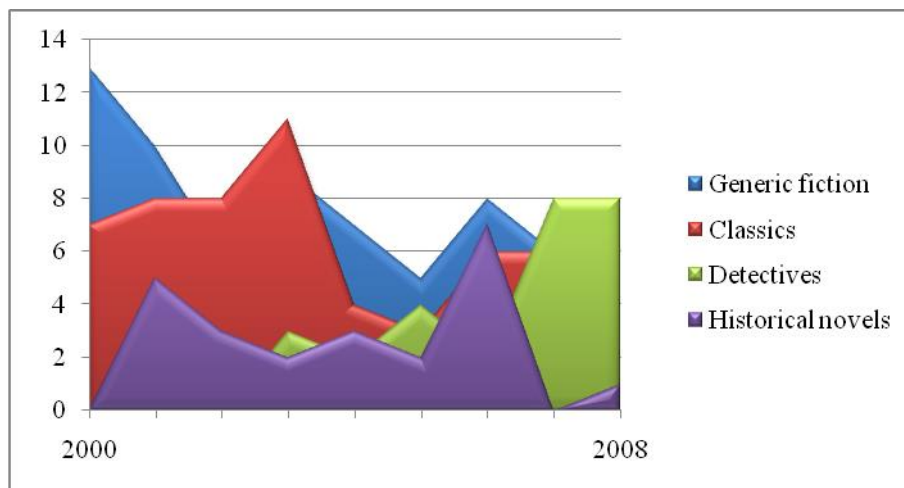
As in the previous section, an investigation of the most translated genres is necessary. The genres and subgenres identified are represented in Graph 14:



Graph 14.  
Translated genres in the UK.

<sup>14</sup> Previous research on the IT website shows that Hesperus has not produced translated works over the 1990s.

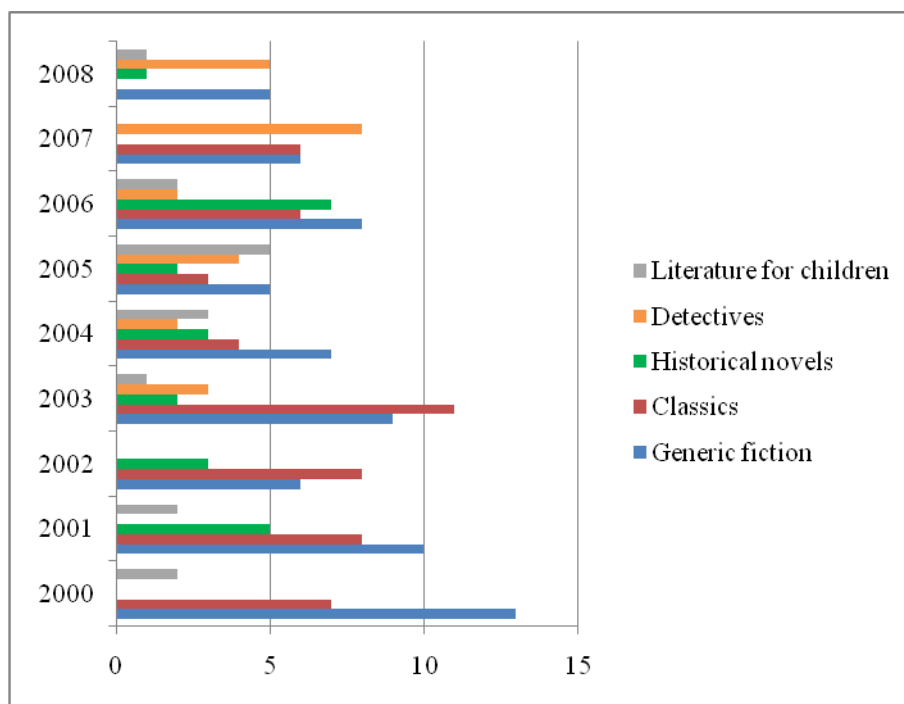
The most translated genres are generic fiction and classic, with over 50 titles each, followed by detective and historical novels. Literature for children has 14 titles only, while the remaining ones have all numbers below 10. Graph 15 shows the distribution of the four main genres over the time span:



Graph 15.  
Trends of translated genres in the UK.

The graph clearly shows a significant reduction of translated fiction to more than half since 2000. The translation of classics peaked in 2003, then it decreased significantly until it stopped in 2007. The detective subgenre has an opposite trend: it was not translated between 2000 and 2002, but then fluctuated around two-four translations and then it went up to eight books in 2007 and 2008. The historical novel as a translated genre fluctuated over the years and peaked in 2007.

To conclude this genre section, we can now see what genres had the two top positions in each year (Graph 16). In 2000 and 2001, the most translated genre was generic fiction, followed by the classic. However, the classic moved up to top position in 2002, but two years later generic fiction re-gained its top position. In 2005 it lost its second position in favour of literature for children and, in 2006, in favour of historical novel. The trend changed completely in 2007: the detective subgenre was in top position, followed by generic fiction and the classic. However, in 2008 only the detective and generic fiction remained in top position.



Graph 16.  
Most translated genres per year in the UK.

We will now move to the most translated authors. Excluding nine collections of tales or works written by different authors, the database lists 118 authors. The most translated author is Valerio Massimo Manfredi (19) followed by Alessandro Baricco, Dante Alighieri, and Andrea Camilleri (11 titles each). A possible explanation of the popularity of Valerio Massimo Manfredi could be found in the similarities he seems to share with Dan Brown in terms of genre and style, as said in various book reviews.<sup>15</sup>

Authors with a number of titles between five and ten are Primo Levi (7), Umberto Eco (7), Elisabetta Dami (6), Luigi Pirandello (5). Differently from the data relating to Italy, the interest towards these authors is shared among several publishing houses. More specifically, Manfredi was translated by Macmillan (10), Pan (6), and W. F. Howes (3). Camilleri was translated mainly by Picador (8), but also by Wheeler Chivers (3). The only publishing house interested in Dami was Scholastic, which published many titles from the *Geronimo Stilton* series. While Levi was translated almost entirely by Penguin, Eco was translated mainly by Secker & Warburg, Dante by Penguin (4), Hesperus (2) and others, Pirandello by Hesperus (2) and others.

The leading genre is classic, with three great Italian writers (Dante Alighieri, Primo Levi, and Luigi Pirandello). As for the other genres, we have historical novels by Manfredi, the detective series *Commissario Montalbano*

<sup>15</sup> See, for example, <http://www.goodreads.com/book/show/1850106.Pharaoh> (07.08.2014).

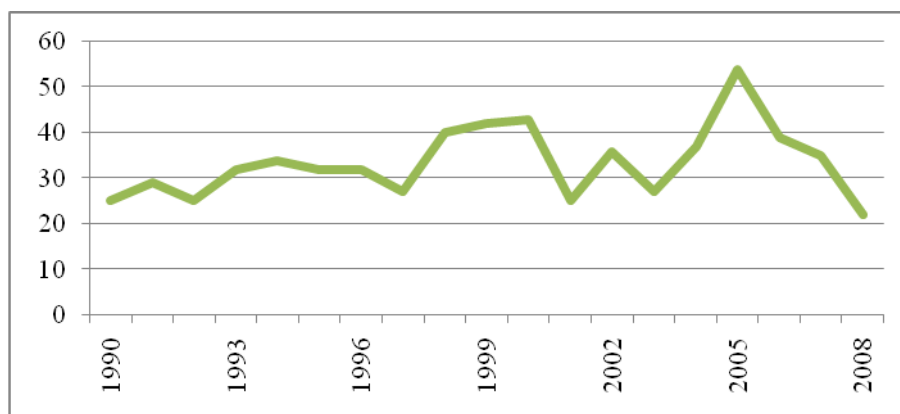
by Camilleri and fiction novels by Baricco. As for Umberto Eco, three of the titles are fiction-based novels, while four are essays.

Other translated authors are Carlo Collodi for children's literature (3), Pietro Aretino, Giovanni Boccaccio, Italo Calvino and Leonardo Sciascia for the classics (three titles each), Michele Giuttari and Carlo Lucarelli for the detectives (four titles each).

It is worth remarking the great attention to new translations of the classics and to contemporary authors on the one hand, and the almost complete lack of fantasy genre on the other, which is due to the fact that the UK has its own rich and fascinating collective imagination, which Italy tends to import, as mentioned in Section 2.1. The only fantasy book translated from Italian into English in the UK is *L'ultimo elfo* by Silvana De Mari (English title *The Last Elf*), but it is specifically for children.

### 2.3. Literary translation from Italian into English in the USA

Data on IT for translated works from Italian into English in the USA since 2000 are available until 2008.<sup>16</sup> For this time span 318 translated titles are listed, and are distributed over the years as follows (Graph 17):



Graph 17.

Yearly number of translated books from Italian in the USA.

Translated literature overall fluctuated between around 25 and 45 books, except for a peak in 2005, after which it decreased significantly to just over half.

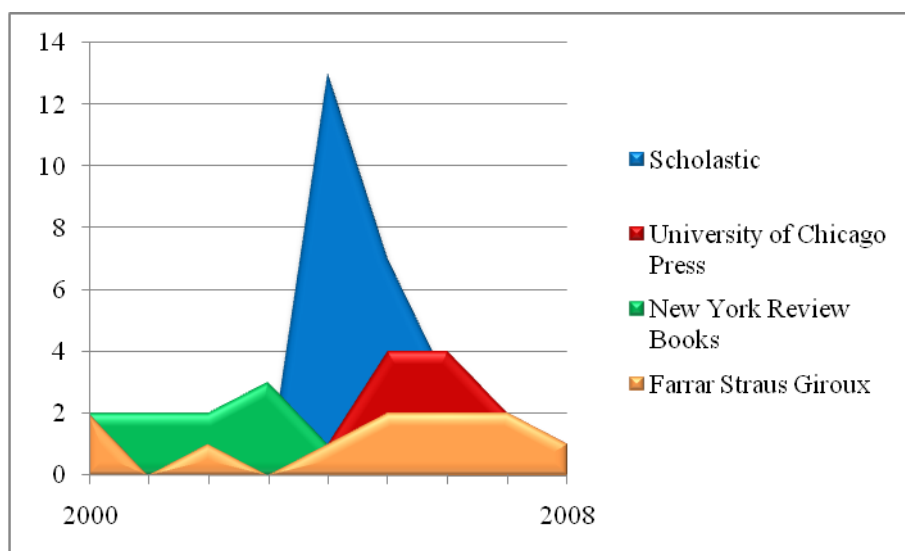
The publishing houses involved are 131. The most productive is Scholastic with 26 titles overall, followed by University of Chicago Press with 15 titles, New York Review Books with 13 titles, and Farrar Straus Giroux with 11 titles. Other publishing houses dealing with translated works are Harcourt, Alfred A. Knopf and Steerforth Press with 10 titles each, Dover

<sup>16</sup> The 'Last Updates' section (<http://www.unesco.org/xtrans/bscontrib.aspx?lg=0>) shows that IT has received data until 2008 and that IT staff is currently processing data relating to years 2009 and 2010.



Publications and Weekly Reader with 8 titles each, Wheeler Publishing and Penguin with 7 titles each, Gareth Stevens, Chelsea and Italica Press with 5 titles each.

Graph 18 represents the annual production of the publishing houses with over ten translated titles:



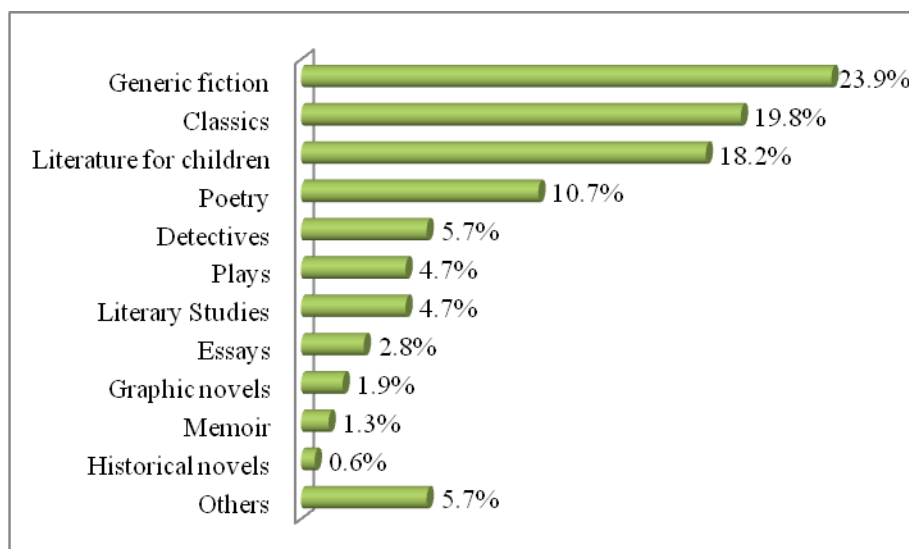
Graph 18.  
Flow of translated literature: American publishers.

Particularly interesting is the trend of Scholastic,<sup>17</sup> which started its production of translations only in 2004 with 13 titles. In 2005 the production almost halved, then it continued to decrease until it stopped in 2007. The others do not show any particular trends, but they all had one- or two-year gaps: University of Chicago Press was unproductive in 2002 and 2003, New York Review Books in 2006 and 2008, and Farrar Straus Giroux in 2001.

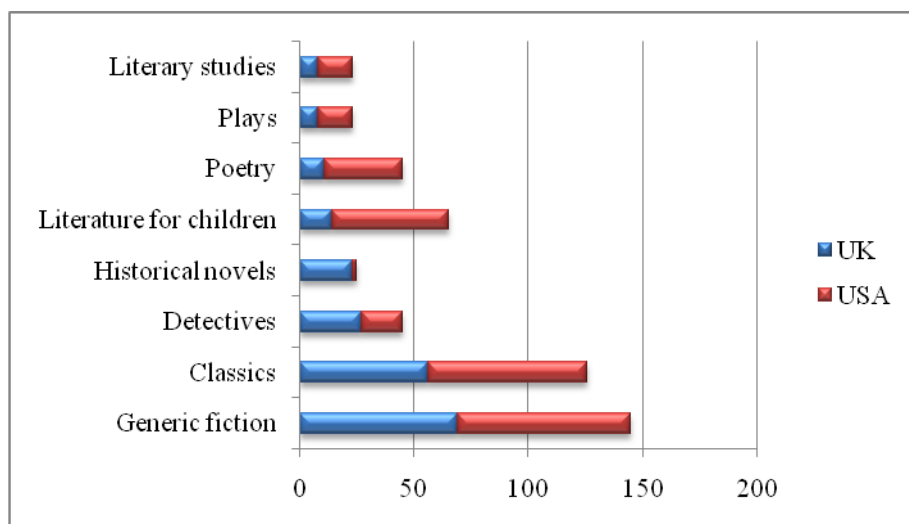
The genres identified are the same as in Section 2.1. and are represented in Graph 19. Similarly to the UK database, the leading genres are generic fiction and the classics, with over 60 titles each. However, there is a third leading genre, which is literature for children (50 titles), which in the UK database is only the fifth most translated genre.

This and other differences between trends in the UK and the USA are represented in Graph 20. As can be seen, American publishing houses are far more interested in literature for children, poetry and literary studies than their British counterparts. By contrast, they have almost no interest at all in translating historical novels, and the translation of detectives is higher in the UK.

<sup>17</sup> Previous research on the IT website shows that Hesperus did not produce translated works over the 1990s.



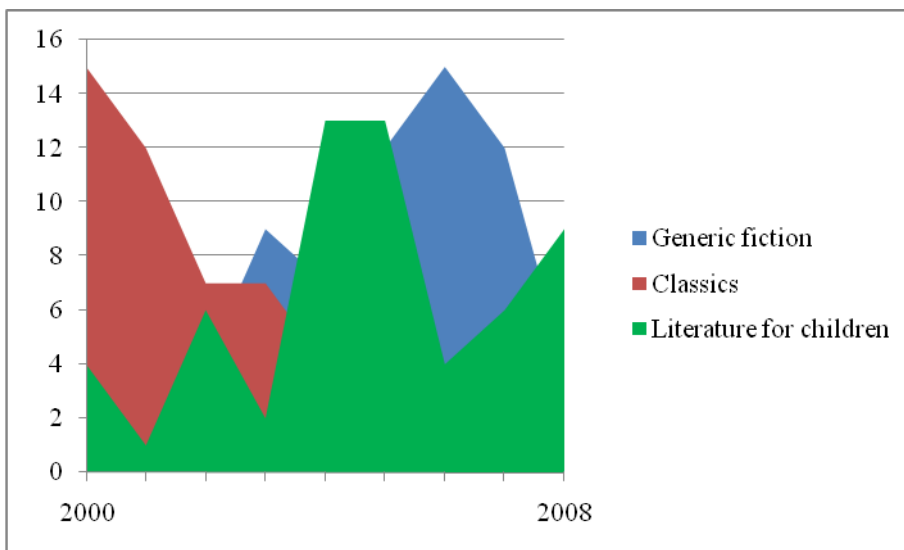
Graph 19  
Translated genres in the USA.



Graph 20.  
The UK vs. the USA: translated genres.

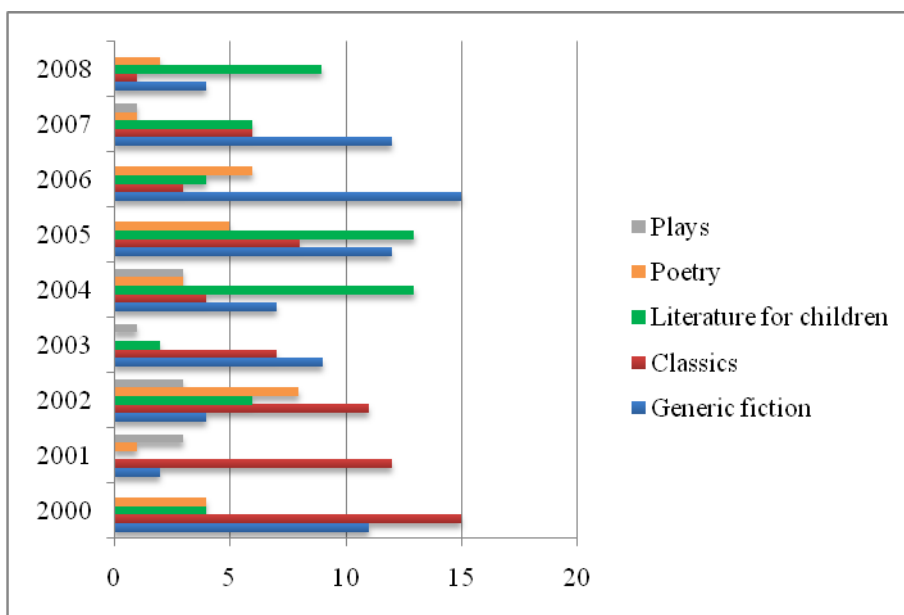
Other interesting aspects arise if we look at the trends of the three main genres translated in the USA (Graph 21).

They all have different trends. After a sharp decline between 2000 and 2001, the translation of generic fiction peaked between 2005 and 2007, but then decreased again. The production of new translations of classics was high between 2000 and 2001, but then decreased and was reduced to only one book in 2008. The translation of books for children was very low at the beginning, then picked between 2004 and 2005, but decreased again over the last years of the time span.



Graph 21.  
Flow of translated literature in the USA.

Graph 22 shows the genres that were in the two top positions in each year of the time span.



Graph 22.  
Most translated genres per year in the USA.

The situation is much more diversified compared to that of Italy and the UK. The classics occupied the top position from 2000 to 2002, moved to second position in 2003 and then to third position in 2004 and 2005, the years in which literature for children was in top position, followed by generic fiction.

Only in 2007 did the classics go back to second position together with literature for children, but lost it again in 2008 in favour of generic fiction.

As far as generic fiction is concerned, it gained the top position in 2003, but moved to second position in 2004. It moved up to top position again in 2006 but lost it again in 2008 in favour of literature for children.

The graph also shows that, differently from Italy and the UK, the role of theatre and poetry has been quite important.

To conclude this section, we will now list the most translated authors. Excluding 14 titles consisting of collections edited by a number of editors, the database lists 179 authors.

The most translated author is Elisabetta Dami with 26 titles, followed by Dante Alighieri (21 titles) and Andrea Camilleri (16 titles). Authors with a number of titles between five and ten are: Umberto Eco and Sebastiano Ranchetti with 8 titles each, Carlo Collodi with 7 titles, and Luigi Pirandello with 6 titles.

Thus, for children's literature we find Elisabetta Dami again, but this time in top position. All her works were translated by Scholastic, half of them in 2004, the year in which literature for children gained the top position. The second most translated author for the same genre is Sebastiano Ranchetti, whose works were all translated by Weekly Reader Books in 2008. Carlo Collodi is also among the most translated authors for this subgenre, and his *Pinocchio* was translated by several publishing houses.

For the classic genre the leading author is Dante, whose translated works were published by a number of publishing houses, among which Dover Publications and Modern Library, and include not only his masterpieces but also literary studies.

Finally, Camilleri is the absolute leading author for the detective genre, again with titles from the *Commissario Montalbano* series. His works were translated by Penguin, Viking, and Wheeler Publishing.

To conclude this part, it is worth spending a few words on the translation of plays. Fifteen Italian plays were translated in the USA over the time span, and eight in the UK. This difference could be related to the fact that literary translation in general in the USA is higher than in the UK by around 36.4%. Even if in both cases we are dealing with small numbers (in comparison with the most translated genres for each country), a specific trend emerges: in the USA among the translated play writers we find Eduardo De Filippo (three titles), whose comedies were shown on the American TV in the 1960s,<sup>18</sup> and Dario Fo (two titles), who won the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1997. These play writers were not translated in the UK as far as the 2000-2008 time span is concerned. This is an interesting point, which would be worth investigating from a socio-cultural perspective.

<sup>18</sup> <http://www.enotes.com/topics/eduardo-de-filippo/critical-essays/de-filippo-eduardo>

### 3. Comparing results

If we compare the trends detected for each country a number of interesting points arise.

Starting from Italy, the situation is very diversified in terms of publishing houses, genres, and authors if compared to those in the UK and the USA. This is due to the fact that English is the dominant source language in Italy (as well as in Europe). The main trend in Italy is the rising interest in literature for children, which overtook even evergreen subgenres such as generic fiction and thriller. As far as translated authors are concerned, the growth in translated literature for children is confirmed by a preference for books written by Robert L. Stine and Jan & Stan Berenstain. Interestingly, the third most translated author is Stephen King, although fantasy is only the fourth most translated genre in Italy.

In the UK, the tendency to translate mainly fiction books and classics finds correspondence in the preference for Valerio Massimo Manfredi and Dante Alighieri respectively. However, among the most translated authors we also find Andrea Camilleri with translated works from the *Commissario Montalbano* series.

In the USA, even though literature for children is only the third most translated genre after generic fiction and the classics, the most translated author is Elisabetta Dami, with the whole *Geronimo Stilton* series. As in the UK, Dante is the most translated author for the classic genre, followed by Camilleri for the detective genre.

It is worth highlighting the popularity of the Italian *Commissario Montalbano* series by Andrea Camilleri in Anglo-American countries. In fact, in the British Corpus Camilleri has the same number of titles as Manfredi, Baricco, and Dante even though detective is only the third most translated genre. Most impressively, 16 books by Camilleri were translated in the USA, despite the fact that detective in the USA is only the fifth most translated genre.<sup>19</sup>

Similarly, in Italy horror and dark fantasy works by Stephen King are very popular even though these are only the third and fourth most translated genres.

<sup>19</sup> See D'Egidio (this issue), for a reader reception analysis of the translated Camilleri, and Katan (2014) for a discussion of a subtitled version of *Montalbano* appeared on BBC4, from an intercultural perspective.

#### 4. Patronage and gate keeping in literary translation

Despite the differences in numbers between the three countries (mainly due to the fact that English is the most translated language) the trends highlighted show how preferences for certain authors and genres over others are shaped by publishers in the three countries.

In Lefevere's view of translation as "rewriting of an original text" (2004: vii), translation is regarded as "[...] manipulation, undertaken in the service of power", which "can introduce new concepts, new genres [...] but can also repress innovation [...]" (2004: vii). Thus, translation is constrained by control factors, among which we find "patronage". Lefevere (2004, p. 15) defines "patronage" as "something like the powers [...] that can further or hinder the reading, writing, and rewriting of literature".

Patronage may be exerted by individuals, groups, institutions, publishers or the media, and has three components: ideological, economic and status component. The ideological component refers to the control exerted onto the choice and development of form and subject matters. The economic component relates to the translator's economic survival and, on a more global level, to dynamics concerning royalties and production costs (Lefevere 2000, in Asimakoulas 2009). The status component refers to the status that patrons may confer to writers, allowing them to be integrated into a specific group's style (Lefevere 1985, in Asimakoulas 2009).

If we attempt to contextualise these three components within the publishing trends highlighted in this paper, we may argue that a key role is played by the economic component, which clearly influences choices on genres and authors. Thus, the translation of literature is gate kept by publishers, who probably make decisions on preferred genres according to a series of factors. Possible factors may include trends on readership, which probably orient translation towards certain genres, or competition between publishers – hence the need to retranslate the classics as the old versions are not likely to be sold if new ones are produced by other publishers.

The ideological component could be related to the translation policies adopted by publishers and editors, which inevitably constrain the translator's work. As reported by D'Egidio (this volume), the translator of Camilleri's works, Stephen Sartarelli, has admitted in an essay (2004) that his linguistic and stylistic choices were influenced by the translation norms adopted by the publisher and the editors. The ideological component, indeed, "may be traced in omissions, shifts and additions of various kind" (Asimakoulas 2009, p. 242).

The status component has to do with the preference for best-selling authors: in Paragraph 3 we highlighted how the most translated authors usually fall in genres which are not in top position, such as Stephen King (horror and dark fantasy) in Italy, Elisabetta Dami (literature for children) in

the USA, and Andrea Camilleri (detective) in the UK and the USA.

Interesting issues on gate keeping in literary translation have been raised at the London Book Fair in 2012, which brought English and American editors and translators together to discuss publishing trends in literary translation into English. Among the aspects brought to light in the debate<sup>20</sup> those worth mentioning are: the tendency of publishers to expect ready audiences, which is related to the stereotypical idea publishers have about what books and/or genres will be successful, the role of ‘road-opener’ rather than ‘gatekeeper’ that small publishers are likely to assume, the lack of adequate advertising when translated books are published, and the great opportunity that publishing translated literature is for the English speaking world – and not only, we may add –, which should lead publishers to buy a translation “as if it were an artwork for their collection”.<sup>21</sup>

## 5. Conclusions

The analysis of the three databases allowed us to identify the main trends characterising the flow of translation from English into Italian in Italy and from Italian into English in the UK and the USA.

This study is meant to encourage research in literary translation, as the trends highlighted open up a variety of perspectives for future investigation in literary translation, such as comparative studies, reader reception studies, issues on patronage. Furthermore, the trends detected may constitute key indications useful to professional translators wishing to publish their works or to undertake translation in new literary genres.

The IT database is currently being updated by the staff and the data relating to years subsequent to the investigated time spans are expected to be available in the near future. Thus, further investigation will be carried out in order to integrate this study with more recent publishing trends, along with investigation aimed at shedding light on gate keeping and the socio-cultural reasons underlying the trends highlighted in this paper.

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<sup>20</sup> <http://publishingperspectives.com/2012/04/lbf-2012-the-gatekeepers-of-literary-translations/>

<sup>21</sup> Barbara Epler, publisher of *New Directions*. <http://publishingperspectives.com/2012/04/lbf-2012-the-gatekeepers-of-literary-translations/>

**Bionote:** Maria Elisa Fina graduated in Literary and Specialized Translation from University of Salento in 2011 and is currently a PhD student in Translation and Intercultural Studies at the same university.

Her research interests focus mainly on translation and intercultural communication between Italian and English in the tourism domain, with particular reference to tourist promotion in English and the analysis of tourism discourse from a cross-cultural perspective.



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