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Publishing Strategies of International Crime Fiction in Hungary

Sándor Kálai and Dorottya Molnár-Kovács

- 1 Traditionally, literary studies have not focused on the production of literature. Similarly, editorial work or marketing practices are often not taken into account. The study of “serious” literary works, which has normally followed the practice of close reading, has always put the emphasis on the subject’s intrinsically literary character: “the work produced according to the logic of a strongly autonomous field calls for a differential, distinctive perception, attentive to deviations from other works, contemporary or past” (Bourdieu, 1994: 77, our translation). Only literary works belonging to the ‘subfield of large-scale production’ (Bourdieu, 1995: 121), produced according to an explicitly economic logic, that has especially drawn the attention of literary scholars to the mechanisms of the literary market. However, in the last two decades, there has been an increasing number of analyses focusing on this part of the literary system, namely the book market.
- 2 According to Ann Steiner, the book market “is complex and offers numerous examples of simultaneous interactions and negotiations between literature, markets, readers, and national as well as global discourses” (Steiner, 2012: 316). It is dominated by large, transnational conglomerates, that “have influenced, and possibly dictated, the production and distribution of literature world-wide, for example through the internet, media convergence, production of literary spin-offs, and what, within the trade, is called ‘content development’.” (Steiner, 2012: 317) In *The Merchants of Culture*, John B. Thompson describes the changes in book publishing in the 21st century, in order to understand the world of trade publishing – the publishing chain. “The publisher is one player in a field, and the way that publishers relate to other players is shaped by a chain of activities in which different agents or organizations perform different roles which are all oriented towards a common goal – namely, the production, sale and distribution of this particular cultural commodity, the book.” (Thompson, 2012: 14)

With the study of the publishing system, studies on book marketing have also started to emerge. Claire Squires analyzes the contemporary British literature from the point of view of marketing processes (Squires, 2007). By observing the process of book circulation, more and more analyses of contemporary crime fiction fit into this trend, which emphasises the importance of book market actors such as fairs, publishers or agents.

- 3 The development of literature as a commercial object, which is highly dependent on editorial work and the marketing chain, can be linked to popular genres (such as crime fiction) and to the transnational circulation of works (especially through translations). Current handbooks on crime fiction – such as *Crime Fiction as World Literature* (Nilsson – Damrosch – D’haen, 2017) or *The Routledge Companion to Crime Fiction* (Allan – Gulddal – King – Pepper, 2020) – emphasize two characteristics of the genre in its contemporary evolution: the hybridization of forms and its global circulation. From the point of view of the globalisation of the genre, according to Johan Heilbron, we can consider book translation as a cultural world system, which means that the translation system is a hierarchical structure with central, semi-peripheral and peripheral languages (Heilbron, 1999). Studying the bestseller lists, one can account for the fact “that English-language literature does not dominate the globe” (Steiner, 2012: 322), and that international success is linked to the genre: this explains the success of Stieg Larsson's novels according to Steiner (Steiner, 2012: 322). Bestsellers can be produced in languages such as Swedish, which can be considered a semi-peripheral language, according to Heilbron.
- 4 We can regard crime fiction as an inherently transnational genre, which can be described by the logic that Franco Moretti identifies: literary texts are “always a compromise between foreign form and local material” (Moretti, 2000: 60) or what David Damrosch calls “glocalism”, an authorial strategy that can take two forms: the exportation of local situations abroad and the importation of global situations at home (Damrosch, 2009: 109). But this strategy is not always the author's, it can also involve the production chain mentioned above. The global success of Scandinavian crime fiction testifies to this logic of exportation/importation of local situations and draws attention to the mechanisms of the literary market: the reorganization of the publishing field in the Scandinavian countries after the phenomenal sales of Henning Mankell's and especially Stieg Larsson's novels, the creation of literary agencies, the growing role of the book fairs in the acquisition of rights (Berglund, 2017: 77-90). The success of Scandinavian crime fiction also draws our attention to the importance of paratexts (titles, covers) as elements of marketing: a book cover with its paratexts (containing or not location elements) place a book in a special cultural context. A constant process of negotiation and interpretation takes place via the texts between the promises of the market and the expectations of the readers. The analysis of the negotiation between the book's content and its representation in different cultural contexts can inform us about the ways in which a national literature can be integrated into the media landscape (Nilsson, 2017: 109-130).
- 5 In the following pages, we will focus on the strategies of Hungarian publishers in publishing crime novels, especially international titles within the country. The general theoretical framework of the approach involves literary studies, sociological studies and visual studies in order to approach our object of study. The first part of our work is based on interviews with some of the managers of publishing houses that publish crime

fiction. The interviews were made using directive interview technique with an open-ended questionnaire. The interviews sought to discover the publishers' view on the current state of crime publishing within Hungary, important actors and factors that drive their decision-making practices that concern new books, translations, marketing strategies etc., and their experience regarding the position of crime fiction within the local book market. The second part is a case study in which we will analyse the covers of crime novels published by these publishers in order to identify localization strategies that inform us about editorial strategies and, more broadly, about the relationship that these publishing houses have with the genre.

PUBLISHING STRATEGIES

INTRODUCTION TO THE HUNGARIAN BOOK MARKET

- 6 The Hungarian book market supplies roughly 13 million native Hungarian speakers in the continent: Hungary - 8.5 million, Romania - 1.2 million, Slovakia - 460 000, Serbia - 250 000, Ukraine - 160 000, Austria - 90 000, Croatia - 16 000, Slovenia - 6200 (see census data). In the past ten years on average 12.000-13.900 titles have been published yearly (Bárdosi - Ivánné - Lakatos, 2007: 6), roughly one fifth of which were novels (Bárdosi - Ivánné - Lakatos, 2007: 6). In terms of number of copies, these add up to around 6 million novels yearly: 3000 copies per title on average (Bárdosi - Ivánné - Lakatos, 2007: 8). More than 50% of novels published in the country are from foreign authors (translated from English, German and French mostly), but these titles take up more than 72% of all printed copies, meaning that local authors reach a more modest audience than their international counterparts (Bárdosi - Ivánné - Lakatos, 2007: 6). Similar to European tendencies, turnover of book sales in the country is increasingly concentrated in larger publishers' hands: in 2006, 14 publishers produced 60% of total sales (Bárdosi - Ivánné - Lakatos, 2007: 11).
- 7 Apart from the many small companies - with modest market shares - comprising the local book market, there are two large publishing groups in Hungary: Libri group with 7 and Lira with 9 of its own publishing houses (Luka-Barcza, 2019). Libri is the biggest publishing group in Hungary (Marosi, 2019), publishes approximately 600 titles yearly, 3-4% of which is crime fiction, while out of Lira group's 9 publishing houses, the genre is part of the portfolio of one of these, General Press. Other than these two larger groups, the industry mainly consists of small family businesses and medium-sized enterprises, and their decisions on publishing and marketing strategies usually reflect this status and the relatively small size of the local book market.
- 8 Publishing houses specializing in crime fiction in the country are Agave - a medium-sized stakeholder publishing fantasy and science fiction apart from crime fiction and thriller - and Detektív, a one-person business dedicated exclusively to the Russian version of the genre. Clearly, the latter is more than anything a labour of love of a dedicated crime reader rather than an indicator that for some reason Russian crime novels would be an especially prominent part of the Hungarian crime fiction market. Another important publisher of crime fiction is 21. Század with 50% of everything they publish falling into the category and Európa, for their long history in publishing crime novels.

- 9 Scandinavian crime novels take up an ever increasingly large size of all crime fiction published in the country. For Animus, owner of the publishing rights to the Harry Potter books in Hungary (which still to this day dominate their sales), Scandinavian crime novels now make up a quarter of their profits. Of the approximately 70 new books they publish each year, around 15% is crime fiction – specifically Scandinavian novels – which they have been regularly publishing for over 10 years (Marosi, 2019). Another publisher of Scandinavian noir is Kossuth publishing house. Crime sales make up 6-8% of their turnover (Kocsis, 2019).
- 10 As part of our research, we have conducted interviews with managerial representatives of seven of the most important crime fiction publishers of Hungary. The interviewees were Kocsis Sándor András, President and CEO of Kossuth Kiadó; Marosi László, chief editor of Animus Kiadó; Rényi Ádám, owner of XXI. Század Kiadó; Magyarósi Gabriella, literary leader of Európa Könyvkiadó; Arató Vera, owner and CEO of Detektív Kiadó; Luka-Barcza Viktória of Libri Kiadó; and Nemes Krisztián, editor of Jaffa Kiadó. The seven publishing houses included in the research – Libri, Animus, 21. Század, Európa, Kossuth, Jaffa, Detektív – are responsible for more than half of all crime fiction publications in the country. The publishing houses were contacted on the basis of their interest in publishing in the genre, and finally the list has been reduced to those willing to participate in the study. In this sub-chapter we will summarize the strategies of local publishers, and their assessment of the current state of publishing crime fiction in the country based on the interviews, concentrating on aspects that have been mentioned by several of the interviewees.

CREATING A MARKET: NORDIC NOIR AND MEDITERRANEAN CRIME FICTION

- 11 Unsurprisingly, the worldwide success of authors such as Jo Nesbø or Stieg Larsson had a significant impact on the Hungarian market of the genre, as publishers agree that Nordic noir continues to be a good sell in an otherwise restrained market (Rényi, 2019; Marosi, 2019; Arató, 2019). For example, one fourth of Animus’s yearly profits come from publishing crime fiction – which is solely Scandinavian crime in their case (Marosi, 2019). However, rather than being fans of these novels, Hungarian readers tend to be author-centered according to publishers (Rényi, 2019; Nemes, 2019). The selling point to them is not “the newest Scandinavian bestseller” but the new Camilla Läckberg, Ken Follett or Stephen King novel for example (Nemes, 2019). Although the success of a crime fiction novel may be related to the genre or the nationality (Berglund 2017, 84), according to our interviewees, within Hungary, nationality is less important than the level of fame of said authors. Similarly, genre is a weak selling point as well: the fact that something is advertised as a crime fiction or a thriller does not have a significant effect on the marketability of the titles, which only seems to be triggered by author names (Nemes, 2019; Kocsis, 2019; Magyarósi, 2019).
- 12 In this regard, it seems like Scandinavian crime fiction is only successful in the local markets if it is referring to already well-known authors. The category of Nordic noir is not yet well established within readers’ minds (Nemes, 2019), despite the continued efforts of publishers and distributors. Attempts to create at least a local “crime fiction market” (if not a Scandinavian crime fiction market) into which new authors could have an easier entry, have largely been unsuccessful. Jaffa, the publisher holding the rights of Harlan Coben’s books in Hungary, attempted to connect other names to

Coben's works, so as to create the category of contemporary – essentially hard-boiled – crime novels. Although it was planned to be a larger marketing endeavor, only two other authors, both American crime novelists – James Ellroy and Jeff Abbott – were successfully added to the publisher's repertoire (Nemes 2019).

- 13 Another interesting attempt was by Kossuth publishing house whose goal was to introduce Spanish crime fiction into the Hungarian market with Scandinavian noir as a model for the project. The concept was that while Scandinavian crimes are often dark, tense and frightening a lot of the times, Spanish crime fictions have a Mediterranean feel to them. With their brightness and humor, they were supposed to contrast their Scandinavian counterparts (Kocsis, 2019). Unfortunately, the attempt was deemed unsuccessful by the publisher, and Southern-European crime novels are still niche products in the local market.
- 14 As mentioned by several interviewees, the setting of each book is also important as they create an atmosphere for the reading experience, and that atmosphere is often reflected in the marketing of the books (Kocsis, 2019; Magyarósi, 2019). Jean Anderson, Carolina Miranda, and Barbara Pezzotti point out: “As for the exotic environment, the proliferation of detective novels with foreign settings brings the genre into close proximity to travel writing and may have both entertainment and didactic value for readers. Whether they are able to judge the accuracy of these representations remains, however, a moot point: their choices – along with the authors’ – may reflect genuine interest in other cultures or instead constitute a desire for a kind of cultural Disneyland in which plot, setting and characters are subsidiary to overt or covert stereotypes” (Anderson – Miranda – Pezzotti, 2012: 3).

LOCAL CHARACTERISTICS OF CRIME FICTION COMMERCE

- 15 Perhaps joining in with a more universal trend, Hungarian crime fiction readers are perceived to be mostly females by publishers, and thus it is deemed to be a fundamentally feminine genre; especially the whodunit type. Political thrillers are different in this sense, as they tend to attract a mostly male audience according to publishers.
- 16 Often criminal acts that take place in the fiction titles are themselves gender-specific: themes such as rape, domestic violence and female victims in general are considered to be aimed more at female audiences. The reason behind this might be that, the majority of the time, the emotional element is the strongest bonding agent between texts and audiences. Criminal acts involving women often evoke a strong emotional response from women readers especially, making the genre “feminine”, as the manager of the publishing house 21. Század suggests (Rényi, 2019).
- 17 The owner of 21. Század has mentioned that signaling a book belongs to the crime genre is a marketing strategy much like connecting books to their authors (Rényi, 2019). However, three interviewees concluded that the genre indicator “crime” is only important to a very small, dedicated crime fiction reader audience, but for most, signaling that something belongs to this genre is not only unimportant, in fact it can sometimes be a disadvantage (Nemes, 2019; Magyarósi, 2019; Luka-Barcza, 2019). With that said however, crime fiction will undoubtedly always have an audience as the need for commercial fiction seems to be unchanging (Marosi, 2019). Nowadays this need for commercial fiction is largely being met by the increasing number and increasingly

good quality TV series available, a significant number of which contain an element of crime (Luka-Barcza, 2019). For the book market, this means that the need for crime fiction is only promising for already successful authors (Luka-Barcza, 2019).

- 18 Another takeaway from the interviews is that the local book market overall can be considered a novelty-market (Nemes, 2019; Marosi, 2019), where newly published books of all genres are competing with each other (Nemes, 2019). According to the editor of Jaffa publishing house, there is no separate competition for non-fiction books or romantic novels. New crime fiction novels have to stand up against sci-fi and popular psychology books as well as with other non-fiction genres (Nemes, 2019). This might mean that crime fiction is not actually that separated from other genres in terms of marketing strategies either, as is the case with Európa publishing house for example (Magyarósi, 2019). It also suggests that relative to recipe books for example, which do not necessarily need to be new to be sellable, novels have a short shelf life in Hungary (Marosi, 2019). Nowadays, after six months of being out, books are not considered novelty anymore and if they have not “made it” by that point, there is virtually no chance of success for them afterwards (Marosi, 2019). The six month period is also becoming even shorter, and publishers need to “let go” of titles quicker according to chief editor of Animus (Marosi, 2019).
- 19 Outstanding success stories, books like *The Girl on the Train* from Paula Hawkins only come around once in a decade for a publishing house like 21. Század (Rényi 2019) where a book is singlehandedly responsible for all profits of a publishing house. Most of our interviewees implied, and some of them openly admitted that book publishing can often be unprofitable in Hungary (Arató, 2019), and although crime fiction itself is generally considered to be commercially successful (Nemes, 2019; Magyarósi, 2019) publishers are still working to get that one breakthrough hit book to support the rest of their – very often failing – projects (Marosi, 2019).

FROM MANUSCRIPT TO BOOK – DECISION GUIDING FACTORS AND GATEKEEPERS

- 20 The traditional route for acquiring publishing rights in Hungary is for publishers to go through literary agents: most important of them according to chief editor of Animus is the internationally active Andrew Nurnberg, then Kátai & Bolza, and Balla & Sztojkov (Marosi, 2019). Increasingly often though local publishers negotiate directly with the representatives of foreign publishing houses.
- 21 It is also common practice to involve professional readers and lectors before deciding on a manuscript. Even more so when it comes to Scandinavian crime fiction for example: publishers are more willing to pay someone who speaks these languages well to review the considered books before engaging in a negotiation. With books written in English, outsourcing the professional reading is not always necessary. However, the most important factor in choosing a manuscript is always past successes of the author. This overrules opinions of reviewers and professional readers as well – who are most likely left out of the decision-making processes in these cases.
- 22 In Hungary only larger publishing groups can afford to rely on the reports of literary scouts – internationally active literary workers, who dive deep into the world of manuscripts, read everything there is to read and report anything noteworthy. Bigger publishers subscribe to these reports to help their decision-making processes, while smaller enterprises acquire manuscripts through their own research. This puts them at

a disadvantageous position as scouts are the quickest informants of the industry: because they read in several languages, they have a good general outlook on the market and can usually spot upcoming trends before agencies. Of our interviewees, chief editor of Animus has mentioned that they work together with a group of literary scouts who regularly (more than once a week) send them reports of current trends, research data and publishing suggestions. Paid newsletters that they subscribe to also help them guide their publishing decisions (Marosi, 2019). Literary scouts are also very important in Európa's day to day work as they provide up to date information about every relevant national market faster than newsletters for example (Magyarósi, 2019). Libri also subscribes to scout reports which help them guide their decision making for international books (Luka-Barcza, 2019).

OPINION-LEADERS AND INFLUENCERS

- 23 Before 2020 international book fairs were almost obligatory for any serious stakeholders in publishing. Among these, Hungarian publishers usually attended three of the most important annual ones in Europe: the Frankfurt Book Fair, the London Book Fair, and the Bologna Children's Book Fair (Nemes, 2019; Marosi, 2019; Rényi, 2019; Kocsis, 2019; Magyarósi, 2019; Luka-Barcza, 2019). These events are generally used for networking and for keeping up with current trends but offers are rarely made on site.
- 24 There usually is a hyped-up book in these events each year. In 2018 it was the psychological thriller, *The Chain* by Adrian McKinty (Luka-Barcza, 2019). These hypes however are never around manuscripts: publishers can only see plot summaries at this point, which can be misleading, and which are essentially a gamble to buy (Luka-Barcza, 2019).
- 25 Spotting international trends by attending book fairs is also problematic because international successes cannot always be translated into local successes. British author Philip Kerr for example failed miserably in the Hungarian market after his books being a great hit worldwide. Whether the reason for this failure is marketing or something entirely different, maybe the compatibility of these books with the Hungarian reader, is unknown for the local publisher of his books, Jaffa (Nemes 2019).
- 26 This example of an international bestseller in crime fiction doing devastatingly in Hungary does not stand alone, however. A similar thing has played out with British thriller writer Sophie Hannah, mentioned in the interview with Libri's Luka-Barcza Viktória (Luka-Barcza 2019) or Danish author, Jens Henrik Jensen's *Oxen* which started at 100,000 sold copies in Germany before failing miserably in Hungary according to the book's Hungarian publisher, Kossuth's CEO (Kocsis, 2019).
- 27 Apart from book fairs local publishers pay attention to the most significant online book themed platforms as well. Reviews on Goodreads, Amazon, Barnes and Noble and the Hungarian site for readers, moly.hu are regularly scrutinized by decision makers. The most active readers who read everything and react to everything are followed.
- 28 However, seeing a large and dedicated follower base of any author on these sites can be misleading: when these are translated into numbers it is clear that they are not large enough by far to make a published book a success. It is not uncommon for a book or an author to have an exceptionally active fan base online, which does not imply that they are only the minority of a huge, silent crowd reading said books.

- 29 Although the Hungarian book market appreciates novelty over anything else, these sites – especially the local moly.hu – are also useful as they can signal an already published book’s unexpected comeback. Sometimes popular culture rediscovers a long lost title and a book can become suddenly sought for, in which case publishers might decide to reprint, as was the case a few times with Jaffa’s old titles (Nemes, 2019). As readers will more likely enquire about books online rather than in shops, this makes the publisher’s job easier.

HUNGARIAN CRIME FICTION IN EUROPE

- 30 Although in this study our aim was to understand the publishers’ perspective on Hungarian crime fiction authors as well, but after the interviews we had to conclude that local authors are rare and their success is usually moderate. Thus, the interviews focused more on the role of international crime novels in the country.
- 31 “Hungarian crime fiction authors” are pretty much non-existent as a group. Publishers have mentioned that although they often get manuscripts from local authors, these are rarely of the crime genre. The CEO of Európa Publishing House stated that only 1 or 2% of Hungarian books (not specifically crime novels) make it to an international publication (Magyarósi 2019). Of course, a translated title does not necessarily mean international success automatically, in fact it rarely evolves into one. One success story worth mentioning however is that of Vilmos Kondor’ whose first book of the *Sinful Budapest* series has been translated into a number of European languages, including English, Italian, German, Dutch, Polish and French.
- 32 So where is the Hungarian publishing industry in the European context, or rather, how do trends in Europe play out in Hungary? Local publishers are mainly interested in the British market, as the owner of 21. Század indicated in the interview (Rényi, 2019). The largest number of relevant books are coming from the UK, and British authors are relatively easy to sell, meaning that the British book charts are the most relevant and have the most direct effect on publishing decisions in Hungary. Everything else, publishing French or Italian crime authors is just experimental at this point (Rényi, 2019).

LOCATION STRATEGIES

- 33 As far as the location strategies are concerned, we have chosen three collections present in the Hungarian publishing market: some examples of Scandinavian crime fiction, especially the novels of Jo Nesbø and Camilla Läckberg (published by the medium-sized Animus), the above-mentioned collection dedicated to Spanish crime novels (by Kossuth, another medium-sized publisher) and another one to Russian noir (by Detektív, a publishing house run by only one person).

LANDSCAPES AND AMBIANCE – POSITIONING NORDIC NOIR IN THE HUNGARIAN MARKET

- 34 Scandinavian crime fiction became an important segment of the book market in Hungary. These novels are published by several publishing houses: Scolar (Arne Dahl and Karim Fossum), Cartaphilus (Lars Kepler), Libri (Erik Axl Sund or Mons Kallentoft),

Athenaeum (Carin Gerhardsen, Samuel Carin Gerhardsen, Samuel Bjørk), but it is Animus that has managed to get the right to publish the novels of the most famous Scandinavian authors. The first Nordic Noir novel published by Animus was an Icelandic title, the fourth novel of Arnaldur Indriðason's detective Erlendur series (2001; *Silence of the Grave*, 2005; Hungarian translation: *Kihantolt bűnök*, 2007). Indriðason was chosen because he was the first non-English speaking writer to have won the Crime Writers Association's Gold Dagger award (Marosi 2019). After the publication of a Jo Nesbø's novel in 2008, in 2009 Animus published the Hungarian translation of Stieg Larsson's Millennium trilogy, which resulted in a substantial increase of the company's sales. The list of the authors published by Animus since then has become quite impressive: Camilla Läckberg, Lars Kepler, Jussi Adler-Olsen, Yrsa Sigurðardóttir, Hjorth-Rosenfeldt, and Håkan Nesser or Arne Dahl are just a few of them. Animus publishes 10–12 titles annually, and a quarter of its revenue comes from crime novels (Marosi, 2019). Its bestselling novels can reach several tens of thousands of copies (David Lagercrantz's sequels to Larsson's Millennium series – *The Girl Who Takes an Eye for an Eye / Mint az árnyék*, 2017 ; *The Girl Who Lived Twice / A lány, aki kétszer élt*, 2019 – which reached respectively 17,000 and 13,000 copies, and two of Jo Nesbø's Harry Hole books – *The Thirst / Szomjúság*, 2017; *The Knife / Kés*, 2019 –, each reaching 15,000 copies), which is quite a remarkable number in the Hungarian book market. The publishing house could build a very successful brand.

- 35 If we look at the editorial paratexts (Genette, 1997: 16-36), we can notice that Animus has chosen the same format (15cm X 21 cm), the same series title for the title of the collection (Scandinavian crime fiction / Skandináv krimi), and the same colors (red, black or white, colors often associated to crime). Interestingly, alongside Nordic authors, the series also hosts a French crime novel, Olivier Truc's *Le dernier lapon* (2012; Hungarian trans. *Sámándob*, 2015), also labelled as a Nordic Noir.
- 36 In the interview, the representative of the publishing house noted that the marketing of these books is often managed with different international partners (Marosi, 2019), but the unity of the collection is maintained by the series title (Skandináv krimik) printed at the bottom of the books.
- 37 The novels of Jo Nesbø are not published in the original order, his publisher suggested beginning with *Nemesis (Nemeszisz)* (Marosi, 2019). In his case, red, black and white colors are dominant on the covers, and the most important paratext is the author's name. There is no visible distinction between the Harry Hole series and other novels, and the only novel which doesn't fit in the collection is the re-edition of *The Snowman (Hóember)* after its adaptation with a new cover. In this case even the logo of the series is omitted.
- 38 If we take a look at the cover paratexts and the please-insert, we see that the capital, Oslo is always mentioned, as well as the season or weather conditions: the snow or the heat (in the case of *The Devil's Star / Boszorkányszög*). Connections between Norway and other countries (Australia, Thailand or Hong-Kong) are always underlined. There is only information about location in the text, visual clues are missing, except for *Midnight Sun (Fehér éjszaka)* whose cover can be associated with Sápmi. It is only in case of two novels that we can find some information about the author himself on the back covers: "the Norwegian king of crime novel" (*Nemesis / Nemeszisz*) or "His deep human knowledge and extremely rich experience of today's globalized world permeate all his stories." (*The Devil's Star / Boszorkányszög*).

- 39 Camilla Läckberg's novels were published in the order of their original publication. The colors here are the black, white and blue, the latter is used for the titles. Unlike Nesbø's novels, where the name of the author is printed in bigger letters than that of the title, in the case of Läckberg's ones the title seems more important. On the cover images the reader can see landscapes which connote the cold atmosphere of the North. These images can be associated with Fjälbacka, the quiet, little seaside town in which the events of the novels take place. In some of them, other locations are important, like the outskirts of Fjälbacka, the island of Grskär or that of Välo. Here, the location seems to be more important to create an opposition between spaces or the present and the past. An idyllic little town is associated with crime and in this the imagery of the North (water, nature, islands, phantoms and witches) plays an important role.
- 40 In the interview the representative of the publishing house states that it is not the landscape which is important, but the ambiance, the darkness and the violence of Scandinavian crime fiction. In the case of these writers' novels we can assume that there is a collaboration between the publisher and the agencies on the adopted marketing strategies. The covers of Nesbø's novels are slightly less localized in Scandinavia. The locations are not recognizable but covers such as *The Kingdom* (*A birodalom*) and *Blood on Snow* (*Vér a havon*) or *The Snowman* (*Hóember*) clearly evoke an atmosphere of cold and snow. In addition, the other covers call to mind stereotypical elements of crime fiction (organized crime in a suit and tie in *Headhunters* / *Fejvadászok*; a preoccupied and mysterious face that may be the hero's or the killer's in *The Redeemer* / *A megváltó* or in *The Son* / *A fiú*). The covers of Läckberg's novels draw more attention to a small town with its borders and the mythology linked to it. In both cases, we see the relationship between threat, violence and cold atmosphere.

CONTRASTING SCANDINAVIAN CRIME FICTION: MEDITERRANEAN NOIR IN HUNGARY

- 41 In 2014 and 2015, Kossuth publishing house published a series of Spanish crime fiction with the series title *Spanyol krimik* / Spanish crime fiction. Eight translations have been produced, but the series had to stop there, probably for financial reasons. The director of the publishing house mentioned marketing strategies of this series in the interview: there were flashmobs in Budapest with high school students wearing jackets with Spanish crime fiction books in their hands (Kocsis, 2019). Other bits of information mentioned by him concerned the main ideas of the series: they wanted to create an aura around Spanish crime novels that should have been the exact opposite of Scandinavian crime fiction series – not dark and violent, but brighter, more humorous, with Mediterranean ambiance. In fact, this was a series dedicated to novels written in Spanish, but not only by Spanish authors: the five authors represented different countries.
- 42 The editorial paratexts in this case create a colorful effect and at first sight they do not suggest the crime fiction genre. The series title unifies the novels: written in red, with the drawing of a bull, also in red. On the cover the nationality of the authors is specified in almost each case (except for Pablo de Santis), and other information can be found about them on the back cover.
- 43 Carmen Posadas, an Uruguayan-Spanish author is represented by two novels: one (*Invitación a un asesinato*, 2010 / *Meghívás gyilkosságra*, 2014) whose story takes place on a boat in the Mediterranean Sea, and another (*Cinzo moscas azules*, 1998 / *Őt két légy*, 2014)

whose events unfold in Morocco. According to the please-insert, these novels can seduce the fans of Agatha Christie. The Argentinian Pablo de Santis was also represented with two novels, each of them are historical crime fiction: *El enigma de París* (2007 / *Párizsi rejtély*, 2014) tells the story of 12 detectives who have to work together in Paris, in 1889, at the time of the World Fair, and the plot of *Crímenes y jardines* (2013 / *Gyilkosok és kertek*, 2015) takes place in Buenos Aires in 1894.

- 44 However, the other novels of the series present a darker image of the society. *Black, black, black* (2010 / *Black, black, black*, 2014) is “a horror story and a sharp social critique in which Marta Sanz lifts the veil on a violent and disintegrating social system”. From the two novels of Francesco Gonzáles Ledesma (*Una novela de barrio*, 2007 / *Szomszédom a halál*, 2014; *No hay que morir dos veces*, 2009 / *Halál Barcelonában*, 2015) “we can learn more about the dark side of Barcelona”. Élmer Mendoza represents the Mexican writers with *Balas de plata* (2008 / *Ezüstgolyók*, 2015), which is “a close look at Mexican society – with brutal murders, pervasive corruption, rival drug cartels, sexual perversions, in a very distinctive narrative style.”
- 45 This means that half of the published novels give a representation of violence. In fact, the series was a mixture of the two generic traditions: the whodunit novels and, with Ledesma and Mendoza, the hard-boiled novel with darker stories. But altogether, the series was dedicated to the Mediterranean territory (Barcelona, Morocco or the Sea itself) with a kind of exotism (the past of Buenos Aires or the present of Mexico).
- 46 Because of the failure of this collection, new authors could not be introduced on the Hungarian book market and it also seems that Spanish crime fiction faced difficulties in finding its readers in Hungary.

CONVEYING RUSSIAN CULTURE – THE CASE OF MARININA’S NOVELS

- 47 As we mentioned, Detektív kiadó (detektív means detective) is a very unique publishing house on the Hungarian market: it’s a small enterprise specializing in crime fiction, mainly in Russian crime fiction. Specifically, they are interested in the publication of Alexandra Marinina’s novels (two in 2015, 2016 and in 2017, one in 2018 and 2020). The small publishing house is run by Vera Arató, who is also in charge of translating the novels, as well as the marketing and distribution of the books. (Arató 2019).
- 48 The books make no profit, but they do not produce a loss either. It is the owner herself who conceived the visual identity of the series with elements indicating Russia: the inverted R letter in the logo, the logo itself (orosz krimik – Russian crime fiction), the red star with the silhouette of the St. Basil Cathedral. Other paratexts, such as the drawing of a bloody hand or the logo of the publishing house (its name beside a man’s head with a pipe in his mouth) are more obvious generic references.
- 49 Arató did not want to suggest a violent fictional universe regarding the series’ characteristics. The inner front cover contains the biography of Marinina, the inner back cover some quotations of the writer (in which she claims that she wants to write about love and hate, anger and revenge, parents and children or choices to make). The author’s ambition consists of the depiction of the 1990’s Russian life. In the case of these translations, success depends more on the readers’ attitude towards Russian culture than that of generic considerations.

TAKEAWAYS

- 50 The Hungarian book market is a small one, where success depends essentially on the name, while a specific novels' belonging to the crime fiction genre is less important than in the case of sci-fi or fantasy. Nationality of an author is also secondary. However, an Anglo-American crime fiction author can have more success than a Russian or a Spanish one. Hungarian authors of the genre are few and far between, while Hungarian titles succeeding internationally are even rarer. Other than the author's identity, the local market appreciates novelty overall: books have to emerge successful in a "blitzkrieg" of a competition to stand a chance.
- 51 Being a small market, publishing crime fiction in Hungary can be a risky business as the market can hardly take one crime fiction title per month (Luka-Barcza, 2019), and even though crime fiction is generally considered profitable (Rényi, 2019), publishers are usually hoping for a breakthrough bestseller (of which crime fiction has provided quite a few in the past decades) to fund other, less successful projects.
- 52 Gatekeepers guiding Hungarian publishers in choosing international titles to market include literary agents, literary scouts, annual book fairs and ever-increasingly online reader platforms.
- 53 Overall, within Hungary, author's names seem to be the deciding factor of success. Although the setting of a crime story can be important to the reader as it provides an atmosphere for the reading experience, lesser known authors from nationalities outside of the USA, the UK and Scandinavia are still challenging to add to any publishing houses' repertoire. Success seems to depend on the authors' names which are thus a more important decision-making factor for publishers than quality of the title itself. It is relatively easy in the case of Anglo-American crime fiction, as it became the dominant model in the market since the Second World War. However, as we saw it in our case studies, the use of stereotypical elements for the localization (bull, red star or the St. Basil Cathedral) does not automatically mean success for the book, they are not necessarily associated with the genre, they only convey well-known stereotypes.
- 54 Altogether, publishing houses in Hungary view crime fiction as a genre with a growing possibility for success as the need for commercial fiction is ever present. Still, expanding the reader's interest to new authors or nationalities is challenging, especially since films or TV series also provide an alternative to this need for crime fiction.

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