

Nordic Noir crime fiction has become a literary phenomenon in Spain, fueled by an ever-growing influx of translations that introduce Scandinavian traditions to Spanish readers. This study examines the paratextual visibility of translators within this subgenre across publishers, critics, and readers. To this end, we analyze the peritexts of 70 translated novels and epitextual elements such as reviews, interviews, and videos. Results reveal a striking invisibility of translators: their names are mostly confined to copyright pages and rarely appear on covers or in authored peritexts. Similarly, epitexts seldom feature translators, with rare mentions in articles or comments on target texts. This marginalization highlights the limited recognition translators receive in the publishing industry and critical discourse. It also reflects a symbolic capital in the red plus a troubling undervaluation of their crucial role in literary circulation and in driving the Nordic Noir boom that has shattered sales records in Spain.

KEY WORDS: Nordic Noir crime fiction, translator's visibility, paratextuality, peritexts, epitexts.

The Writers that Came in from the Cold: Translator's Visibility in the Nordic Noir Crime Fiction Published in Spain

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Los escritores que surgieron del frío: la visibilidad del traductor en la novela negra nórdica publicada en España

La novela negra nórdica es un fenómeno editorial impulsado por un caudal creciente de traducciones que destilan al español las distintas tradiciones escandinavas. Nuestro artículo explora la visibilidad paratextual del traductor de este subgénero para editoriales, críticos y lectores analizando los peritextos de 70 novelas traducidas y de epitextos relacionados como páginas web, reseñas, entrevistas y vídeos. Los resultados alumbran a un traductor ensombrecido cuyo nombre, rara vez en la portada, se entierra en las páginas de créditos sin apenas peritextos de su autoría. En lo epitextual, el traductor figura residualmente en las fichas técnicas de las novelas, y pocos son los artículos y comentarios sobre su labor. Esta invisibilidad refleja su escaso reconocimiento en el sector editorial y en el cinturón crítico y receptivo que lo rodea. También desvela un capital simbólico deficitario, alejado de su papel catalizador en la circulación literaria y detonador en el bum nórdico que ha astillado récords de ventas en nuestro país.

PALABRAS CLAVE: novela negra nórdica, visibilidad del traductor, paratextualidad, peritextos, epitextos.

1. INTRODUCTION

Crime fiction, translated into Spanish as *novela negra*, has been fueling and undergirding our literary market since the beginning of the 21st century (Sánchez-Zapatero, 2020). This phenomenon, however, was not a sudden burst but a delayed explosion, the outcome of a long-standing process that would eventually cement the popularity of the subgenre across the country: it firstly crawled into the literary system via the translations of Chandler's and Hammett's hard-boiled crime novels in the 1950s and 1960s; it grew thanks to an autochthonous tradition sparked by Vázquez Montalbán's *Tatuaje* in the 1970s and later consolidated by bestselling authors like Lorenzo Silva or Dolores Redondo (López-Martínez, 2016), and it finally secured the throne of national sales lists driven by the traction of an unstoppable literary cyclogenesis: the outbreak of the Nordic crime novel during the first decade of the 2000s (Rino-Ponce, 2016). Winter had come... and it had come to stay.

It is no coincidence that the blood-tainted snow of Nordic crime fiction has already covered the entire peninsula. This storm was unleashed by an alignment of literary and market conditions, but it made landfall thanks to an indispensable agent: the translator. Due to their work, the Spanish reader could transmute the cobbled alleys and wheat-field surrounded villages of rural Spain into the stabbing cold and windy shores of the seaport town of Fjällbacka; Lisbeth Salander got to hack and control our literary system, and Harry Hole started to roam the prime shelves of our bookstores in his worn jeans and inseparable Doc Martens. If we approach this phenomenon through the magnifying lens of translatology, we discern a clear question: Is the translator's recognition attuned to the resonance of this literary boom?

Considering the translators' invisibility that Venuti (2017) or Hatim (1999) —among many others— regard as an inherent trait of Western literature, and the results obtained in earlier similar studies (Echauri Galván, 2023), the present paper is built on two interrelated hypotheses: 1) translators of Nordic Noir novels are overly invisible in the editorial paratexts of the books, and 2) this invisibility extends to the reception of these works by literary critics and regular readers.

In order to explore these assumptions, this essay adopts a mixed-methods approach that applies quantitative and qualitative analytical tools to parse the paratextual visibility of the translator in a series of paratexts related to three pivotal agents in the circulation of any sort of literature, nationally and worldwide: the publishing industry, specialized critics, and the average reader. To that end, the study dissects a corpus formed by the peritexts attached to a selection of translated Nordic Noir novels and a set of epitexts issued by the aforementioned actors, namely webpages, interviews, and reviews in press and social networks. Our analysis combines a quantitative survey of visibility markers (such as the presence or absence of translator names and notes) with qualitative content discussion rooted in Genette's typology and expanded through recent work on digital and transmedia paratexts. Results will not only shed light on the overall visibility of the translator but will also allow us to pinpoint the readership's (un)awareness of their crucial role, how they discuss their job (when appropriate), and, ultimately, establish the symbolic capital of these traditionally sidelined wordsmiths. Because burying your name under six feet of paratextual information can be another kind of killing...

2. DIFFERENT SHADES OF BLACK: NOVELA NEGRA AND NORDIC NOIR

The bestselling machinery we call *novela negra* encompasses almost anything published as crime, mystery or detective novels, but also noir fiction and many other subgenres (Fresquet-Roso, 2016; Sánchez Zapatero, 2020). This label functions as a convenient melting pot where different authors whose works might be tagged as *novela negra* converge, even though they might not share more than a few features. Sánchez Zapatero (2020) attributes the opening of this umbrella term to the publishing industry's commercial interest in partaking in the success that this "supergenre", as he christens it, has experienced globally. Since we do not intend to highlight or redefine the lines that separate and contour the different facets of this generic polyhedron, for clarity and coherence's sake, we will be referring to this sometimes convenient, sometimes inconvenient amalgam of literary trends as "crime fiction/novels."

In Spain, crime fiction had a late flourishing; but spring arrived, and its blooming painted our literary panorama in dark colors and an ample palette of reds (Galindo, 2024). Our own personal boom set off from the 70s onward, when authors like Manuel Vázquez Montalbán, Eduardo Mendoza, or Jaume Fuster blew up the prevailing English and French models and ignited a new style informed by realistic and naturalistic traits that crystallized in mundane stories filled with violence, sex and organized crime (Fernández-Colmeiro, 1994; Sánchez-Zapatero and Martín-Escribà, 2013). The shock wave reached new authors and decades: Lorenzo Silva, Alicia Giménez Bartlett, Rosa Montero, and others carried the fire through the 80s and 90s (López-Martínez, 2020), and a young generation of crime fiction writers like Javier

Castillo, Santiago Díaz, or Virginia Feito helps them keep it alive nowadays (Ballarín, 2022). This impulse, nonetheless, has been bolstered by an underlying constant flow of translations from different countries and crime-fiction traditions; the most recent one came in from the cold, from the Scandinavian Peninsula, bringing ashore the worldwide acclaimed Nordic Noir (Sánchez-Zapatero, 2020).

It took decades, however, for Nordic Noir to expand with the strength to redress the power balances of our literary panorama and rut the novelistic soil of Western literatures and beyond. The roots of Nordic Noir stretch back through icy decades to the publication of Maj Sjöwall's and Per Wahlöö's ten-novel series (1965-75) starring Martin Beck. As the troubled inspector Beck puppeteered the most effective division of the Swedish national police, the authors "conceived the modern template for the Scandinavian crime novel" and showed the world the porous pillars and fractured foundations of the Swedish welfare state and the northern utopia (Grydehøj, 2020, p. 118). Subsequent works traced their police procedural blueprint: an unstable protagonist who struggles to juggle his professional and personal life is painted with the colors of literary realism to address freezing-hot delicate topics that unveil the underbelly of a superficially thriving society, allegedly bunkered against the problems that raze other countries. This is the reason why Henning Mankell's most recent stories, for example, tackle topical issues such as "national identity, isolation, bigotry, and xenophobia within an atmosphere of change caused by globalization and immigration" (Grydehøj, 2020, p. 119).

Pioneers and forerunners aside, in the big scheme of things, the turning point that propelled Nordic Noir crime fiction to massive levels of popularity was the publication of Stieg

50 Larsson's *Millenium* trilogy in the second half of the 2000s. Scandinavian winds took bookstores by storm and their thrust expanded the margins of this subgenre; hence, Nordic Noirs were not always *noir* in the conventional sense, since they embraced "anything from traditional whodunits, spy-novels and thrillers" (Bergman, 2014, p. 81).

Crime fiction cuts in literary systems smoothly, but according to Grydehøj (2020), Nordic Noir has two additional features that sharpen its edge and boost its circulation: the exoticism of the hibernal north and the appeal of the wrecking ball that shatters extraneous realities, in this case the Scandinavian ideal. The pivotal role of the subgenre in the deconstruction of the "widespread image of the region as consisting of well-functioning, exemplary nation states" (p. 122), the *schadenfreude* it imbues when readers "realize that everything is not as perfect as it is reputed to be" (Bergman, 2014, p. 88) are attraction poles for international markets. Covers, on the other hand, capture the contradiction between the pure, shining-white landscapes and the dark, stinking sewers of the northern societies (for example, see Camilla Läckberg's *Los gritos del pasado* published by Maeva or Jo Nesbø's *El muñeco de nieve* issued by Debolsillo) to foster Nordic Noir's vernacular magnetism among readers from different countries (Grydehøj, 2020, p. 122).

The definitive explosion of the subgenre in Spain confirms these observations. The literary earthquake it triggered and the commercial aftershocks that followed were extensively covered by the press. As of 2009, both national and regional newspapers like *El País*, *El Mundo*, *La Vanguardia*, *El Periódico* or *Heraldo de Aragón* reflected the bulldozing effect on the market of the *Millenium* saga (more than 1.2 million copies of the first two novels were sold and 200.000 of *La reina en el palacio de las corrientes de aire* were

devoured by Spanish readers the day it was released) and considered the popularity of Stieg Larsson's trilogy second to none, surpassing even the forays of a teen wizard with a scarred brow, or the social turmoil, political carnage, and unbridled passions hidden under the shadow cast by the cathedral of Knightsbridge (*El País*, 2009).

The phenomenon soon constellated other authors: Camilla Läckberg followed suit, her sales skyrocketing to 2 million copies (Corroto, 2019) and paving the way for a legion of colleagues—including bestselling writers Jo Nesbø and Henning Mankell—to burst in afterwards (Fresquet Roso, 2016, p. 350-51). A whole cosmos of information, merchandising, and audiovisual productions has been built around these figures, their names clearly imprinted in the press, the media, and the tablets of contemporary lore. But this did not happen by chance: a close-knit network of Spanish translators has been working for years to freeze our pulse with the stone-cold bodies violently dropped in our bookstores from northern latitudes. Whether our literary system regards them as partners in crime or inconsequential bystanders will be unveiled soon.

3. ACCESSORIES TO THE MURDER: PARATEXTS AND TRANSLATOR'S VISIBILITY

Crime fiction spans a vast array of backgrounds, characters, enigmas, and literary nuances; and yet, readers seem to have a very precise frame of expectations when they approach this long-standing, regularly-recycled, everblooming subgenre. Consumers of these works seek the rush of instant pleasure, an emotional bond with the characters, magnetic settings, and a storyline they can devour compulsively (Burgess and Williams, 2022). They are a voracious species, chaining one novel after another, bold in

their quest for new adventures and timorous in their need for a safe distance from the brutality of narrative lines and for a set of generic traits that reminds them of the unspeakable comfort found in previous murder cases (Brewster, 2016, pp. 3-5). In other words, readers of crime fiction, including Nordic noirs, expect these texts to read fast and to share familiar patterns and topoi regardless of the author; in yet other words, they want *transparent* and *fluent* translations that do not apostil the flow of the plot or hinder the adrenergic pace of the story.

These descriptions throw us back to the translation studies of 1995, when Venuti (2017) sparked the discussion about the translator's (in)visibility with the gasoline of the two terms italicized above. The Anglo-American literary system [and most Western literatures, as portrayed by Pym (1996) or Venuti himself], favor smooth target texts that lead readers to believe they are facing the source, not a translation. These markets are underpinned by an ideological-cultural wiring according to which publishing companies, literary critics, and regular readers promote, sell, expect, and consume translations that read as original works (Venuti, 2017, p. 4-5). Translators are thereby tied up by these constraints and relegated to a position of obedience and low transactional power (Venuti, 1992). Most of them —except maybe acclaimed creative writers (Ray, 1992) the likes of Borges, Cortázar, or Murakami— have been thus ghettoed into corners of social irrelevance and historically perceived as invisible agents in the circulation of literature (Guzmán, 2009), a “perception” observable in silences, ellipses, and negative spaces.

Invisibility opens two interconnected gateways into Bourdieu's sociological framework and its echoes with translation studies. The first one has the word *habitus* carved on it. The po-

sition of translators in the literary system is not merely a reflection of individual agency or aesthetic taste, but the outcome of a socially conditioned set of dispositions (what Bourdieu terms *habitus*) that orient translators toward choices which are both structured by the field and structuring of it in turn (Gouanvic, 2005; Cao et al., 2023). These ingrained patterns push translators towards conforming to the precited expectations of fluency, transparency, and self-effacement, practices that not only ensure the product will be easily absorbed by the target literary market (Venuti, 2017, pp. 4-6) but also perpetuate the translator's minimal visibility and minimum credit (alas, in every sense of the word).

Their peripheral status is precisely the key to the second —and more significant for the goals of this study— Bourdieusian door: *symbolic capital*. Boiled down to its basic substance, this concept refers to the perceived value and respect an individual or group has within a social domain, which can be based on their cultural capital, social networks, or even their perceived economic achievement (Bourdieu, 1986). The translation field, shaped by market forces and cultural hierarchies alike, rarely allocates symbolic capital to translators in a meaningful or lasting way. A select few (as those totems of universal literature mentioned before) may build up public recognition thanks to their prior authorial renown, strategic affiliations with reputable publishers, or sustained critical acclaim (Gouanvic, 2005; Cao et al., 2023); yet, the average translator operates in the shadows, away from the spotlight of cultural and public resonance and, consequently, apart from due credit.

The delicate (un)balance that upholds Western literary systems has, hence, clear consequences on translation practice. But the repercussions of this asymmetrical *statu quo* extend beyond the straight line between the overture

52 of the story and its final words. In this context, Leiva-Rojo (2003) pieces together Lambert's, Munday's, and Van Gorp's proposals and presents a list of seven strategies to parse the visibility of the translator. Number six suggests disassembling the book and exploring its different parts looking for translators' prints in the form of footnotes, prologues, epilogues, names on the cover or back cover, biodatas... Number seven, on the other hand, advocates canvassing literary reviews to analyze if, where, and how translators are discussed (p. 68). Leiva-Rojo is, in his own different terms, talking about liminal territories, informative satellites scholars can chart to unveil a wealth of details shaping readers' perceptions and defining their reception and response to translators and their work, the novel, the author... and many other "et ceteras." Leiva-Rojo is, in short, talking about *paratexts*.

This concept was coined by Gerard Genette and eidetically defined by the author as verbal and non-verbal elements that materially accompany or orbit around the text to transform it into a consumable physical object, to introduce it, and to ensure it is disseminated, understood, and interpreted; in other words, paratexts *make the book a book*, facilitating it to penetrate the target audience from different angles and circulate through the literary cosmos cumulating (new/different) meanings over the years (Genette, 1987/1997, p. 2-3). The breadth of paratextual typology embraces an extensive network of interrelated materials, classified according to different criteria. Thus, we find an initial physical distinction—and the cornerstone of this paper—between *peritexts*, appended to the text, and *epitexts*, separated from it (p.5). Time is of the essence and an axis of Genettian paratextuality; this parameter subdivides paratexts according to the moment of publication or in reference to the writer's life: the first set

includes *prior*, *original* (published alongside the text), *later* and delayed *paratexts*, while the second set encompasses *anthumous* and *posthumous* items (pp. 5-6).

One of the matrix concepts around which many reflections in Genette's *Seuils* (published in 1987) unfold is *authorship*. According to this criterion, the paratext can be *authorial*, issued by the *publisher*, *collective*, or *allographic* if it comes from a third party (p. 8-9). In a similar vein, Genette adds the factor of responsibility to refer either to the materials for which the writer or the publisher are responsible (*official*), or to those produced by third parties without any connection to the former figures (*unofficial*). His typology does not end here; it keeps ramifying based on aspects such as substance (*textual*, *iconic*, *factual*) and the addressee (*public*, *private*, *intimate*), or by projecting bisectrices that segment paratexts into those with *illocutionary value* and those with *performative value* (p. 7-11).

This stream soon overflowed the dikes of literature and extended to other areas. Almost simultaneously with Genette's distillation of the concept in *Palimpsestes* (issued in 1982) and *Seuils*, authors like Stam or Janin-Foucher channeled the paratextual torrent towards the big screen and dazzling spotlights of the cinematographic field (Klecker, 2015). Years later, J. Gray (2010) among others consolidated paratextual studies in film and television, whereas scholars like Re (2016) oriented the analysis towards new fields like transmedia storytelling. Logically and inexorably, the paratextual wave also broke against the margins of translated works.

Although Genette (1987/1997) does discuss translation, it corners it in the final pages of his work as "just another paratext" that may provide some information about the source, a derivative element that should be ideally drafted hand in hand with the author or by authors

themselves. This (mis)conception, prior to the upsurge of translation studies, runs counter to contemporary approaches that reject the servile nature of the target text and assert the creativity and autonomy of the translator (Batchelor, 2018). In this spirit, Tahir-Gürçağlar (2002) advocates severing the ties between source and translated text and initiating a new direction in paratextual studies, one exclusively focused on the paratexts in and related to the translation. Deane-Cox (2014), on the other hand, uses Genette's own words to challenge the peripheral role of translation: if authorial intention is key to crafting and comprehending a particular work, the thick stack of translations that are conducted without the guidance of the writer's voice should entail at least a partial recognition of the translator's authorial nature.

Beyond this conceptualization of the target text as a "text in its own right," translations have an undeniable potential to shed light on specific features of the source, illuminate hidden interpretations, or silhouette the blurred footprints of the creative process (Batchelor, 2018). Piling research on translation and paratexts has also cultivated a new and leafy tree of paratextual onomastics. Yuste-Frías (2012) uses the term *paratraducción* to define the vast cultural, ideological, and linguistic network interwoven by these materials, their translation, and the publication of translated literature, whereas Deane-Cox (2014) christens the same and similar phenomena as *translatorial paratexts*. In like vein, Batchelor (2018) oxygenates Genette's typology by multiplication: time of publication is further fragmented to span *pre-*, *original*, and *postranslation paratexts*, while the number of senders and receivers is squared to include key figures both inside and outside the publishing industry (critics, followers, scholars...). At the same time, she equalizes the kinds of paratextual materials to

the pace and forms of the digital era and suggests the study of posters, apps, webpages, or videos, among many others (Batchelor, 2018).

Paratexts are, in short, a complex, evolving, and interdependent elementary web with several functions and possibilities. One of them is providing (or denying) spaces for the translator to make their names. This streak of paratextuality has been tapped in prior studies that explore different planes of translators' visibility. M. P. Gray (2021), for instance, deepens and extends Venuti's claims of invisibility by parsing the epitextual status of the translator in critics' and readers' reviews from France, Germany, and the United Kingdom. Results show that the general public is more prone to overlook the translator than experts. Focusing on the latter alone, French critics mention the translator's name more often, while British reviewers discuss translator's decisions more recurrently. But let us not be fooled by these sparks of recognition: visibility percentages do not even reach 30% in the first scenario and 20% in the second, with comments rarely amounting to more than vague and superficial observations.

In like manner, Solum (2017) takes us to one of the beating cores of Nordic Noir, the Norwegian literary ecosystem, with a study dissecting a sample of translation reviews that sparked suggestive and countercurrent debates about the translator's job and triggered an intense crossfire of written reactions and responses. These epitexts *do* gravitate around translation, both as a process and a product, and ram pillars of the Western translational acquis, like critics' tendency to circumvent the translator's effort or their reluctance to compare source and target texts in their analyses. Results are, however, veiled by methodological smoke and mirrors: the media outlets that published the reviews only cover a small portion of the Norwegian

54 cultural landscape, and the sample discussed is too thin to even approach the vast and overwhelming forms of a rule.

Despite the limitations, Solum's study hints at the transition that Bilodeau (2013) fully develops in a paper that juxtaposes the paratextual invisibility of Western translators with their prominent status in the Japanese market. A different light rises in the East, one that reveals a different paradigm founded on a different set of paratextual conventions. Akashi (2018) extends this baseline to new coordinates of the Eastern literary panorama by exploring the correlation between fame and visibility, using Haruki Murakami's translations into Japanese as a case study. Her research evinces that the writer's popularity enhances paratextual recognition even further, with his prestige resonating in every corner of this liminal dimension.

Alas, western winds blow again through the research conducted in Spain. Here, a wide gap separates legal standards and actual recognition, and translators must negotiate the discrepancies between the authorial condition granted to them *de jure* and the social and cultural maltreatment they experience *de facto*. Barrero (2004) reminds us that the Spanish legislation recognizes the translator as an author with all the bells and whistles this position entails. And yet, the contradiction between the idealized framework of *how things are supposed to be* and the stubborn reality of *how things are* is all too evident. Fernández (2010) charts this sectoral breach through an empirical study grounded on the opinions of Spanish translators. Participants seem to accept the premise (aka Pyrrhic victory) that things are slightly better than before, but the findings of the survey trace a serrated line that plummets unceasingly when it connects the focal points of translators' working conditions and status: dwindling salaries, contractors

accustomed to bypass regulations, or rampant professional intrusion delineate the frail foundations of a trade neglected by most literary critics and invisible to the social eye due to its fragmentation and atavistic inability to weave strong associative networks.

Translators' complaints regarding visibility are easy to confirm: a look at our own bookshelves or a visit to our favorite store or library will surely adumbrate the paratextual amnesia that research evinces with systematicity and underlines with granularity. One such example is the historical novel translated into Spanish over the last three decades. According to Author (2023), it is particularly shocking to notice that a subgenre supposedly prone to rely on translatorial paratexts to color the historicity of the novel (just consider the contextual explanations needed when readers do not share the writer's-novel's background) blocks these liminal spaces to the translators' inroads and exiles their names to copyright pages. Readers' and critics' responses follow suit, generally disregarding the translator, including their names somewhere in the data sheet in the best-case scenario, or, steered by the biological determinism that leads us to brazenly share our *schadenfreude*, commenting on their work only (and marginally) to underscore their mistakes, poor choices, and subjective wrongs.

An alternate methodology and a different sample convey a fractal of the same phenomenon that repeats itself across genres. Santana-López et al. (2017) perused the bibliographical catalogue of our Biblioteca Nacional to gauge the visibility of the Spanish translators of German works from 1970 to 2010. Albeit the situation has changed (and improved) after the approval of the Ley de Propiedad Intelectual, more than two-thirds of the vast compilation (over 20,000 entries) indicate the text is a translation

but omit the translator's name. Of the remaining works, just 44% "name names," whereas the rest cloud the translator again in silence. As the authors conclude, invisibility is probably a consequence of editorial policies like those described in the preceding paragraph; in this context, German-to-Spanish translators navigate bylines, elliptical spaces, and blind spots driven by an apparently random, retroactively corrective criterion that proves itself insufficient to achieve high levels of recognition.

A glimpse of the golden East can be seen, however, in Serra-Vilella's (2021) contribution, a paper that depicts how the rays of the rising sun stream in our literary market via translation. A paratextual analysis that encompasses genres from literature to manga, business management, or martial arts reveals a greater visibility of the translator in literature than in other categories, a progressive decline in the use of pseudonyms, and the usefulness of paratexts to understand translatorial decisions and the publisher's attitude towards their job (pp. 244-245). In sum, a beacon of hope in the otherwise overwhelming darkness that surrounds the figure of the literary translator in our country.

Whether this sparkle is a fleeting anecdote or a burgeoning norm is something time and research will tell. Meanwhile, the present paper contributes to this ongoing exploration of the Spanish paratextual ecosystem through an empirical study that finds strength in numbers and innovation. As subsequent chapters will display, our analysis searches—for the first time—for the translator's prints in the bloody crime scenes that Nordic Noir crime fiction has snowed all over our literary panorama; and it does so by canvassing an extensive sample of peritextual and epitextual materials related to this ironically and apparently undying publishing sensation. Our approach combines, in short, the audacity of the

best Marlowe and the thoroughness of the sidekick who dives into files and cold cases to find the clue that will unravel the mystery. Please clear the area, and let the investigation begin.

4. FINGERPRINTING THE TRANSLATOR: PARATEXTUAL ANALYSIS

The first section of this analysis evaluates the translator's visibility in the peritexts of 70 translated Nordic Noir crime novels¹ published in Spain from 1972—"the case that set the precedent," as indicated above—up to the present years of everlasting literary momentum. To do so, we examined a series of peritexts inside or appended to the book, including the front and back covers, title pages, copyright pages, footnotes, prefaces, epilogues, and flaps.

Determining exact peritextual authorship in each novel verges on the impossible, but as noted by Castro-Vázquez (2009), Winters (2014), Batchelor (2018), and Tarakcioğlu and Kıran (2021)—landing on the present what Genette (1997) already outlined in *Paratexts*—peritexts are a complex scaffolding typically designed by the publisher with masts that intertwine economic and ideological interests, often reinforcing power hierarchies that sideline writers and bury translators six feet under. Although in some cases these elements may be negotiated with them [remote but possible scenarios mapped out in studies such as Liang's (2024)], the final responsibility and decision, whether aligned with the wishes of other agents or not, ultimately lie with the publisher. And in the cases that follow, it is clear that peritexts serve as marketing makeup that conceals the traces left by translators.

¹ Only the sources cited in the article will be included in Appendix 1.

If we judge a book by its cover and the translator's recognition by whether their names appear on it or not, we can conclude the profession is paratextually ignored in the Nordic Noir subgenre. Only 3 out of the 70 novels open this center stage for the translator to share the show: Alfaguara's *El hombre con cara de asesino* (Rönkä, 2002/2013) and *El enigma Flatey* (Arnar-Ingólfsson, 2002/2014), and Lengua de Trapo's *Bailar con un ángel* (Edwardson, 1997/2002). Differences between these editions can be spotted, though; while Alfaguara subtly places the translator's name in the upper left corner, still catching the eye, Lengua de Trapo boldly stamps it right under the title. There is a flip side too: in all three cases, the font used for the translator's name is the smallest on the page. High visibility with an asterisk.

Bailar con un ángel includes another interesting detail in its peritexts, albeit not directly related to the novel: the flap of the book lists other titles in the same collection along with the author and the translator of each volume. The translator's visibility in the flaps of Nordic Noir crime fiction ends here, but the information contained in these peritexts opens an extra angle worth peering through. 12 novels highlight the text has been translated into a number of languages, and 3 boast that the translation rights have been sold to many different countries. These figures, paratextually "neonized" by the publishing companies, create a paradox aligned with the findings in Author (2023): translation into other languages is a medal on the book's chest, a marketing hook that reflects the prestige of the writer and the quality of the novel but forgets the vectors that enable literature to circulate overseas.

Translators' names thus concentrate on second or even third tiers of visibility, namely the title and the copyright pages. The first scenario

encompasses 58 cases. Surprisingly, contrary to previous opinions on improving conditions, only five of the twelve books that deny this space to the translator were published before the year 2000. The other seven were released in the first two decades of the 21st century, some as recently as 2020, like Nesser's *Kim Novak nunca se bañó en el lago Genesaret*. Copyright pages, on the other hand, are not subject to zeitgeist fluctuations or the variability of discretionary editorial policies: they always list the translator's name, in truth compelled by Spanish regulations like the Ley de Propiedad Intelectual.

Translator's footnotes draw a similarly barren panorama. Only 9 novels include these slots, primarily used to provide historical data, information about Scandinavian figures, authorities, or places, and to explain words intentionally left untranslated in the text. All nine titles were published after 2005. Notable examples include, among others, Mankell's (2002/2006) *Antes de que hiele*, Lagercrantz's (2017) *El hombre que perseguía su sombra*, or Lapidus' (2006/2010) *Dinero fácil*, a paratextual sleight of hand that unearths and entombs the translator all at once. Throughout the novel, we can find as many as 129 footnotes appended by translator María Sierra, but abracadabra, never presented as such. The normalized abbreviation *N. del T* (*nota del traductor*) is conspicuously absent, so readers may mistake them for peritexts from the source, *Snabba Cash*, where such notes are nowhere to be seen.

The same rule of absence applies to other types of peritexts: prefaces, epilogues, biographies, book spines... are paratextual cordoned areas for the Nordic Noir translator. All in all, their peritextual visibility is consistently low and inflexibly persistent. The only time window slightly opened to this figure is the one that runs from 2009 to 2014: these years account for 8 of the 9

novels that include translator's footnotes and 2 of the 3 cases where their names are imprinted on the front cover. The others are hermetically sealed to any form of noticeable recognition and reveal a sectoral attitude our forthcoming epitextual study will —unfortunately— underpin.

This second stage of the analysis is segmented into three sections corresponding to three key agents in the production, publication, circulation, and consumption of Nordic Noir crime fiction in Spain. The first part applies an epitextual lens to the mugshot of an industry that, by now, has become a regular suspect: the publishing companies. Our research in this regard provides a granular examination of their webpages and the sections devoted to the novels in our sample.

Here, references to the translator can mainly be found in the novels' datasheets that are sort of like the equivalent of the copyright pages in the books, i.e., spaces of limited visibility inserted with administrative automaticity. Most webpages include the translators' names in these lists together (and typically after) other "essential" information like the number of pages, the format, or even the type of binding of the volume. Size and position are also worth exploring. Prevalence in most sites is given to the title, the front cover, a synopsis of the plot, and the author's bio. Publishing houses like Planeta (and all its associated labels such as Seix Barral, Tusquets, or Destino) place the latter after the product sheet, but the lines and space devoted to the writer's life and career are notably longer and larger. Siruela (publisher of two works) is the sole company that places the translator's name immediately after the author's and the title in the upper part of the page, next to the book cover.

More unfunny facts. Firms like Penguin and the many branches of this gigantic publishing group (Roca Editorial, Reservoir Books, Suma de Letras...) do not automatically provide the

specifics of the novel: users need to click on a tab ("Detalles del producto") for the datasheet to drop down and the translator's details to pop up. We can even find exceptions to top this already obscuring practice: books like *Offline* (Holt, 2015/2017), *El caso Hartung* (Sveistrup, 2019), or those issued by Providence Ediciones (one novel) and Editorial Principal de los Libros (two) do not credit the translator in the already "inconspicuous" list of book details.

In short, and in keeping with the conclusions of precited studies, we can infer that translators had little or no say in editorial peri- and epitextual decisions. After all, such widespread and sustained self-sabotage and attraction to anonymity is hard to conceive. Instead, clues pile up, pointing an accusing finger at the Spanish publishing industry: they have murdered translators of Nordic Noir crime fiction by omission, hence creating what we may call an "editorial *habitus*," which, ironically, relies on the habit of *not* doing.

Sadly, they have other partners in crime. Another vertex of the literary polyhedron and a vector in the reception of literature —specialized critics— mirror the patterns of the industry and commit similar sins of oblivion. This second part of the epitextual study is based on an analysis of 30 plus 3 (this odd formula will be easily understood in no time) reviews of Nordic Noir crime books published in Spanish media including national and regional newspapers and cultural magazines and supplements like *El País*, *El Mundo*, *La Razón*, *ABC*, *Diario.es*, *20 minutos*, *La Vanguardia*, *El Norte de Castilla*, or *Babelia*.

If we were to summarize the first 30 documents, we could say "press does not talk translation." In the whole sample, translators are only mentioned twice. One mention is relatively extensive and surprising in nature, since it praises the job of the translators of Larsson's *La reina en el palacio de las corrientes de aire*. Specifically,

58 it highlights that “los traductores han logrado tener a tiempo la tercera y última entrega de la saga *Millenium*,” something “que no parecía tan claro hace unas semanas (EFE, 2009). The second reference, however, is again attuned to the low pitch given to the translator’s voice: Navarro (2018) provides a brief datasheet at the end of his critique of Mankell’s *El hombre de la dinamita* that includes the translator’s name, Carmen Montes, in the minimalistic usual fashion: bottom of the page, small font, occult to the eyes of the impatient reader.

Interestingly, reviews like EFE’s (2010) show (the otherwise evident) awareness of the leap from one language to another, noting, for instance, that Liza Marklund’s *Dinamita* “es la primera novela que se edita en castellano de la escritora sueca.” However, unlike the example above and like most critics, they seem to assume texts are magically recoded into Spanish, words and sentences switched into a different language by some sort of spell or mystical machine, as translators are never credited in the article.

Hidden under this pile of silent pages translation-wise, we find a low-intensity hope in a small sample of three articles (hence plus three) that, in turn, hints at the *habitus* that underpins at least this streak of the profession. Two of them appeared in *Público* and focus on different derivations of the Nordic Noir phenomenon strictly (and thus surprisingly) through the lens of the translator. Both are passages of the same story: Rocamora (2009) and Corroto (2010) describe the asphyxiating pressure under which translators of this subgenre work, forced to immediate delivery by publishing houses eager for best-sellers, buried under unceasing assignments due to the lack of specialized translators, dispirited by fees that do not grow in proportion to this crushing workload. Thanks to them, we

discover a job more akin to the anxious sweats of dismantling a time bomb than to the patient craft of embossing a story onto the white surface of a new language.

The third article is an interview with Juan José Ortega (Beltrán, 2019), one of the Spanish translators of the *Millenium* saga. The text is a triptych that highlights the precarious conditions of the profession, praises the addictive nature of the job and the upsides of his experience as part of the engine that powers a bestselling sensation, and concludes with a personal reflection that rubs salt in Venuti’s bound for its content and tone: when Ortega happily avers that “el mejor piropo que te pueden hacer es que la novela fluye muy bien. Si no, nos encontramos con libros que suenan a traducción” he aligns himself with Western market standards and advocates for the textual invisibility of the translator. Understandable and pragmatic as this may be, it inevitably triggers certain deontological questions about translation and publishing practices, market dynamics, and readers’ expectations, topics we would enjoy addressing... elsewhere.

Regarding the epitextual visibility that concerns us now, this is the role we believe the specialized press should have and the approach they should take: one that equates the translator’s Herculean effort with the author’s and recognizes the key part they play in the circulation of literary phenomena like Nordic Noir crime novels: without them, all these stories would still sound like double Swedish to us.

However, critics are prone to discuss translations as if they were originals, leaving translators’ names as foggy and obscure as they appear in the peritexts from publishing houses, thus perpetuating their bankrupted social credit and squalid authority. And regrettably, as the next lines will show, references to the translator

among readers get even more diluted in an even broader paratextual stream.

This final stage of our analysis gauges translators' recognition in the last stop of the commercial literary tracks: regular readers. To do so, we have dissected a total of 8,840 reviews of translated Nordic Noir crime novels across literary blogs, discussion platforms, and social media. Results after parsing the first set of epitexts—24 blogs published by readers—underscore the “in” in *translator's invisibility*. Only one blog, *Anika entre libros* (Violeta Lila, n.d.), credits the translator's name in a datasheet she adds to her evaluation of Läckberg's and Fexeus' *El mentalista*, and just three other websites include remarks about the translator's decisions. One can be found on *Libros y Literatura*, where César Malagón (2010) criticizes the “traducciones (...) enrevesadas” of the titles in Larsson's *Millenium* saga. The last two references do not belong to the review itself but to the visitors' reactions. In *El Ojo Lector*, Nicanlanu (2012) and Javier S. (2012) join in the translator's beating, blaming the poor writing of *La princesa de hielo* on “un problema de traducción.”

The bulk of this sample is concentrated on book discussion platforms, with 8,792 reviews posted by Spanish readers. These evaluations have been retrieved from *Goodreads*, one of the most popular sites for users to exchange their views on literature. For those who love spoilers, here is a chilling statistic: just 150 entries show some kind of visibility. A marginal fraction of this minimal percentage (4 texts) addresses unrelated translation matters, but the rest can be clustered around common translative axes.

For starters, we can find a few users (5) who like to name names in their assessments. Soledad Blanco Conesa (2021a and 2021b) notes that “la edición que leí es de Booket y fue traducida por Martin Lexell y Juan José Ortega Román”

before reviewing Larsson's *La chica que soñaba con una cerilla y un bidón de gasolina* and *La reina en el palacio de las corrientes de aire*. Carol Álvarez (2018) does likewise when commenting Ahnhem's *Mañana te toca a ti* “en traducción de Santiago del Rey.” Gemma entre lecturas (2023) shares a personal anecdote while analyzing Nesbø's *Eclipse*, a novel by the author with whom “me enganché a la literatura noruega” and, as fate would have it, translated into Spanish by “mi amiga Lotte.” Finally, Librosqmencantan (2023) eulogizes the “narrativa fantástica” of Björg Aegisdóttir's *El crujido de la escalera*, a description she haloes giving special “mención a la traducción hecha por Cherehisa Viera.”

This last review opens a short streak of comments that praise the translator's work under increasingly shimmering lights. The flickering “una traducción aceptable” (Ernesto, 2013) or the soft “la traducción de la narrativa es puntual en cuanto a palabras se refiere” (Diego, 2015) and “la traducción de mi edición es buena” (Ann Cebrián, 2020), pave the way for the blinding epithets by Marien Perezdealba (2023), Alicia (2017), and Saúl (2021), who rate different Nordic Noir crime novels as “una muy buena traducción,” “increíble el trabajo del [...] traductor,” and “su traducción al español es excelente,” respectively. Numbers, however, pour cold water on these warm compliments: we find only 18 examples in a sample of more than 8,000 reviews. A sad drop of recognition in a paratextual ocean.

The previous evaluations have their underside too. Not everything in our epitextual garden is rosy for the translator; quite the opposite, opinions are closer to a bed of thorns, as negative remarks on their work (37) more than double the figure above. What remains the same is the varying degrees of critical temperature. In a tempered area, we can incardinate comments on specific issues, like “la no traducción

60 de frases hechas” pinpointed by Sebas (2017) or “los chistes [...] mal traducidos” highlighted by Eba Munoz (2023), and overall remarks that reveal a “traducción que no me terminó de convencer” (Daniela, 2020) or simply “mejorable” (Rafa Aguirre Ezquerro, 2022). Criticism starts to boil when reviewers assert that “se pierde muchísimo con las traducciones” (Clara, 2017) or share a plain and resounding “la traducción al español no es buena” (andrea ricagno, 2022). Finally, abrasive invectives state that “la traducción es terrorífica (en plan mal)” (Violeta, 2023), debase the target text by affirming that “la traducción no le hace ningún favor, sino al contrario, a la historia” (Daniela, 2012), or just strafe the translator point blank by considering that “el peor contra de todos no es de la escritora, sino de la editorial: la traducción” (Montse Gallardo, 2023).

In a sort of middle ground, we can place a block of critiques (49) that question whether certain quality issues of the novel are ascribable to the translator. Sometimes they give them the benefit of the doubt, but more often than not, readers doubt they can bring any benefit. For instance, Mayte Blasco (2020) wonders if “la novela no está muy bien escrita (o tal vez la traducción al español sea muy mala),” Laura Bergen (2020) supposes that “la poca naturalidad de los diálogos [...] quizá sea cosa de la traducción,” and Patricia García (2021) regrets not having understood “muchas cosas, no sé si por una mala traducción o qué.” Among the few reviewers who try to stem this tide, Labi-jose opines (2017) that Nesbø’s *Petirrojo* has “una calidad literaria muy superior [...]” either because “el traductor ha hecho un gran trabajo” or “el autor ha sabido por fin manifestar todo lo que se le suponía;” similarly, Rosana Adler (2022) thinks that Läckberg’s *El mentalista* “está mejor redactada que las primeras novelas

de la autora. Quién sabe” if she has matured as a writer, if it is the coauthor’s (Henrik Fexeus) doing, or simply “que la traducción ha mejorado.”

Beyond polarized digressions and shots in the dark, we have found a series of reviews grouped around concrete translatorial choices. One of them is title translation, with a special focus on the *Millenium* saga. Eleven of the twelve readers that discuss this issue show their surprise (and, mostly, dismay) at a “pésima traducción” (Lucas Rodríguez, 2014), decisions that “no me da la cabeza para entender” (Ritz, 2010) or “no tiene(n) nada que ver con lo que de verdad significa” (Sempiterno_books, 2013) and may even “arruinar un poco la trama del libro” (Mauricio Roverssi, 2011). Only Isaura (2011) considers that “el título en español” of the first part of the series, *Los hombres que no amaban a las mujeres*, “es bastante acertado.”

Not so wise seems to be the translators’ inclination to use the Castilian variant and its idiosyncratic expressions in some novels. Twenty reviewers discuss this matter, and none of them support the choice. Mike Ceballos (2017), for instance, complains that “la traducción [...] no es en español neutro,” Ernesto (2013) regrets reading “frases de la península como: ‘dar por culo’ o ‘a ojo de buen cubero,’” and Pablo Palet Arandeda (2016) laments encountering Spanish lingo, a sort of “lenguaje pseudoadolescente [...] francamente lamentable.” On a note that transcends the paratextual frame of our study, this creates an interesting paradox: a domesticating approach that allegedly leads to invisibility winds up making the translator visible; at least for an epitextual second.

The final issue readers tackle is indirect translation, a practice they *directly* criticize. Five readers demonstrate an unprecedented interest in the translation authorship and process, as they complete an exercise of translatorial archeology

that unearths novels like *El nido del cuco* or 1793 have been translated “del sueco al inglés y del inglés, ya al español” (El olor de los libros, 2020). This practice “no tiene perdón de dios (sic.)” (Mictter, 2023), hampers the flow of the plot (María, 2020), and is, in short, “una estafa” considering that “traductores españoles del sueco hay y bastantes” (Caro, 2020).

To button up our epitextual analysis, we decided to search for the translator’s fingerprints in a different medium: videos. More specifically, we have watched and dissected a sample of 24 TikTok posts dealing with translated Nordic Noir crime novels. However, dusting a different surface did not yield very different results. No translator left a mark, and no reviewer devoted a second to them or their work, making invisibility a transmedia occurrence—a continuum only perceptible by the magnitude of its absence, chaining words that never existed and names that were never pronounced.

Almost zero visibility among literature suppliers and a key liminal agent between product and consumer like literary critics anticipated poor visibility prospects among Spanish readers. And this is what we get. When credit is not given in the top layers of the literary pyramid, it is very hard for it to filter down and permeate the base—its most extensive level, the fuel that keeps the engine running. With a few exceptions numbers turn into mere anecdotes, our study evinces that Spanish readers of Nordic Noir crime fiction mostly receive, consume, and discuss this subgenre without acknowledging the linguistic bridges that brought these authors from the cold into the Spanish sun, the figures who melted cultural resistances so that it became a literary sensation and a financial bulldozer. In this case, victims are not murdered but forgotten, perhaps just a gentler way to disappear...

5. CONCLUSIONS

The results of our analysis corroborate our opening hypotheses, and hence the trend of translator’s invisibility in Spain within critical sectors of literary production and circulation. Even though they are a central cog in the gears that have elevated Nordic Noir crime fiction to its bestselling status, translators only wrestle their name into a small proportion of a wide paratextual sample, with no significant differences in the recognition publishers, critics, and readers demonstrate towards an instrumental work that is only marginally—and mainly negatively—discussed. These findings align with the Western tradition of backgrounding the translator (both in and outside the text) extensively explained by Venuti (2017) and others, and with the precarious labor conditions, scarce social and critical awareness (Fernández, 2010), and paratextual invisibility in specific subgenres (Echauri Galván, 2023) literary translators experience in the Spanish market.

Beyond confirming this entrenched pattern, our study adds yet another voice to this polyphonic conversation by displaying an exhaustive and granular geography of the translator’s role within particular coordinates of the Spanish literary landscape. The systematic paratextual dissection of our Nordic Noir corpus not only cements existing claims about invisibility but also exposes the structural persistence of this erasure across different stages of literary circulation, from production to reception. Translated into Bourdieusian lingo, the article concludes that the paratextual *habitus* adopted by publishers in this subgenre begets critical and public invisibility and strips translators of symbolic capital, all at once.

Studies like Akashi’s (2018) or Bilodeau’s (2013), however, show us an alternate reality that Solum (2017) rescues from distant utopianism

and transmutes into a tentative but actual possibility of envisioning and establishing a new translative imagery in the West, an Arcadia in which translators reach a different social stature and paratexts become the neon lights that multiply their visibility and illuminate the intricacies of their taken-for-granted work. Just as peritextual invisibility has led to epitextual invisibility, it is reasonable to think that a change in publishing practices could create a ripple effect that influences critics and readers, potentially leading to a greater and more consistent recognition of the translator's role within the paratext, even if only through instinctual mimicry.

A few Spanish publishing houses like Impedimenta or Acanalado (which deserve due credit and a star role in another paper) are already building this horizon with volumes that open core peritextual spaces (such as the front cover or the prologue) to the translator. But bad habits die hard, good praxis is sometimes difficult to metabolize, and this peritextual shift has not yet reached larger publishing companies, at least not the ones examined in this study. The indispensable premise of the virtuous circle described above is, therefore, a work in slow progress. In the meantime, agents in our literary system kill translators softly and quietly with indifference. Crimes against the unnamed do not make the news, and Spanish translators do not make the front pages of Nordic Noir crime novels or the core lines of literary reviews. Move along; there is nothing to see here... yet?

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