

Literature, "In-House" Writers, and Processes of Success in Publishing

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Frank de Glas,

"Literature, 'In-House' Writers, and Processes of Success in Publishing"

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Abstract: Frank de Glas discusses in his article, "Literature, 'In-House' Writers, and Processes of Success in Publishing," the fact that too many studies of twentieth-century publishing practices concentrate on individual case studies while neglecting more general patterns and that too little use is made of theoretical concepts developed in the sociology of cultural production. He argues that one of the contributing elements in the economic and artistic success of a publishing house is the bringing together of a productive group of "in-house authors." To build up and to maintain such a group, publishers steadily launch new authors who they hope will become productive writers associated with their publishing house. There is little systemic and empirical knowledge, however, of the extent of how and to what degree such publishers succeed. The present article presents empirical research -- based on explicit theoretical and methodological argumentation -- into the literary careers of Dutch-language writers of literary fiction in the period of 1961 to 1965. The results of the study increase our insight into general tendencies in the productivity of authors and their commitment, or lack of it, to particular publishers in The Netherlands.

Frank DE GLAS

Literature, "In-House" Writers, and Processes of Success in Publishing

From an a priori point of departure as to theoretical base and discipline, the present article is comparatist from the perspective that it outlines explicitly a theoretical framework and methodology and it then applies the framework and methodology to a specific problematic in the field of literature. Thus, the study presented is thematically in the mode of investigating an important aspect of the process of the literary system (literary life). In this context, a study of the processes of publishing offers us insight into the making of a canon, the market and production of literature, the making of literary reputations, and more.

With regard to the problematic studied, namely publishing, recent scholarship has made considerable advances, in particular in the study of twentieth-century literary publishing (see, for example, Altbach and Hoshino; Dahab; De Glas; Estivals; Glaister; Janssen; Tötösy 1996). More, where traditionally attention was confined to the biographies and autobiographies of publishers, there has been -- after several years of omission following Jacques Dubois' seminal work -- a growing interest in literary institutions as a location of activity where processes such as publishing take place (see, for example, Beekman; for a bibliography see Tötösy 1998-

<<http://clcwebjournal.lib.purdue.edu/library/sysbib97.html>>; see also SHARP: Society for the History of Authorship, Reading, and Publishing <<http://www.sharpweb.org/>>). In the first instance, this interest in institutional processes focuses on the role of criticism and reviews and school and university curricula (witness the stream of publications on canon formation), but has more recently spread to the role of publishing houses. As a result, literary histories in Europe and in the United States are being revised with a view to the influence of publishing houses and editors on the production of individual literary works, the (re)emergence of *auteurs*, and the making of their reputations, etc.

In another context I have argued that the study of individual publishing houses has been too much a matter of case studies and too little an attempt to reflect in more general terms on the role of publishers with the help of the theoretical insights developed in other disciplines regarding cultural institutions (see 1989; 1992). Since literary scholarship has traditionally focused on the intrinsic evolution of forms of writing, the role of cultural institutions was relegated to the margins. Accordingly, the emergence of an author's oeuvre was seen above all as a matter of individual creativity, while the rise and fall of movements was seen above all as the accumulative effect of the creativity of individuals. The sociology of cultural production has opened our eyes to the fact that extrinsic (contextual and systemic) factors may play a role in the evolution of artistic forms. Howard Becker, for example, has demonstrated this fact with respect to music and the visual arts and Richard Peterson has applied a cultural production perspective to the field of literature and has detailed the influence on literary evolution of a number of social factors such as law, technology, industry structure, occupational careers, organizational structure, and market.

Pierre Bourdieu has gone even a step further, arguing for recognition of the importance of competitiveness in the relations between the various actors (authors, publishers, critics) in what he designates the "literary field." The artistic value attributed to a text or other work of art, according to Bourdieu, is a social product -- a notion that reflects his systemic approach and his anti-essentialist principles (see Bourdieu; Jurt; Van Rees and Vermunt). The material and the immaterial production of a work of art are necessarily related: those responsible for the material production of a work also play a role in its symbolic production by praising it as authoritatively as possible. From different positions within the literary field, writers, journals, publishers, and critics compete with each other for recognition as cultural authorities. P.D. McDonald has shown that this approach is also applicable in the history of the book, where it can help revise Robert Darnton's influential but not sufficiently elaborated communication model (110-11).

Empirical research based in explicit theoretical frameworks enhances our understanding of the strategies used by publishers to attract and keep their authors. In my opinion, studies of publishing ought to seize upon the opportunities offered by Bourdieu's theoretical work but without falling into an uncritical acceptance of all his precepts. It is still too early to formulate a definitive judgment regarding the usefulness of his basic concepts, since many of them have not yet been put to the test

of empirical research. Critical reflection such as that of M. Munnichs and C.J. Van Rees suggests that not all of Bourdieu's concepts are unambiguous. Nevertheless, they offer at the very least an interesting heuristic instrument, one that may help us towards formulating new questions. In another context, I have argued that attempts to apply Bourdieu's concepts to the production of literary works have often paid insufficient attention to the role of publishing house lists and to the way in which publishers develop those lists (see 1989, 1992). In other studies, I have tried to develop categories in order to describe and analyze publishing house lists. In the same context, I made an inventory of the different dimensions from the publisher's perspective of the oeuvres of living authors (see 1993, 1998). This approach, based on the work of Bourdieu, provides the basis for an analysis of the role of literary publishers in the literary system.

The publication of the entire oeuvre of a particular writer in the course of time is essential for both the symbolic and the commercial success of a publishing house. "In-House" authors ensure a regular supply of manuscripts, they encourage the development of readers dedicated to their works and this in turn encourages regular and long-term sales. Traditionally, publishers themselves have always insisted on the importance of including "in-house" authors in their lists. As the German publisher, Peter Suhrkamp put it: "what matters to me is not the individual book, but the author in all his different manifestations" ("es geht mir nicht um den Einzeltitel, sondern um den Autor in seiner Gesamtphysiognomie" (qtd. in Unseld 140; my translation). The French publisher Edmond Buchet put the point even more strongly: "a publisher is, in some way, the author of his authors and he himself creates an oeuvre made up of his publishing house, the sum total of all the oeuvres he has published" ("L'editeur est, en quelque sorte, l'auteur de ses auteurs et il crée lui-même une oeuvre, une oeuvre qui est sa maison, une oeuvre composée de toutes celles qu'il a publiées" (9-10; my translation). Buchet's words bear out the point that oeuvres are not only important for the commercial success of a publishing house, but also for its cultural prestige (in Bourdieu's terms its symbolic value). With hindsight it can be established that the major writers of the twentieth century produced extensive oeuvres while authors like Henry Roth or Ralph Ellis are exceptions which prove the rule. If a debutant(e) is talented enough to be published and subsequently to get positive feedback from the critics, then it becomes easier to cross the threshold into a long-term, socially-prestigious career as a professional writer. On the other hand, both authors and publishers know full well that the former have to keep adding new titles to their oeuvre in order to keep up sales of earlier works through the renewed public attention which a new work brings with it. Continuous public attention helps the publisher win prestige for the writer and, in the long term, to contribute to his or her literary canonization through the strategic re-issue of works in "Classics" series or as part of "Collected Works," translations, the lobbying of the members of the juries of literary prizes, etc.

In this article, I present the results of research into the literary careers of 87 authors who made their debut as writers of literary fiction with Dutch and Flemish publishers in the period 1961-65. I focus in particular on the subsequent productivity of these writers and examine the extent to which they went on to become "in-house authors" with the publisher who brought out their first published texts. By focusing on the period 1961-65, it is possible to follow the development of these writers across some three and a half decades. In practice, the Netherlands and Flanders (the Dutch-speaking part of Belgium) make up one linguistic area. In 1961, this area had approximately fifteen million inhabitants, a population which had grown by 1997 to some twenty-one million. Many Flemish authors publish their work in the Netherlands -- this situation resembles that of prominent Swiss and Austrian writers whose work is often published in Germany. Dutch authors also have a readership in Flanders. Around 1960, the total number of works published in the Netherlands and Flanders averaged some 9,000 a year, about 5,500 of which had originally been written in Dutch (this figure includes fiction and non-fiction, first editions, and reprints) (Herpers, 89). The authors treated in this study will probably be unknown quantities for those not familiar with the Dutch literary scene; my purpose here, however, is not to discuss their work as such, but to analyze systemically their relations with their publishers.

In the corpus of the study, I limit myself to debutants in the genre of literary fiction as my primary interest concerns the question of which publishers publish and, in the process of publishing, how they publish later works of the core group of debutants. I would like to note that texts written by the authors in question in other genres are not represented in the analysis; only new fiction titles are

included with reference being made to collections only when these include new work; and the reprinting of earlier titles such as reprints, special book-club editions, paperback editions, translations, film rights, etc., are not considered for similar reasons. In sum, the guiding question behind the present study is with regard to the extent literary debuts are followed by the production and publication of new works of fiction and what the process of such continua or the lack of it suggests.

As suggested previously, publishers cannot survive without regularly launching the works of new talent thus to rejuvenate the group of "in-house" authors. In this process of renewal, publishers have several obstacles to overcome, as follows. To begin with, their authors have to go on writing after they have made their debut; they must have more than one book "in them"; their authors have to produce subsequent works which are publishable and potentially successful; their authors have to be kept on board so that the investment made in their debuts (usually without much return) can be returned; their author's work has to attract enough buyers/readers to generate profits for the publisher; and lastly the artistic merits of their authors must be publicly recognized in such a way as to benefit both the writer and the publishing house. In what follows, I examine whether or not the Dutch and Flemish publishers chosen for this study succeeded in overcoming the said obstacles. Two assumptions underlie my interpretation of the literary careers studied here. The first is the idea that both authors and publishers will usually do their best to ensure production of new work. This can be explained, on the one hand, by the social prestige associated with being a recognized writer and, on the other hand, by the desire of publishers to invest in their authors and to get financial as well as symbolic return for their initial investment. For both parties, moreover, have an interest in giving the oeuvre enough critical mass for it to remain more or less continuously in the public eye. The second assumption underlying my analysis is the idea that publishers will try to hold on to their debutants, whereas the writers themselves will usually try to climb up the publication ladder, as it were, by moving to ever-more prestigious publishing houses.

In order to offer a reflection of status among the publishers, they are divided into three categories. The first category includes the five publishing houses (which I refer to as the G-5) which have dominated the literary scene in the entire Dutch-speaking area since 1961: De Bezige Bij, Meulenhoff, Querido, De Arbeiderspers, and Contact. The second category (which I refer to as the "Other Dutch Publishers") includes less trend-setting and "second-class" publishers located in the Netherlands, and the third category of publishers is the Flemish publishers. It should be noted that in some cases Dutch and Flemish publishers work together. The titles of the fiction debuts of the authors followed in this study are debutants 1961-65 and their subsequent oeuvres. Each author's data includes the following: name, date of fiction debut, publisher, number of subsequent fiction works, and (where relevant), works in other genres (the detailed data are available from the author of the article upon request to <Frank.deGlas@let.uu.nl>). For the analyses of the corpus, I concentrate on the following questions: Did the debutant fiction writers continue to publish in the same genre?; Which category of publisher is most represented in the list of fiction debuts?; How many works are published subsequent to the debut title by the same publisher or by the same category of publisher?; Do productive writers tend to remain with the same publishers?; In which cases has the publisher of a debutant been able to overcome all or the majority of obstacles listed above (i.e., the author produces more than one more book; the publisher gets to publish these subsequent works; these works are profitable; and they increase the symbolic value of the publisher)? Here are the results of my analysis of the data following the questions stated.

Did the debutant fiction writers continue to publish in the same genre? The data suggests that debutant writers in the period 1961-65 often used their "first work" as a sort of training ground for "learning" to write. When seen in the light of subsequent writings, the debut appears to have had a function of orientation for many authors and publishers. This begs further study as to whether there may be a pattern here. For many authors, the first work of fiction was also the last. Does this mean that their inspiration simply ran out and that they had nothing more to say? Does this mean that the publisher was no longer interested? Authors and publishers are usually very reluctant to explain why a given book was not followed by a new text or by a sequel. Sometimes the premature death of the author provides an explanation. Alternatively, the explanation may be the author's lack of confidence in fiction as his/her preferred medium. For instance, Michael Tophoff, among several others, expressed skepticism on this score and went through a long writer's block on the period 1974-88;

Enno Develing, who made his debut with the publisher De Bezige Bij in 1964, published a series of essays with Manteau Publishers in 1968 under the title *De dood van de roman* (*The Death of the Novel*) and subsequently shifted his attention to "projects" in which the visual arts played an important role (Beekman 1985). But there are also cases in which a limited oeuvre of fiction becomes the starting point for productivity in other literary genres. If writers have already published work before making their debut as fiction writers, this is usually poetry. According to my data, a good number of authors produce only a limited number of fictional works and concentrate instead on building an oeuvre of poetry. Nevertheless, most debutants have no published work in any genre previously. Having been through training with their first work, many of them proceed in a different direction, often but not always by writing works in other literary genres such as drama, radio-plays, essays, juvenile literature or in non-fiction. At times this second phase of development fits in with the first phase, at other times it does not. Authors who shift to another genre often have this new work published by a new publisher they select. According to my data, the spread of an oeuvre over different publishing houses is most obvious in the case of juvenile literature and non-fiction although it can also be observed in the case of poetry. Clearly, this route reduces the profitability of a given author for the original publisher.

Which category of publisher is most represented in the list of fiction debuts? That is, what can be said in absolute terms about the range of publishers involved in bringing out "first works" in the period 1961-65? In the data analyzed, 87 debutants are arranged according to publishing group (G-5; Other Dutch publishers; Flemish publishers). Within each group writers are listed according to the size of their subsequent fiction published ranging from small (1-4 titles), to medium (5-9 titles), and to large (more than 10 titles). The 37 publishers of the data results in a total of 87 fiction debuts in the period 1961-65. This suggests a reserved attitude by the publishers toward new authors. The next question is with regard to the differences between the different types of publishers. The data suggests that the G-5 publishers take by far the most initiatives when it comes to publishing debuts: De Bezige Bij accounts for 11, Querido for 9, Meulenhoff for 8, Contact for 5 and the Arbeiderspers for 4. Of the publishers in the other groups, only Stols and Manteau show comparable initiative (each of them accounting for 4 debuts). The other publishers in the groups of Other Dutch and Flemish lag considerably behind the G-5, while keeping pace with each other.

How many works are published subsequent to the debut title by the same publisher or by the same category of publisher? Previously, the data showed that the productivity of authors varied considerably and that many writers do not produce more than one title. However, there are exceptions. For example, Willem Brakman (born 1922) has to date published no fewer than 46 titles (and this despite the fact that he only made his debut at age thirty-nine after first making his career as a physician). If the debut is taken as the "seedling" of a publishing house, then the following image emerges from the data analysed. In almost a quarter of the cases considered here, the initial investment is not returned. This could suggest, for instance, that in a considerable number of cases, the fiction debut turned out to be the beginning of productivity in another branch of writing. In another quarter of the cases, the seed planted by the debut does come up but then dies; in yet another quarter, the seedling turns into stunted plants. Only in the final quarter of cases does the debut grow into maturity and substantial production. These figures once again underline the risks involved for publishers in launching debutants. An average return of only four titles in only half of the cases over a thirty-year period is meager indeed. Moreover, the critical mass represented by oeuvres of 5, 6, or 7, titles is meager as well. And such problems at the level of productivity are just the beginning: publishers still have to deal with the problems of commercial viability and literary recognition. When divided up according to publisher type, the data suggests that the G-5-publishers publish the greatest number of authors who, after their debut, continue to write prose fiction. This means of course that these authors also produce the most extensive fiction oeuvres. Authors who produce only a limited number of fiction titles may nevertheless contribute to the cultural prestige and economic success of a publisher by writing in other literary genres such as poetry or essays.

Do productive writers tend to remain with the same publishers? In order to describe the hierarchical relations between different publishers in the literary field for any given period, it is important to know which publishers succeed in attracting and holding on to which authors. It has already been suggested that this influences both the symbolic and the commercial survival of a

publisher. It has also been suggested that the cooperation between publishers and writers is influenced by commercial interest as well as mutual loyalty. But if they, despite of this, subsequently go their separate ways, what reasons could they have for that? The desire of authors to climb the ladder of reputation (symbolic as well as commercial) has already been mentioned. To this should be added various forms of mutual dissatisfaction: authors may be critical of and/or dissatisfied with their publishers, for example, of having done too little to promote their work. A parting of the ways may also be brought about by the dissolution of the publishing house or its merger with a bigger publishing house or because an author follows an editor who has moved to another publisher. In general, it should be noted, publishers are not very forthcoming about the reasons behind such partings of the way. In examining the relations between authors and publishers here, I focus on three questions: 1) Which publisher did authors choose for their second book; 2) What was the average productivity of the authors per type of publisher; and 3) Did the very productive writers tend to remain with the same publisher or did they move around?

As regards the choice of publisher for a second book, it would appear that this choice is of particular importance both for the authors and for the publisher: after all, the debut has brought the writer to the attention of other publishers. Small-scale publishers have often been heard to complain about the fact that the larger publishing houses tend to lure writers into their fold once the initial investment in their debut has been made by someone else. In the three categories of publishers, the data analyzed of the number of debutants per type of publisher who stay with, or alternatively defect from, their first publisher suggests the following. In the G-5, we can find the most debutants, the most debutants who went on to become productive writers of fiction, and the most debutants who went on to produce extensive oeuvres; of the thirty-one writers who continued to write, the vast majority remained with their original publisher. In the category Other Dutch Publishers, sixteen debutants continued to write fiction, but it is obvious that their publishers had difficulty in holding on to them since no fewer than eight of them defected to other publishers (principally to the category of the G-5). The situation of the Flemish Publishers indicates an even higher level of "defections": only six of the twenty-one debutants who continued to write fiction remained with their original publishers.

As regards the productivity of writers in relation to their loyalty to a particular group of publishers, the following can be noted. Not surprisingly, the data confirm the fact that authors are ambitious. More surprising is the fact that the contrast between publishing groups is pronounced, that is, publishers in the G-5 generally hold on to authors who are productive. It is tempting to explain this by some appeal to the publishers' flair for sniffing out talent, but I would argue that the process is much more complicated than that. The data suggests that the Other Dutch Publishers category is less successful in spotting productive writers since the number of writers per publisher who continue writing in the long term is very limited indeed. For the period covered in this study, publishers in this group managed to launch no more than one productive writer per two publishing houses. This means that individually these publishers would average only three successful writers over a thirty-year period, a very small number indeed. The situation is even more negative for the Flemish Publishers, since their debutants are particularly susceptible to the lures of rival publishers. Less than 20% of debutants in this publishing group go on to produce extensive oeuvres. In the period covered in this study, they only managed to launch an average of one productive writer per four publishing houses. It is also worrisome that not a single (Dutch or Flemish) publisher outside the G-5 managed over a period of thirty years both to launch a writer who wrote more than ten books in the same genre and to publish more than 50% of these works (not to mention the entire oeuvre).

As regards the question whether or not the very productive writers remain with the same publisher, the following can be said. Given the commercial importance of extensive oeuvres for publishers, it is interesting to consider whether long-term alliances between authors and publishers develop in practice. Three gradations of loyalty may be distinguished among the productive writers included in the data. Those who remained with the same publisher for less than 33% of their work ("the homeless"), those who published between 33% and 66% of their work with the same publisher ("the emigrants"), and those who published almost all their work with the same publisher (the "in-house" authors). To begin with, it is striking that none of the "in-house" authors published all of their work with a single publisher, that is, works in other genres are more often than not published elsewhere. Only a third of the very productive writers published 80% or more of their fiction titles with

the same publisher. In this regard, with few exceptions there are no significant differences between the various publishing houses in the G-5 category of publishers. Although the G-5 publishers are thus relatively successful in holding on to their authors, it should be noted that a considerable number of productive authors do fall by the wayside long before they have reached retirement age, either because they stop writing fiction altogether or because, for various reasons, they end up selecting another publisher. In general, the shifts made by the "emigrants" and "homeless" categories of writers are lateral ones, that is, within the same group of publishers. There is also a possible correlation between the direction of an author's moves and the size of his or her oeuvre. In other words, less publishable work would have a greater chance of ending up with the less-prestigious publishers.

In which cases has the publisher of a debutant been able to overcome all five obstacles suggested? At the beginning of my discussion here, I argue that success for the publisher of a debutant ultimately depends on the fulfilling of five conditions, each of which can be seen as an obstacle to reckon with: the debutant produces subsequent to the debut text another work and she/he continues to produce work, he/she remains with the same publisher, and obtains both symbolic and financial recognition. To what extent appear these conditions in the careers of the authors whose data are included in the study here? I present some detailed data here. The first matter to be considered is the fate of the 87 "first works" themselves, only a handful of which were ever reprinted. Three titles deserve particular mention: Cremer's *Ik Jan Cremer [I, Jan Cremer]*, the 46th reprint of which came out in 1994, Wolkers' *Serpentina's Petticoat*, the 21st reprint of which came out in 1980, and which has since then been reprinted several times as part of his *Alle verhalen (Collected Stories)*, and Heere Heeresma's *Bevind van Zaken (According to Circumstances)*, which has been reprinted many times in different collections, as recently as 1992 in *De sterke verhalen (The Fishy Stories)*. The question might be asked whether the reception of these works satisfied the desire of the publishers for cultural recognition. In this case, however, I limit my discussion to analyzing the profitability of these writers in economic terms: three commercially successful first novels in a cohort of 87 writers is a very low score indeed. But perhaps it is unrealistic to expect more, and the publishers do not appear to either. After all, launching new writers is a risky business as everyone knows, one that bears fruit only in the long term. What is remarkable, however, is the fact that Cremer is the only one of these commercially successful writers who remained entirely committed to his original publisher -- that is, De Bezige Bij not only brought out the reprints of Cremer's first work, but also published all his subsequent fiction. In contrast, Heeresma's publisher (Contact) only held on to him for a few of his works, while Wolkers' original publisher (Heijnis) disappeared from the scene entirely.

Leaving aside other aspects of the reception of first works, let us look at some other conditions of success in the process of publishing, that is, from the point of view of the initial investment made in the debutant. In order to measure success, I take the publication of 8 works of fiction with the same publisher as the criterion of productivity. On the basis of this criterion, seven productive writers can be identified in the data. It should be noted that 8 works of fiction as a measure of publishing success is not very much, given the fact that the authors in question had 32 and 37 years of writing, respectively, in order to reach that number of titles. In light of this it becomes obvious that productivity does not occur necessarily in combination with commitment to the original publisher. Where this combination does occur, one of the publishers in the G-5 is invariably involved. In my opinion, the fact that only 10% of fiction writers -- 8 out of 87 -- go on to publish regularly with their original publishers represents a very low return for the initial investment. In fact, the percentage is even lower than that, since more than half of the productive writers stop writing after twenty years or select another publisher. Out of the 87 debutants studied here, only two writers produced substantial numbers of works of fiction on a regular basis (at least one title every two years). Whether these authors also increased the cultural prestige of the publishers along with their profits remains to be studied.

The results of the present study reflect the conflict between individual and collective interests, an aspect that has been the focus of much discussion in the social sciences. As a group, publishers have a vested interest in publishing debutants for the obvious reason that without them their business would ultimately run dry. When the matter is considered from the point of view of individual publishers, however, the value of debutants is less obvious. On average, the writers of selected for the present study -- who made their debut in the period 1961-65 -- generated limited profit for their

publishers. Not only do very few publishers profit culturally and financially from their debutants, in many cases the same debutants simply fail to produce more work: a quarter of all debutants in the data stopped writing altogether or continued in a different genre, and the percentage was significantly higher among small and less reputable publishers. These results of the data analysis also represent a measure of the uncertainties which affect the writers themselves with regard to their own talents and chances of success. To be sure, the bleakness of the picture is somewhat lightened by the fact that some writers do go on to make profits for their publishers by writing in other genres, but this does not happen very often. At the same time, even where debutants continue to write fiction, the chances of symbolic and financial success are still slim. Only a few publishers (all of whom belong to the G-5) manage to prevent their authors from moving to another publishing house. It also appears to be difficult for writers to remain productive over a long period. It is curious that from the group of small and less reputable publishers and who published a total of fifty first novels between 1961 and 1965, not a single publisher managed to launch and hold on to even one productive writer. Even the G-5-p publishers have to make huge investments in order to end up with a limited number of productive "in-house" authors. Such data suggests that the generally and traditionally accepted principle of mutual trust between author and publisher ought to be further studied and perhaps reassessed. It should also be noted that only one publisher in the data analyzed ended up with two successful "in-house authors" whose careers fulfilled all five conditions of the process of success in publishing.

In conclusion, the following summary results of the analysis can be presented. Firstly, my conclusions point towards the need for a more detailed analysis of the economic basis upon which rejuvenation and renewing take place within the publishing world. In the light of Bourdieu's contention that rejuvenation is one of the factors determining the place of a given publisher within the literary field and that individual writers are subject to "social ageing"(1993, 59), it becomes particularly interesting to know whether or not publishing houses are also subject to such an ageing process. In any case, it is clear that the returns for investments in debutants are very low indeed. Secondly, the results of the study militate against any over-simplified view of the hierarchical relations between writers and publishers in the literary field. To be sure, Bourdieu has emphasized the fact that the symbolic value of a particular work is never determined by one single factor or reviewer (1993, 78). But again, he has left it to others to validate the claim by empirical work. At the same time, his theory of literary fields supposes a highly systemic and interdependent set of relations between all parties. The data and analysis of the present study suggests that individual publishers often have uncertain and erratic relations with very many beginning authors whose future as writers is as of yet unclear. Thirdly, the results point to the necessity of further refining the model of publishing practices developed by Bourdieu and his disciples. In my opinion, Bourdieu's original, sharply drawn distinction between types of publishing lists on the grounds of their orientation towards commercial or symbolic gain and towards short-term or long-term goals (see 1993) is too simplistic. The model can further be criticized with regard to his vision of the publisher as a free agent who strategically seeks out talented writers and binds them to his/her publishing house (I should like add here that the latter notion is perpetuated in A. Boschetti's analysis of the relationship between Gallimard and Grasset in the 1920s). In practice, finding talent and holding on to it appears to be much more difficult: the publishers considered in the data of the present study were involved much more often in transitory relationships than in long-term ones. These publishers invested in writers of fiction whose prospects as literary talents were still uncertain in many or all respects. The results of the analysis raise many questions about social factors which mould the career of an individual writer and provide evidence with which to correct some of the misunderstanding endemic to the romantic view of the writer as an individual agent. Finally, the results of the study point to the necessity of analyzing in more detail the factors which explain how publishers manage to hold on to their productive writers. However, such an analysis requires more elaborate and precise data regarding the way publishers establish their lists than Bourdieu and his disciples have worked with so far.

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