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## **Bestselling Fiction in Europe 2008 / 2009: An Extraordinary Case of Diversity within Strict European Contours.**

### **An Analysis.**

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**Analyzing bestselling fiction authors and their books' performance in seven major European book markets over the past 12 months (April 2008 through March 2009, Top 10 in France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Spain, Sweden, and the UK) presents a stunning landscape of probably unrivalled inner cultural diversity, yet under strictly European colours – and with books written in English representing only a surprisingly small island in comparison to other European languages.**

The top 40 writers divide into 13 writing in English, and 27 writing in other – European – languages, with Swedish (8), French (6) as the strongest, beating Dutch and German (each 4), Italian (3), Spanish (2), and Brazilian Portuguese (1).

Not a single writer to be translated from a non-European language could make it into the top 40 author's charts (in previous years, however, the Japanese Haruki Murakami, or Turkish Nobel laureate Orhan Pamuk may have spoiled this exclusively Euro-centric pattern, yet only slightly). Not even a Central European or a Russian author is among the top listed. However within the English realm, 2 authors with clearly non-Western bearings and agendas are among those who met with the largest reading audiences across the continent, Afghanistan born Khaled Hosseini and India born Man Booker Prize Winner of 2008, Aravind Adiga.

### **The (or 1CBB) One Country Block Buster Phenomenon**

Close scrutiny of the analyzed data show ever more telling results. Of the top 40 writers, 25 made their (heavy) splash in just one country. In return, only 2 English and 10 non-English writers could make it to the top of bestseller lists in 3 or even more countries with translations of their books. (In fact most of these local block buster titles had been translated into other languages, but were not successful to the point of getting into the top segment of the charts.) This illustrates to what extent book markets are still centred on a predominantly domestic readership (and this selection, based on adult fiction only, largely excludes books from and about media personalities, with their normally predominately only national fan audiences - well with the exception of UK starlet Katie Price perhaps).

The 1CBB pattern is most strongly reflected in the predominance of Swedish (crime) fiction which has been out competing any other flavour or origin of fictional writing in the surveyed period, while simultaneously, with Stieg Larsson's millennial trilogy, it had also the rollercoaster ride from North to South and West. Undoubtedly, the path for Larsson's pan-European success was paved by Henning Mankel's books that

initially started to be a huge success in Germany, and from there made it to the bestseller lists in variety of European countries. This pattern may soon be followed by other Swedish fiction writers such as Liza Marklund, Jan Guillou Jens Lapidus, or Camila Läckberg – who has been most recently launched in France by Actes Sud, the French publisher for Stieg Larsson.

But 1CBB is also responsible for kick starting entirely different authors' careers, like those of Roberto Saviano, Carlos Ruiz Zafon, Muriel Barbery, Charlotte Roche, and many others. It also has it that even books pointed at clearly national concerns can come up to an European threshold (like Uwe Tellkamp in Germany in 2008, which perhaps will find otherwise unlikely readers abroad now).

By this pattern, contenders for being the next pan European laureates can be tracked at a relatively early stage. Not surprisingly, a new book by the Austrian-German Daniel Kehlmann ("Ruhm") shows rapidly certain prevalent characteristics of a success story. But also a less well known writer as Dutch Jeroen Smit ("De Proi"), or a perhaps new global rising star as Caribbean-US Junot Díaz ("The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao"), who writes in English, can be spotted early on the radar screen.

### **Mapping Trends, Patterns – and Opportunities**

Analyzing bestselling lists across Europe and globally allows drawing maps for the international book markets, ideally segment by segment, and region by region. As cultural trends and hence peoples' preoccupations and reading habits tend to expand from national to both more local and global, understanding the big picture is critical to develop a got read on what readers want and need, and what authors and publishers have to offer.

In combination with other related data, this allows to track cultural developments and assess the impact of internal and external factors, to evaluate policies and to better understand markets.

For actors on the markets, such a mapping and the analysis of authors', titles' and sector's performances is simply a tool of choice to recognize opportunities and have the decisive edge.

### **A note on the methodology**

This analysis is based on monthly compilations of the top 10 bestselling lists (fiction) of Boekblad, The Bookseller, buchreport/Spiegel Bestsellerliste, El Cultural, Livres Hebdo/Ipsos, Svensk Bokhandel, and a combined top 20 fiction and non fiction list for Italy provided by Informazioni Editoriali.

We based this analysis primarily on authors (and not titles or publishers), as we consider the authors as carrying more strongly the brand of a work than the individual title, or the publisher. In order to assess and compare the impact of an author's books, we attributed points for each month that a book stays in a given market in the top 10 (with 50 points for a #1 rank, 49 for a #2, etc.). This system allows having larger and smaller countries and book markets across Europe in a realistic calibration.

## The top 40 European fiction authors April 2008 – March 2009

Author	Title	Original language	Country	Apr08/Mar09 (Points total)
Stieg Larsson	Millennium (3 Titel)	swedish	F, SP, SE, NL, UK	2601,5
<b>Stephenie Meyer (*)</b>	<b>4 titles + The Host (adult UK)</b>	<b>english</b>	<b>I, SP, D, UK</b>	<b>2156,5</b>
Khaled Hosseini	2 Titel	english	NL, SE, D,	1172
<b>Roberto Saviano (**)</b>	<b>Gomorra</b>	<b>italian</b>	<b>I, D, F, SP, NL, SE,</b>	<b>1104</b>
Carlos Ruiz Zafón	El juego del ángel	spanish	SP, NL, I, D	893,5
Ken Follett	World Without End	english	F, D, SE, SP,	825
Muriel Barbery	L'élégance du hérisson	french	F, D, SP,	786
Charlotte Roche	Feuchtgebiete	german	D, NL, UK	709
John Boyne	Boy with Striped Pajamas	english	SP	527
Cecelia Ahern	The Gift	english	UK, D,	465
Elizabeth Gilbert	Eat, Pray, Love	english	NL	430
Henning Mankell	Kinesen	swedish	SP, SE, D, NL	404
Anna Gavalda	La consolante	french	F, D, SP,	401
Liza Maklund	En plats i solen & Livsstid	swedish	SE	374
Paolo Giordano	La solitudine dei numeri primi	italian	I, SP, NL	368
Jean-Marie Le Clézio	Ritournelle de la faim; L'Africain	french	SE, F,	334
Jens Lapidus	Snabba Cash	swedish	SE	321
Andrea Camilleri	Mehrere Titel	italian	I, SP, D, UK	289,5
Jean-Louis Fournier	Où on va, papa?	french	F	287
Eduardo Mendoza	El asombroso viaje de Pomponio Flato	spanish	SP	285
Mark Levengood	Hjärtat får inga rynkor	swedish	SE	285
Katie Price	Angel Uncovered	english	UK	284
Siegfried Lenz	Schweigeminute	german	D,	282
<b>J.K. Rowling (*)</b>	<b>Beedle the Bard; Deathly Hollows</b>	<b>english</b>	<b>SP, D,</b>	<b>243</b>
Jan Guillou	Men inte om det gäller din dotter	swedish	SE	243
Jeroen Smit	De Prooi	dutch	NL	241
Marc Levy	Toutes ces choses qu'on ne s'est pas dites	french	F	240
Simone van der Vlugt	Blauw water	dutch	NL	239
Guillaume Musso	Je reviens te chercher	french	F	234
Asa Larsson	Till dess din vrede upphör	swedish	SE	229
Johan Theorin	Nattfåk	swedish	SE	226
Lauren Weisberger	Chasing Harry Winston; Chanel chic	english	F	225
Dora Heldt	Urlaub mit Papa	german	D	220
Paolo Coelho	Brida	portuguese	I, D, NL	205
Nicci French	What to Do When Someone Dies	english	NL	193
Patricia Cornwall	Scarpetta, The Front	english	UK	191
Martina Cole	The Business	english	UK	190
Esther Verhoef	Alles te verliezen	dutch	NL	188
Youp van t Hek	Bacterien moeten ook leven	dutch	NL	188
James Patterson	Cross Country	english	UK	187
Uwe Tellkamp	Der Turm	german	D	187
Mary Higgins Clark	Where Are You Now?	english	F	183
Aravind Adiga	The White Tiger	english	UK	181

(\*) All age titles, not listed as fiction in all countries, therefore excluded from this ranking and analysis

(\*\*) Listed as fiction in ist original Italian edition, yet as non fiction in others, but written in the form of a novel, therefore included in this ranking

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