

One Book's Brand is Another Book's Frame

Covering the Dutch Cover of Carlos Ruiz Zafón's *La sombra del viento*

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Abstract

Book covers can be an important part of the branding process in the case of authors from abroad. The branding of Carlos Ruiz Zafón's novels in the Netherlands is a paradigmatic case in point. The front cover of his Dutch debut *De schaduw van de wind* became a classic: it is a crucial element of the Dutch Zafón brand, while essential features from it have been used to frame a considerable number of other Spanish authors' novels that have since been launched onto the Dutch market. We examine three cases: Arturo Pérez-Reverte, Elia Barceló, and María Dueñas. Emulating successful cover branding seems to have the best chance of succeeding in the case of 'new' authors and appears to be most effective in the short term.

Keywords: branding, translations, covers, hetero-representation

Carlos Ruiz Zafón's novel *La sombra del viento* is every publisher's dream. Worldwide, it has sold more copies than any other Spanish novel, the only exception being, of course, Cervantes' *Don Quixote*. Germany was the first foreign country where Ruiz Zafón's novel was published (in the summer of 2003). Other countries soon followed and *zafonmanía* became a global phenomenon. To provide an idea of *zafonmanía*'s key features, it is relevant to cite the blurb from the US cover: 'The number one bestseller.' This is, evidently,

a cliché frame¹ that does not disclose anything of the book's content. But the considerable economic capital attributed to Ruiz Zafón's novel does, in fact, distinguish it from many others and could be an incentive for readers to get interested: success breeds success. It is also interesting to consider the book's content, which is, significantly, not easy to nail down. First, we have its uncertain literary status. On the one hand, we have highbrow intertextual references to modern classics like Gabriel García Márquez's novel *One Hundred Years of Solitude* and Jorge Luis Borges's short story 'The Library of Babel'. On the other hand, the author lavishly uses lowbrow and middlebrow techniques and stylistic devices (cliffhangers, stereotypes, clichés). Furthermore, the novel is an amalgam of literary and subliterary genres (gothic novel, *Bildungsroman*, adventure novel, thriller, historical novel, romantic novel, mystery novel, picaresque novel). Even the novel's setting is open to various interpretations. Is Ruiz Zafón's Barcelona 'real'? Is it a literary creation? Or is it both? And what about the references to the Spanish Civil War and to the post-war repression of the Franco regime? Are they true to history or true to the conventions of certain literary (sub) genres? Or are they both? (Steenmeijer 2017).

This openness is matched by the novel's title and front cover illustration, the two paratexts that, as we will argue below, are fundamental for the Zafón brand.² What, to begin with, are the distinctive features of the title and the cover illustration of Ruiz Zafón's novel? There is no doubt that 'la sombra del viento' sounds good: it has rhythm and it pairs two suggestive (or, if you like, 'poetic') nouns. But what does this combination mean? What is, in fact, 'the shadow of the wind'? How can one possibly imagine a wind with a shadow, be it literally or metaphorically? And what is the relation between the novel's title and its story?

The cover illustration also raises interpretative questions. What to make of the photo that dominates the Spanish front cover of *La sombra del viento*, taken by Francesc Català-Roca (1922-1998)? The overall image is that of a

1 In this chapter, the terms 'frame' and 'framing' refer to 'ideas, conditions, or assumptions' that have a specific goal: creating or maintaining a brand identity. <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/frame%20of%20reference> [accessed 23 January 2019].

2 Brand is a concept that can be defined from two perspectives: the producer's ('a name, term, sign, symbol, or design, or a combination of them which is intended to identify the goods and services of one seller or group of sellers and to differentiate them from those of competitors' (Kotler 1997: 442)) and the consumer's ('a customer experience represented by a collection of images and ideas; often, it refers to a symbol such as a name, logo, slogan, and design scheme' (American Marketing Association Dictionary)). Both definitions underline the essentiality of a sign or a combination of signs that, at least in the consumer's view, is different from other signs or combinations of signs.

hazy, almost deserted street. On one side, in the front, we see a street lamp and more to the back there are a man and a little boy (father and son, we may presume) who are walking alongside a row of trees that, strikingly, lack branches and leaves. On the left side there is a wall with tree branches above it, suggesting that there is a park behind the wall. On the other side of the street (or avenue), we see a big building and, vaguely, a few cars that can be associated with the post-war period. The picture has an aura of times past and – perhaps most importantly – mystery, due to the ‘effects of perspective’ highlighted by Ruiz Zafón himself (2008: 23) that reinforce the haziness and sensation of emptiness or loneliness of the street (or avenue) as well as the diffuseness of the father and son figures, whose facial features can hardly be distinguished.

In the light of these observations, it is coherent to assert that the title and the cover illustration of *La sombra del viento* are polysemic and, concomitantly, suggestive and attractive. So much so that they became a transnational phenomenon: the novel's editions in others languages used a literal translation of the original title (*The Shadow of the Wind*; *L'Ombre du vent*; *L'ombra del vento*; *Der Schatten des Windes*; *De schaduw van de wind*; *Vindens skugga*, etc.) while the cover illustration (or variations) of the Spanish original were used by ‘publishers on the five continents’ (Ruiz Zafón 2008: 25), which is quite remarkable if we take into account the fact that novels are routinely given different covers in different countries.

To get an idea of the appeal of these two elements of the Zafón brand, it is important to add that the titles and cover illustrations of Ruiz Zafón's next three novels – together, the four novels form the tetralogy *El Cementerio de los Libros Olvidados* (*The Cemetery of Forgotten Books*) – are echoes (or variations) of those of *La sombra del viento*; the titles have the same grammatical structure and similar polysemic, ‘poetic’ meanings (*El juego del ángel*/*The Angel's Game*, *El prisionero del cielo*/*The Prisoner of Heaven*, *El laberinto de los espíritus*/*The Labyrinth of Spirits*) while three of the four cover illustrations are based on pictures of Català-Roca, the only exception being *El laberinto de los espíritus*.³ Considering the fact that ‘[b]rands are inherently visual’ (Schroeder 2005: 1292), there can be no doubt, then, that *La sombra del viento*'s archetypical title and, most importantly, its archetypical front cover illustration are essential elements of Ruiz Zafón's brand.

As we will show in more detail below, the impact of *La sombra del viento*'s title and cover illustration reaches much farther: they have been emulated many times and in many ways to frame novels written by other (Spanish)

3 Gabriel Casas's picture on this novel's cover, however, has the same style and atmosphere.

authors. We are dealing with a common strategy in the book publishing world: 'for lesser-known authors we often make an association with well-known authors when marketing them. For example, we use front cover reviews by brand name authors, or give them similar recognizable jacket designs' (Royle, Cooper, and Stockdale 1999: 11). The reason is obvious: 'it is possible that familiarity with that design will lead the browser's eye to particular books on the shelves' (Royle et al. 1999: 9).

The Cover is the Key

At this point, it is vital to look more closely at the role and functions of book covers. To begin with, we should keep in mind the enormous competitiveness in the book market and the concomitant urgency of effective marketing:

publishers [...] have to compete for the time, attention and money of retailers and customers once a book has been produced. The marketplace of books is enormously crowded [...]. Marketing and sales staff devote a great deal of time and effort trying to ensure that their titles stand out from others and are not simply lost in the flood of new books appearing every season. (Thompson 2010: 11)

In this context, brand-name authors 'are extremely important for trade publishers because they provide the counterweight [...] to offset the inherent riskiness of frontlist publishing. [...] [T]heir sales are predictable because they have readerships that are loyal to them.' (Thompson 2010: 212) Book covers are particularly relevant:

A cover often determines whether the book will be purchased. [...] As publishers concentrate on book packaging perhaps even more than the text itself, covers have become more graphically innovative. Covers may not keep a book in print nor in readers' hands, but in the current market, book industry people agree: The cover is the key – the cover sells the book. (Yampbell 2005: 369)

Without denying or neglecting the other functions of book covers (to inform, to familiarize, to direct), it would be correct to say that, primarily, they are designed to attract the attention and to gain and maintain the interest of the consumer (and of other actors involved in the distribution and reception chain, such as book retailers, newspaper editors, literary critics, librarians).

As Wil Immink, the designer of the *De schaduw van de wind* cover, asserts: 'Especially the books of lesser known authors need to be recommended. There are, of course, various factors that make a book a bestseller, but the cover plays a very important role' (Lambriks 2009).⁴ This is a role that has become much more important in a market that has become extremely competitive. As Phillips (2007: 19) duly affirms, '[t]he importance of the cover to a book's sales is reflected in the growth of the approval process for new designs'. In Clayton Childress's view, 'the "packaging" of books – from their formats to their covers, back-cover synopses, blurbs, and author-photos – is all advertising' (Childress 2017: 132). Branding plays a major role in the process: '[t]hrough utilizing design, the author is able to be marketed as any other branded product and by using an established and reliable image the author becomes synonymous with a particular design' (Royle et al. 1999: 11).

For various reasons, though, it is debatable that authors can be 'marketed as any other branded product'. First, the nature of books as a product is different from that of products like soft drinks, perfumes, or clothes. Usually, the content of a book is not created by the company (that is, the publishing house) but by a (self-employed) writer. The essential decisions about the product's content – theme, plot, characters, style – are therefore *not* made by the company. Thus, the author can only *temporarily* be identified with the company that (re)produces and distributes his text. Second, the relationship between demand and supply is very different. In contrast with soft drinks, perfumes, or clothes, a book is usually consumed only once. But as Thompson rightly remarks, '[r]eaders become "fans" of a particular writer, or of a series of books by a particular writer, and they want to read more' (Thompson 2010: 212). Consequently, if there is an urgent demand for more (of the same), it is not evident that it can be fulfilled.

'They want to read more', but the purchase of the same product can't be repeated. The author is not a factory that can (re)produce his or her product according to customer demand. This explains the Janus-faced politics in the publishing industry:

The staff of every publishing house are constantly looking over their shoulders to see what their competitors are doing. They constantly scrutinize the bestseller lists and study their competitors' more successful books to see whether they can pick up clues about how they might develop their

4 'Het zijn vooral de minder beroemde schrijvers waarbij je een boek echt moet aanprijzen. Natuurlijk zijn er meerdere factoren die bepalen of een boek ook echt verkoopt, maar de omslag speelt een heel belangrijke rol.'

own publishing programmes. This kind of inter-organizational rivalry tends to produce a degree of homogeneity or ‘me-too’ publishing among the firms who publish in the same areas – one successful chick-lit book will spawn a dozen look-alikes. But it also produces an intense desire to find the next big thing, as firms are constantly seeking to prevail over their competitors by being the first to spot a new trend. (Thompson 2010: 10)

Two archetypes of books can be distinguished here. On the one hand we have original, trendsetting books with economic and symbolic capital, on the other hand we have derivative, trend-following books with hardly any symbolic capital, published dominantly for commercial reasons. The first category of books can be considered brands, the second category – books framed on the basis of (strong) brands – could be labelled as bandwagon books (Michael Legat, *apud* Squires 2007: 74) that can develop into a spin-off brand identity. A core element in this process is the front cover: ‘The reader has read a fine book, when he sees another cover like that he thinks: yes! [...] That cover can give the good feeling’ (Witman 2010).⁵ As far as authors from abroad are concerned, book covers can be an even more important, if not decisive, factor in the branding process than in the case of domestic authors, who are much more available for media appearances, who are more acquainted with the specific codes of the national literary field, and who are, therefore, capable of directing or adapting their self-representation or posture. For all these reasons, it is safe to say that the positioning of authors from abroad is predominantly a question of image or hetero-representation.

De schaduw van de wind

The Dutch translation of Ruiz Zafón’s novel was published in the fall of 2004 and became one of the biggest bestsellers of the new millennium in the Netherlands, selling more than 750,000 copies (Witman 2010). It remained in the Dutch Bestseller 60 for 210 weeks, a feat topped only by Kluun’s *Komt een vrouw bij de dokter* (216 weeks) (Chin-A-Fo and Jaeger 2017). *Zafonmanía* not only established the author and his work in the Dutch literary field but also created a publishing trend: the Zafón lookalike covers. Before going into detail about these covers, a brief comment on the Dutch cover illustration of Carlos Ruiz Zafón’s novel is necessary. Like the Spanish edition, it shows

5 ‘De lezer heeft een fijn boek gelezen, als hij weer zo’n cover ziet, denkt hij ha! [...] Die cover kan het goede gevoel geven.’

the Català-Roca picture described above, but unlike that edition – which shows the black and white version of the original – the Dutch edition is in a sepia tone, a change that publishing house Signature made to enhance the picture's nostalgic atmosphere,⁶ as Nelleke Geel remembers it. This decision had considerable repercussions, as we will show below: the sepia tone is one of the major features of many look-alike covers generated by the *De schaduw van de wind* cover, some of which will be scrutinized below. For practical reasons, we will restrict our analysis to the covers of three Spanish authors. The first one, Arturo Pérez-Reverte, was relaunched with *De schaduw van de wind* lookalike covers after various attempts to find a substantial public for his novels had failed. The second one, Elia Barceló, had published one novel in the Netherlands before the *De schaduw van de wind* make-over. The third one, María Dueñas, made her debut in the Dutch literary field with a novel that has a cover similar to *De schaduw van de wind*'s. It is my intention to explore these three cases on the basis of the following questions: what was the position of these three authors in the Dutch literary field before their books were framed on the basis of the *De schaduw van de wind* cover? How exactly were these books framed? What elements of the *De schaduw van de wind* cover were emulated and how? What elements were left out, added, or changed? And, most importantly, did the position of these authors in the Dutch literary field change after the *De schaduw van de wind* makeover? If so, in what way?

Arturo Pérez-Reverte

The publishing history of Arturo Pérez-Reverte's *oeuvre* in the Netherlands could be summarized in three words: a Sisyphean task. He is, undoubtedly, one of Spain's most translated authors in the Dutch literary system. To date, twelve of his novels and one non-fiction title have been published by a succession of no less than six publishing houses: de Prom, Anthos, De Fontein, Meulenhoff, Karakter, and Wereldbibliotheek. None of them, however, succeeded in finding a substantial public for Pérez-Reverte. It speaks volumes that only two of his novels were reprinted (and, for that matter, only once). This state of affairs raises the following question: how can we explain this remarkably high number of transfers? What were the motives to continue the efforts to establish Pérez-Reverte in the Dutch

6 Telephone conversation with Nelleke Geel, publisher and translator of *De schaduw van de wind*.

literary system? The answer is not evident if we consider that not only were sales poor, but this Spanish author had hardly gained any literary capital over the years, either. From the start, the reception of his work in the Dutch media was more benevolent than enthused, both in terms of quantity (the number and volume of the articles were relatively small) and quality (generally, his novels were labelled as middlebrow literature with literary pretensions). In other countries, however, Pérez-Reverte had built a strong reputation. In Spain he is a highly respected literary writer who had made a name for himself as war reporter before becoming one of Spain's bestselling writers and a well-known (and polemic) public figure. More importantly, in other foreign countries (Italy, France, Germany, Great Britain, the US) he has done (and does) well or even very well (Steenmeijer and Grohmann 2006). This strong international reputation must have been the incentive for various Dutch publishing houses to give Pérez-Reverte's work one chance after another, in spite of the accumulation of failed attempts.

De Prom, part of the publishing company Bosch & Keuning, was the first Dutch publishing house to jump on the bandwagon of Pérez-Reverte's international successes. In 1993, they published *Het paneel van Vlaanderen* (original title: *La tabla de Flandes*), followed by two other highbrow thrillers – *De club Dumas* (1995; *El club Dumas*) and *Het trommelvel* (1997; *La piel del tambor*) – as well as the non-fiction title *Comancheland* (1997; *Territorio comanche*) and the historical novel *De zon van Breda* (2000; *El sol de Breda*). Then Anthos, also part of Bosch & Keuning, gave it another shot, republishing *De club Dumas* (1999), *Het trommelvel* (2000) and *Het paneel van Vlaanderen* (2001). Next, De Fontein, another publishing house of Bosch & Keuning, published two new titles, *De oude zeekaart* (2002; *La carta esférica*) and *De koningin van het zuiden* (2003; *La Reina del Sur*). In 2007 Meulenhoff, an Amsterdam publishing house with a solid catalogue of contemporary Spanish American and Spanish literature, published Pérez-Reverte's most 'literary' novel, *De schilder van het kwaad* (*El pintor de batallas*). Then, in 2008, Karakter, an independent publishing house of commercial fiction, relaunched Arturo Pérez-Reverte with, on the one hand, new editions of *De zon van Breda* (2008), *De club Dumas* (2009), *Het paneel van Vlaanderen* (2010), and *Het trommelvel* (2010), and on the other hand five new titles.⁷

7 One of them is the historical novel *De geseling van Cádiz* (2011; *El asedio*), the other four are, similar to *De zon van Breda*, part of the Capitán Alatriste cycle, a series of adventure novels set in Spain in the first decades of the seventeenth century: *Kapitein Alatriste* (2009; *El capitán Alatriste*), *Zuiver bloed* (2009; *Limpieza de sangre*), *Het goud van de koning* (2009; *El oro del rey*), *Het gele wambuis* (2009; *El caballero del jubón amarillo*).

As it is not feasible to analyse all of them in detail here, we will only scrutinize the front covers of *Het paneel van Vlaanderen*, *De club Dumas*, and *Het trommelvel*, the three novels that in the course of the years were launched by three different publishing houses: de Prom, Anthos, and Karakter, respectively. Initially, de Prom's strategy was a very simple one: the front covers of *Het paneel van Vlaanderen* and *De club Dumas* are plain emulations of Alfaguara's original front covers, dominated by conspicuous, intriguing, classy illustrations in full colour (*Het paneel van Vlaanderen*: a woman standing beside a sitting man who is playing chess against the background of church pillars; *De club Dumas*: a bunch of old books overlapped by a black-and-white photograph of the three musketeers and company), crossed by a black part which mentions the title of the book, the name of the author, and the name of the publishing house, all in white letters. With *Het trommelvel*, de Prom changed strategy. The sobriety remained – only a genre indication was added ('literaire thriller') – but the classiness and modernity of the first two covers (and of the Spanish edition of *La piel del tambor*, which continued the design frame of the two previous novels) were lacking: below, we see a hazy picture of an old Mediterranean street (probably in Seville, where the novel is set) in sepia tone, and above there is a blue sky with a few white clouds. The text elements (author, title, publishing house, genre) are placed in the image (and not in a separate part) and printed in typewriter style.

Anthos's new editions of these three novels lack unity as well: *De club Dumas* (1999) and *Het trommelvel* (2000) show a dark interior with some light coming in from the window(s) in the background, while the front cover of *Het paneel van Vlaanderen* (2001) is dominated by a black-and-white photograph of a man sitting on a horse in what seems to be a *plaza de toros* scene. The only other paratexts are: author, title, and publishing house, with the exception of the anonymous quote on the front cover of *De club Dumas*.

This variety of designs hints at a trial-and-error strategy. Publishing house Karakter⁸ broke with this trend, opting for consistent and coherent frames for *Het paneel van Vlaanderen*, *De club Dumas*, and *Het trommelvel* that echo the successful *De schaduw of the wind* brand. Karakter makes no secret of this borrowing strategy: the front cover of *De club Dumas*, the first

8 Between 2008 and 2012 Karakter published nine novels by Arturo Pérez-Reverte. Two groups can be distinguished: the historical novels and the contemporary novels. The central threads on the front covers of the historical novels – labelled as historical thrillers – are stereotypical images of the commercial historical adventure genre (musketeer-esque men with big hats, swords, and daggers; crosses; old maps). The novels that are set in our times (which, for that matter, are also rich in historical elements) exude an atmosphere that is clearly Zafonesque, which is somewhat ironic considering the fact that Pérez-Reverte is one of Ruiz Zafón's *maestros*.

contemporary Pérez-Reverte novel they published, boasts the following quote, attributed to 'Subterranean Press': 'A direct competitor of Zafón's *The Shadow of the Wind*.'⁹ In a screaming flyer headline, the publishing house frames Pérez-Reverte as follows: 'Rises head and shoulders above Zafón.'¹⁰

De club Dumas's front cover image – in sepia tone, needless to say – shows a table with old books in different positions (standing, lying, closed, open) against the background of what appears to be an old wall. *Het paneel van Vlaanderen* has a similar classy and mysterious atmosphere: in front we have a chess piece (king); in the background, horizontally and vertically, we perceive hazy chessboard patterns in different shades of sepia filled with vague designs. The image on *Het trommelvel* is the most Zafonian one: on the foreground we see an old-time street lamp, in the background the extremely hazy silhouettes of a huge building, and in between a few people in a park with bare trees. We cannot distinguish their faces, and some of them are sitting on benches; two people, seen from the back, are walking and appear to be talking.

After three novels that were published in a short period of time (2009-2010), Karakter did not continue with the contemporary novel line of Pérez-Reverte's work (and three years later they also gave up the historical novel line). The Zafonian touch clearly had not done the trick. Sales were poor and so was the reception in the Dutch press; there were hardly any reviews, not even of the new novels that were published by Karakter (the Alatrisme series, and *De gesel van Cádiz*). It comes as no surprise, then, that Wereldbibliotheek, Pérez-Reverte's next Dutch publisher, did not continue the Zafón line. It is telling, however, that so far they have only published one title.¹¹

Elia Barceló

In 2005 the Spanish writer Elia Barceló debuted in the Netherlands with the short novel *De eeuwige terugkeer van de liefde* (The Eternal Return of Love).

9 'Een directe concurrent van Zafón's *De schaduw van de wind*.' Karakter does make a secret, however, of the quote's misleading, if not fraudulent nature: Subterranean Press is not a medium, as is suggested, but 'a small press publisher in Burton, Michigan [...] best known for publishing genre fiction' (Wikipedia). Their core business are trade editions but they also produce 'collector's and limited editions [...] issued with author signatures, in both numbered and lettered states'. The quote on the cover of *De club Dumas* refers to Subterranean Press' special edition of Pérez-Reverte's novel, a production that 'will rival ours of Carlos Ruiz Zafón's [sic] *The Shadow of the Wind*' (website).

10 'Steekt met kop en schouders uit boven Zafón.'

11 *Schaduw tango* (2012). Original title: *El tango de la Guardia Vieja*.

The title is a far cry from the original one: *El secreto del orfebre* (The Secret of the Goldsmith). The image on the front cover is a soft-focus photo in sepia tone that shows, in profile, the face of a woman and vaguely on the foreground a few flowers. On the back cover the book's content is summarized as follows: 'Is love stronger than time? Can beauty remain?'¹² These paratexts leave no doubt as to the way publishing house Signatuur framed *De eeuwige terugkeer van de liefde*: as a sentimental love story directed at a female reading public.

De eeuwige terugkeer van de liefde did not do well. Unsurprisingly, then, Signature did not publish other works by Barceló. Two years later, publishing house Q reintroduced the Spanish writer in the Netherlands with *Bal masqué* (2007). This translation was published three years after the Spanish original (*Disfraces terribles*, 2004) and one year after the German version (*Das Rätsel der Masken*, 2006). The Dutch cover is completely different from the Spanish and German ones, which are in full colour and show, respectively, an Asian dressed woman 'fighting' with an umbrella annex bat, and the nude back of a woman. The Dutch cover has a sepia tone. In the front we see the contours of a bridge with three old-fashioned street lamps: two big ones and one small one, surrounded by the tiny, shadow-like contours of three people whose traits cannot be distinguished (maybe they are men, but we cannot be sure). In the background the Eiffel Tower rises prominently. Hence, the links with the *De schaduw van de wind* package are prominently present in the cover's image, and, moreover, they are explicitly expressed in the quote from the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* printed on the front cover's upper right side: 'Carlos Ruiz Zafón's *The Shadow of the Wind* and Elia Barceló's *Bal masqué* show that Spain is the country of the great storytellers.'¹³

Bal masqué was an instant success. In three years' time (2007-2009) fourteen editions were published. After that, it became a slow seller (reprints in 2013 and 2017). Strikingly, in all these years only a minor change was made to the front cover: in 2008 the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* quote was replaced by one from the Dutch edition of *Elle*. The message, though, was virtually identical: 'For the fans of Carlos Ruiz Zafón's *The Shadow of the Wind*: Elia Barceló's *Bal masqué*.'¹⁴

Obviously, Q treasured Elia Barceló in its catalogue, publishing a considerable number of her novels. Did Barceló's Dutch publisher continue with

12 'Is liefde sterker dan tijd? Kan schoonheid blijven bestaan?'

13 'Spanje is het land van de grote vertellers, zoals *De schaduw van de wind* van Carlos Ruiz Zafón en *Bal masqué* van Elia Barceló onomstotelijk bewijzen.'

14 'Voor de liefhebbers van *De schaduw van de wind* van Carlos Ruiz Zafón: *Bal masqué* van Elia Barceló.'

the Zafón frame, converting Barceló in a spin-off brand? The question is not easy to answer if we consider the front covers of *Tangohart* (2008; original title: *Corazón de tango*) and *Stemmen uit het verleden* (2009; *El vuelo del hipogrifo*). The sepia tone dominates both of them, but the images are quite a different matter. On *Tangohart* we see the sharp and prominent representations of a man and a woman passionately dancing the tango and of a street lamp right behind the two dancers. On the cover of *Stemmen uit het verleden* there is a panoramic view of Florence which shows a river, a bridge, and historical buildings, but no people. Explicit references to *The Shadow of the Wind* and Carlos Ruiz Zafón are lacking, however. Instead, both covers mention Barceló's successful Dutch debut: 'From the author of *Bal masqué*'. Paradoxically, then, the Zafón-framed *Bal masqué* became Barceló's brand, a conclusion that is confirmed by the sepia-toned front cover of the omnibus containing *Bal masqué*, *Tangohart*, and *Stemmen uit het verleden*, published in 2010. It is telling for Q's branding strategy that in this edition, in contrast with the separate editions of these three novels, for the first time Barceló's name is printed in a strikingly larger font than the novels' titles.

This also goes for Barceló's next novels, *Donker geheim* (2010), *Laura* (2010), and *De kleur van de stilte* (2017).¹⁵ Another feature that the front covers of these novels have in common, is the prominent reference to *Bal masqué*. Importantly, there is a third feature they share: the absence of references to the Zafón brand. In fact, the images of these covers are quite a different matter: a staircase of stones that 'flows' into the sea (first two editions of *Donker geheim*); a woman's head seen from the back (third edition of *Donker geheim*, a cover of the German cover); the cheek, ear, and hair of (what seems to be) a young woman (*Laura*); a still of flowers and oranges (*De kleur van de stilte*). It is worth mentioning as well that the fifth edition of *Stemmen uit het verleden* (2011) is not the Zafonian one of the first four editions: we see a woman whose face we cannot distinguish standing between enormous pillars.

On the basis of these data, it might be tempting to conclude that for *Donker geheim*, the author's name and the reference to her most successful novel *Bal masqué* were sufficient elements to constitute a strong front cover brand. However, the striking difference between the sales of *Bal masqué* and those of all of Barceló's next novels points in another direction: *Bal masqué*: sixteen editions; *Tangohart*: two editions; *Stemmen uit het verleden*:

15 We have not included Barceló's young adult novel *Cordeluna* (2012) and her science fiction novel *Anima mundi* because they do not function in the middlebrow literary segment.

five editions;¹⁶ *Donker geheim*: three editions; *Laura*: one edition; *De kleur van de stilte*: one edition. Furthermore, it is revealing that today only two novels of Elia Barceló are shown on Q's website – *Bal masqué* and *De kleur van de stilte* – and that the front cover of the first one is printed much larger than that of the second one. A more plausible narrative, then, would be that initially, triggered by the success of *Bal masqué*, Q tried to brand Barceló as a Zafonian author. After the publication of *Tangohart* and *Stemmen uit het verleden*, however, this strategy did not produce the expected results, and other types of front cover illustrations were tested. None of them, however, succeeded in becoming Barceló's new brand, a necessity after it had become clear that the *De schaduw van de wind* frame had only worked well for *Bal masqué*.

María Dueñas

Some book titles seem to be untranslatable. A striking example is *El tiempo entre costuras*, María Dueñas's 2009 debut that, much to the writer's surprise, sold over a million copies in Spain and, subsequently, was translated in many languages. The richly layered title permits various interpretations. Considering the plot (set in the thirties: a young Spanish woman is cheated on by her husband and left broken in Morocco; she sets up a sewing atelier and subsequently becomes involved in the Spanish Civil War and the Second World War), the most evident translation would be something like 'The time between the sewing', but this version lacks another meaning that resonates in the original title: 'The time between the seams'. The titles of the translations are very different: Italian: *La note ha cambiato rumore* (2010); German: *Das Echo der Träume* (2013); French: *Le Fil du Destin* (2011) and *L'Espionne de Tanger* (2013); English: *The Time in Between* (US, 2012) and *The Seamstress* (Great Britain, 2012).

The title of the Dutch edition, published in 2012 by Wereldbibliotheek, is *Het geluid van de nacht* (The sound of the night). It has nothing to do with the book's content, but it sounds rhythmic and has a mysterious aura significantly similar to *De schaduw van de wind*. This is no coincidence, but a deliberate decision made by the editor if we consider the sepia-toned image on the front cover with bare trees, a street lamp and two people with their back turned to us: a man in the background, a woman in the foreground. The link with *De schaduw van de wind* – absent in the French, German,

16 In 2014, publishing house Rainbow published a pocket edition.

Italian and English editions – is hard to miss and may have contributed substantially to the triumph of *Het geluid van de nacht* in the Netherlands.

The commercial success of *Het geluid van de nacht* was capitalized on by Wereldbibliotheek when in 2013 they promoted Dueñas's next novel, *De wereld vergeten* (To forget the world; original title: *Misión Olvido*); on the belly band we see a small reproduction of the cover of *Het geluid van de nacht* and the following text: 'From the author of *Het geluid van de nacht*. 50,000 copies already sold'.¹⁷ The front cover itself, however, hardly shows any *De schaduw van de wind* traces. A part of it is in sepia tone but the other colours (the blue sky, the woman dressed in black and red) have been given much more prominence. The main echo of *Het geluid van de nacht*'s front image is the woman in the foreground with her back turned to the reader, an element that the *De schaduw van de wind* cover lacks and that would turn out to be the most distinctive element of Dueñas's front cover brand in the Netherlands.¹⁸ The full-colour front cover of the Dutch edition of Dueñas's third novel, *Het geluk van een wijngaard* (2016; original title: *La Templanza*), leaves no doubt: on the foreground we see a woman dressed in white, looking at a rustic landscape. In the distance, we distinguish the tiny figure of a man, very much like the one on the cover of *Het geluid van de nacht*. Of course, the tiny figure and the rather kitschy title – which has nothing to do with the original one (it means 'The happiness of a vineyard') but has the same structure as *De schaduw van de wind* and, for that matter, *Het geluid van de nacht* – could be labelled as Zafonian echoes. But in this context they function as vintage Dueñas elements due to the lack of other essential *De schaduw van de wind* elements on the covers of *De wereld vergeten* and *Het geluk van een wijngaard* (the sepia tone, the trees, the street lamp) and, most importantly, due to the dominating image of a woman looking back that usurps the two Zafonian echoes mentioned above.

With *De wereld vergeten* and *Het geluk van een wijngaard*, then, designer Karin van der Meer developed a different frame for the Dutch editions of Dueñas's novels, which is quite remarkable if we take into account that, so far as sales are concerned, *De wereld vergeten* did quite poorly. In the marketing process of *Het geluk van een wijngaard*, it might have been tempting to turn back to the Zafonian image of *Het geluid van de nacht*. Instead, Wereldbibliotheek only (re)used the *De schaduw van de wind* touch in the title and on the back cover, which includes a brief reference to *Het geluid van*

17 'Van de auteur van *Het geluid van de nacht*. Reeds 50.000 exemplaren verkocht.'

18 Curiously, the front cover of the pocket edition of *De wereld vergeten* (published by Rainbow in 2017) is unmistakably *De schaduw van de wind*-like.

de nacht and which, significantly, does not mention *De wereld vergeten*. This was a clear strategy, as Wereldbibliotheek editor Koen van Gulik explained:

All three novels look back on a life. And just like the text, the cover of *Het geluid van de nacht* alludes to the thirties in Spain.¹⁹ The cover of *De wereld vergeten* features San Francisco, again just like the book, and the text and image of *Het geluk van een wijngaard* allow a dating of around 1900. Every time a woman looking back, every time the same lettering. This way, Dueñas's novels have been given identical features, so as to enable the reader to recognize them more easily.²⁰

Conclusions

Branding authors from abroad is quite a different matter than branding domestic authors, who are much more available for media appearances than foreign authors. More importantly, they usually are not familiar with the specific codes of the literary fields in which the translations of their work function. Consequently, they are hardly able to channel or adapt their self-representation or posture. It could be argued, then, that the position of authors from abroad is most of all a question of image or hetero-representation, a process protagonized by the publisher and the book cover designer.

Having established this link, we might argue that in the case of authors from abroad, book covers can be an important if not decisive factor in the branding process. The successful branding of Carlos Ruiz Zafón's novels in the Netherlands is a paradigmatic case in point. The front cover of his Dutch debut *De schaduw van de wind* became a classic: it is a crucial element of the Dutch Zafón brand, while essential features of it have been used to frame a considerable amount of other Spanish authors' novels that were launched onto the Dutch market. In this chapter, we have examined three cases: the Zafonian relaunch of an author whose work had already been translated into Dutch but had not managed to gather much economic and/or

19 In fact, this is not as evident as Van Gulik asserts.

20 'In alle drie de romans wordt namelijk teruggekeken op een leven. En net als de tekst refereert het omslag van *Het geluid van de nacht* aan de jaren dertig in Spanje. Op *De wereld vergeten* figureert San Francisco, opnieuw overeenkomstig het boek. En bij tekst en afbeelding van *Het geluk van een wijngaard* kun je een datering rond 1900 voorstellen. Telkens een terugkijkende vrouw, telkens dezelfde belettering, zo hebben Dueñas' titels gemeenschappelijke kenmerken gekregen, opdat de lezer ze makkelijker herkent.' (Van den Berg 2016)

literary capital (Arturo Pérez-Reverte), the Zafonian makeover of an author with only one book published in the Netherlands that did not do well (Elia Barceló), and María Dueñas, whose successful Dutch debut was packaged in an unmistakably Zafonian way.

As we have seen, publishing house Karakter's generous relaunch of Arturo Pérez-Reverte's fiction did not succeed in changing the Spanish author's position in the Dutch literary field. It is interesting to add that the same pattern can be seen in the cases of Eduardo Mendoza and Antonio Muñoz Molina, which for reasons of space could not be elaborated on in this chapter. Like Pérez-Reverte, Mendoza and Muñoz Molina are two leading Spanish authors with a considerable catalogue of Dutch translations that were fairly well received in the Dutch press but that did not sell well (the exception being Mendoza's steady seller *De stad der wonderen*): the Zafonian (re) framing of the covers of some of their novels did not alter their position in the Dutch literary field.²¹

Tellingly, the Zafonian touch did work well in the cases of two authors who were (almost) completely unknown in The Netherlands: Elia Barceló and María Dueñas. Thus, tentatively, we might conclude that as far as book covers are concerned, the framing of authors by emulating successful cover brands seems to have the best chance to succeed in the case of 'new' authors. This assumption, however, needs to be qualified. Elia Barceló's and María Dueñas's cases suggest that if framing in the footsteps of a successful brand works well, it only does so in the short term. For a strong position in the long run, a non-emulative brand appears to be required. Elia Barceló's Dutch publisher Q made various strikingly different attempts, but they all failed to create a strong brand of her own. Wereldbibliotheek, on the other hand, developed a consistent strategy in its endeavour to create a sovereign brand for María Dueñas, though it remains to be seen if their efforts will pay off: her second and third novel fared less well as far as sales figures are concerned than *Het geluid van de nacht*.

In more general terms, we could say that emulating strong cover brands appears to be most effective in the short term. This even goes for Carlos Ruiz Zafón himself: the covers of *Het spel van de engel*, *De gevangene van de hemel*, and *Het labirint der geesten* – the other three novels of the tetralogy *The Cemetery of Forgotten Books* – were designed in the footsteps of the cover of *De schaduw van de wind*, but these novels were not as successful, not in economic terms and not in symbolic terms. This, of course, cannot

21 Another case in point is Ignacio Martínez de Pisón, a minor literary god whose third Dutch translation (*De dag van morgen*, 2013) was framed in a clearly *De schaduw van de wind* way.

only be attributed to the cover designs, but it is indisputably a relevant factor, the more so if we take into account that we are dealing with an author from abroad.

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