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Women Writers in Translation in the UK: The 'Year of Publishing Women' (2018) as a Platform of Collective Change?¹

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1. INTRODUCTION: THE YEAR OF PUBLISHING WOMEN (2018) AS A WATERSHED YEAR?

In May 2015, writer Kamila Shamsie sent out a provocative call to action as part of an impassioned speech at the Hay Literature Festival, in Hay-on-Wye, Wales: she called on British publishing houses to make 2018 the 'Year of Publishing Women' (YPW), to coincide with the centenary of some women getting the right to vote. As she announced in her talk, published by *The Guardian* and *The Bookseller* a few weeks later (Shamsie 2015), the idea was simple: women are still under-represented in publishing, as in other domains, and so for one year publishing houses should only publish books authored by women. This would then have a positive impact not only on figures for that one year, but also subsequent years, as the collective action would shake up an industry that has been shown to be fairly stagnant in terms of the gender distribution of published books (see Rudd 2013).

By issuing this challenge in 2015, Shamsie was, ostensibly, giving publishers plenty of time to prepare – and to take part. And yet only one publisher, the independent publishing house And Other Stories, declared their intention to participate. As the founder of And Other Stories, Stefan Tobler, explained, they realised “it provided an opportunity, instead of relying on what happens on its own, to really make a public call” (Tobler, in Yates-Badley 2018, online, n.p.). Nicky Smalley, the marketing director, reflected that Shamsie’s “incendiary solution” was “a provocation to all British publishers, big and small, she urged presses to highlight the problem, instigate discussion” (Smalley 2018, online, n.p.). Reactions elsewhere were mixed: most famously, at a panel on the Women’s International Day in 2016, writer Lionel Shriver defined Shamsie’s campaign as “rubbish and a ridiculous idea” (in Flood 2016, online, n.p.). Our contention here is that it was far from rubbish or ridiculous, but a message sent to the publishing industry about equality, and one that, while not being the outright success Shamsie may have hoped for, has had a significant effect on publishing in the UK, particularly among independent presses.

Though Shamsie was campaigning for women’s writing in general, the YPW aimed to include women writers in translation too. If the situation is not promising for women writing in English, it is even more challenging for translated authors, in a publishing context in which translated literature “oscillates around 3 per cent” of the book market in Ireland and the UK on average, as confirmed by the *Publishing translated literature in the United Kingdom and Ireland 1990 - 2012 statistical report* (Büchler and Trentacosti 2015, 5).² Given the “hyper-central position” of English (Sapiro 2008, 158), translated texts have traditionally been eschewed by the Anglophone marketplace, partly because of a tendency towards being “reactive in terms of translations, wanting to see (and know) what works have done in other markets before committing to buying rights” (Mansell 2017, 53-54).

Linking this to the lack of women’s visibility in their own literary cultures, this may help explain the fact that, out of that meagre 3 per cent, less than one third (around 28%) of books in English translation are authored by women writers.³ Translator and activist Katy Derbyshire laments:

Only a tiny fraction of fiction published in English is translated, and only about a quarter of that translated fiction was originally written by women. For some reason, fiction in translation by women is an absolute rarity – black diamonds, palomino unicorns. (Derbyshire 2016, online, n.p.)

Despite these figures, Büchler and Trentacosti's report also pointed at a consistent increase in the number of titles in translation. This was confirmed by a more recent report on *Translating the Literatures of Smaller European Nations: A Picture from the UK*, whose authors assert that the widespread and enduring pessimism about the prospects for translated literature in the UK is outdated, noting that “the concern has shifted from a focus on the low amount of translated literature being published, to questions about the diversity of literature translated” (Chitnis et al. 2017, 1). This diversity is mainly understood in terms of the literary genres and the variety of smaller literatures (defined as those that depend on translation to reach international audiences) that are rendered into English, most of them representing smaller European nations and thus perpetuating Eurocentrism. When looking at gender in translated literature, publication lists are still dominated by male authors (Chitnis et al. 2017, 9), a trend which was also highlighted by Daniel Hahn, writing about the longlist of the 2017 Man Booker International Prize (the most prestigious award for literary translation in English). Hahn noted that the longlist reflected “a significant gender imbalance (as we see every year), and a significant bias towards European writers and European languages (as we see every year, too)” (Hahn 2017, 48), and pointedly noted that these imbalances were indicative of the overall submissions pool, and thus of a more widespread imbalance in the translated literature industry.

Although there is reason to be optimistic about the upward turn in the percentage of literature being translated into English, initiatives such as the YPW in 2018 are essential to hold gatekeepers to account for the continuing bias towards male-authored writing available in translation. While other stakeholders (booksellers, reviewers, literary festivals and others) also have a part to play in tackling this bias, for the purposes of this study we shall focus on publishers because of their role as primary “gatekeepers.” More precisely, we shall focus on small independent publishing houses in the UK, based on our contention that smaller presses are pioneers for activism in translation. Indeed, Stefan Tobler, co-director of And Other Stories, identifies their independent and not-for-profit status as being the primary factor that gives us more freedom to embark on projects and initiatives (like YPW); unlike larger publishers, who are fearing a backlash/losing money” (Tobler, in Yates-Badley 2018, online, n.p.). We identify the smaller presses as important activists for gender parity in translation for two key reasons: first, because of their contribution to the increased percentage of translated literature in the UK (as noted by Chitnis et al. 2017, 2), a trend that explicitly includes women writers – indeed, Chantal Wright, who was instrumental in setting up the Warwick Prize for Women in Translation, notes that “smaller, independent publishing houses are pioneering in their activism for gender in translation” (Wright, in Krstić 2018, online, n.p.). Second, independent presses are crucial to activism in translated literature because of their work as “cultural talent scouts” (Freely, in Flood 2019a, online, n.p.), the importance of which is reflected in the fact that eleven of the thirteen books longlisted for the Man Booker International prize in 2019 were published by independent presses, and that eight of the thirteen were women-authored.

This focused approach will help us to assess the impact that the YPW has had on translation into English in the UK in 2018 and whether it might lay the groundwork for equality-driven shifts in the coming years. We shall situate our contribution within wider debates about gender, publishing and translation, and also in the context of different initiatives put in place to encourage greater translation and dissemination of women writers into English. Special attention will be paid to recent theorisations of translation as a tool for enabling transnational encounters among diverse women, as claimed by transnational feminism, particularly when translation happens in a space we shall term “from-the-Rest to-the-West.”

Underlining the importance of the intersections between critical debate and literary activism, and the ways in which each enlarges and empowers the other, we set in dialogue the theory produced by academics with the immediacy of online publications and their relevance to such a time-specific debate. By so doing, we accord equal importance in this study to traditional academic research publications and contemporary methods of dissemination such as blog posts, online editorials, and podcasts, responding to the “diversity” of advocates highlighted by Chitnis et al (2017, 2). We shall then introduce our case study and carry out a statistical analysis of translated women’s writing published in 2018 in the thirteen independent presses forming our corpus, with particular consideration of translation flows in relation to the geopolitical status of the source texts. Finally, we shall offer some conclusions about the impact of the YPW on the UK translated literature industry, highlighting areas of growth and areas that are still in progress.

2. HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVES AND CRITICAL ISSUES ON GENDER, PUBLISHING AND TRANSLATION: INTERSECTIONS OF ACADEMIC STUDIES AND LITERARY ACTIVISM

The topic of women writers in the circuits of translation is one of the most researched areas in feminist translation studies (see Castro and Ergun 2018, 131-132). Thirty-five years after the publication of the first panoramic study on women writers in translation in the Anglophone target culture (Resnick and de Courtivron 1984),⁴ the obstacles its authors noted (namely the “lack of recognition by critics and lack of influence over the publishing interests,” (Resnick and de Courtivron 1984, 211) still significantly reduce the chances for foreign women writers to be noticed and selected for publication in the English-language market. These two obstacles are part of what Margaret Carson (2019) has recently categorised as the “first barrier” faced by women writers in their journey to translation (i.e. the gender gap in publishing). Those writers who succeed at overcoming it then face a “second barrier” (2019, 39-41): the lack of visibility within their own literary culture owing to their not being featured in interviews or newspapers, reviewed by well-known reviewers in well-regarded venues, or awarded literary prizes as publishers have not considered submitting their manuscripts.

Gender-biased attitudes towards women in translation are many and varied (for an overview, see Castro 2017), and this is something that many publishers are becoming increasingly aware of. In a 2018 interview, Smalley of *And Other Stories* confirms that

most of what gets translated has already had a level of success in its original language, and often, in a lot of cultures, more attention is given to male writers. Men are favoured, considered more serious, considered to write better literature and so on, and so they’re the ones that get the awards, they’re the ones that get the coverage in the news that bring them to the attention of foreign publishers who might want to publish them. (in Vassallo 2018, online, n.p.)

Exposing these male-centric/gender-biased trends of the publishing industry in literary circles and media has given a renewed thrust to long-standing claims in academia to use translation more consciously and strategically as a tool to help disseminate the works of silenced women writers. One of the earliest examples is Françoise Massardier-Kenney’s pioneering proposal for a “redefinition of a feminist translation practice,” in which different translator-centred and author-centred strategies would make it possible to “change literary history by bringing to light authors who were inaccessible before” (1997, 65). Indeed, if literary translation plays a major role in the internationalisation of cultural markets and becomes a marker of status in the economic global system (Sapiro 2016), a feminist intervention seems vital to ensure a more balanced representation. Some of the most recent initiatives developed in the English-language

literary scene include the 'Women in Translation' tumblr (Price and Carson, 2015) and the 'Women to Translate' series at the online literary website *LitHub*, including posts listing foreign authors that should enter the English-language domain (see *LitHub* 2017).

However, the challenges for women in translation do not end when they enter the English-language literary circuit. Carson contends that a "third barrier" is the lack of visibility of translated authors within the target book market (2019, 41-42), mainly owing to the fact that foreign publishers are more likely to promote their men writers abroad (e.g. in literary festivals) and that books in translation by women writers are less likely to be reviewed (see also Wood 2019; Radzinski 2018). To overcome that invisibility and give greater status to what is already available in English translation, different initiatives developed in the last few years have succeeded in linking the growth of translated literature to the importance of technological advances. Indeed, as Chitnis et al. conclude in their report, "[s]ocial media, book reviews sites, on-line reading groups and bloggers are transforming the notion of word-of-mouth" (2017, 2), which is "the primary means of spreading interest in a book" (2017, 6).

One such initiative is the Translating Women project that forms part of the basis for our research, where as well as regular reviews, founder Helen Vassallo maintains a 'Virtual Bookshelf' to help readers to create their own informed reading lists (Vassallo 2018). Equally important in making women in translation visible is the 'Warwick Prize for Women in Translation' (Warwick 2017), established by the University of Warwick in 2017 to address the gender imbalance in translated literature. Coordinated by the literary translator and scholar Chantal Wright, it is awarded annually to the best work of literature by a woman published in English translation by a UK or Irish press. Besides the recognition and prestige awarded to the winner each November, by announcing the long-listed selection first and the short-listed titles a few weeks later, this Prize creates an invaluable portfolio easily accessible to the general public. A third initiative worth considering is the 'WITMonth' campaign, founded by Meytal Radzinski (2014a) on her blog in 2014 to encourage and challenge readers to seek out translated texts by women every August, for "as long as the huge imbalance in publishing women in translation persists" (Radzinski 2016, online, n.p.). Most of the actions occur on Twitter under the hashtag #WITMonth or #womenintranslation, which gives publishers the chance to promote their existing titles and readers the opportunity to find excellent books to read. Many of the initiatives mentioned above are featured in an article in the literary magazine *Words Without Borders* for International Women's Day in 2019, which highlighted fifteen women and organisations working for gender parity in literature, and which shows the difference that activism can make (Words Without Borders 2019).

Calling for an increased translation of (simply) women writers as a way to address the gender imbalance in translated literature may, however, risk erasing the complexity of gender identities and promoting essentialist understandings of what a woman is or may be. Needless to say, gender is not the only imbalance in translated literature,⁵ but a uni-dimensional understanding of it may lead to the situation Shamsie warned about at the very end of her talk at the Hay-on-Wye literary festival, showing her commitment against different "areas of exclusion" in women's writing:

If we are to truly claim that we're pushing back against inequality, it's essential that the YPW doesn't end up looking like the year of publishing young, straight, white, middle-class, metropolitan women. (Shamsie 2015, online, n.p.)

The only way to avoid this undesirable situation is to consider the YPW from an intersectional perspective (Crenshaw 1989) or a metramorphics approach (Flotow 2009), looking at how gender interacts with other social categories. Different categories (such as race, class, ethnicity, age, religion, geography, sexual identity, sexual orientation, etc.) are interconnected with gender to create intertwined systems of privilege or discrimination; taking on a "politics of

location” as formulated by Adrienne Rich (1986, 212), identities are inexorably complex and situated. In our analysis, we shall focus on how gender is linked to geography (McDowell 1999); in particular, we shall address the power dynamics within languages and literatures in different geographical spaces or, put differently, between the hyper-centralised English-language literature field (Sapiro 2008) and other smaller literatures in less translated languages (Branchadell 2005)⁶.

By tracing the flows of women in translation in the YPW, our aim is to assess the extent to which this initiative may be creating opportunities for women’s encounters that ultimately lead to better contextualised understandings of intersectional experiences in different geopolitical situations. As argued by theorists of transnational feminism (Lock Swarr and Nagar 2010), these women’s encounters and understandings transcending national boundaries are crucial to global social justice – and for them to happen we need translation; as Kathy Davis explains: “there can be no successful feminist politics without translation” (Davis, in Nagar et al. 2017, 111). Translation is a crucial tool for enabling transnational encounters among diverse women and alternative cross-border connectivities and solidarities (Costa and Alvarez 2014, 557)⁷. Yet, literary exchanges have flowed far more easily from North to South and from West to East, particularly leading to the (subtle and sometimes not so subtle) imposition of Anglo-American cultural values through translation (Venuti 1995, 14-15), whereas travel in other directions has proved almost non-existent. To challenge this trend, which reinforces neo-colonial practices so commonly incurred in previous formulations by Western feminism, some scholars have called for the need to “avoid West-to-the-Rest narratives, and develop more South-to-South oriented dialogues” (Costa 2006, 73). Alongside this, it is our contention that narratives ‘from-the-Rest to-the-West’ are crucially important too. For these feminist alliances to be truly productive, efforts must be made to incorporate narratives from other languages, literatures and cultures in English translation. In our study of the YPW, we want to explore the extent to which women’s encounters may be facilitated by translation from other languages into English, and how diverse (from a geopolitical point of view) those translated women writers are.

3. A GENDERED AND GEOPOLITICAL OVERVIEW OF THE YPW IN SMALL UK INDEPENDENT PRESSES

We carried out extensive data analysis of the 2018 publications of thirteen UK-based independent publishing houses who normally publish works in translation as a significant part (or all) of their list, discarding large or mainstream publishers and restricting our corpus to those that can be defined as small presses (see tables for full list and breakdown of publications).⁸ Though we do not have scope in this piece to present all the analysis undertaken, we shall summarize our principal findings, and use these to draw tentative conclusions about the impact of the YPW for women in translation in the UK.

The thirteen publishers in our corpus published thirty-nine translations of women-authored books (see table in Appendix I). Most of these independent publishers publish women in translation as part of their ‘generalist’ series, but some have specific series devoted to women in translation, such as Parthian’s Europa Carnivale series. Another distinctive feature is that some publishers or imprints are committed to specific geographical areas: while many focus on Europe (Istros Books publish translated literature from the Balkans, and Norvik Books publish Scandinavian literature in translation, while Parthian Books offer the aforementioned Europa Carnivale series), two concentrate on other areas: Tilted Axis Press publishes work from South Asia, and Charco Press publishes writing from Latin America.

Of these thirteen presses, eleven published books by men writers too – the only exceptions being *And Other Stories* (as a result of taking part in the YPW) and Parthian (with

all prose books in translation being part of their women writers in translation series). The total number of men writers in translation by these presses is forty-five (see table in Appendix II).

Though the take-up of YPW seemed disappointingly small, with only one out of our thirteen small publishers taking up the YPW challenge, these figures demonstrate that other presses have nonetheless made significant contributions (deliberate or otherwise) too. The total number of books published by the publishing houses in our corpus did not indicate total parity, but it did suggest an improvement: books by women in small presses made up 46 per cent of the translated literature publications, compared to 54 per cent for books by men. While this is not the 100 per cent women-authored total that the YPW had sought, it is certainly an improvement on the overall statistic of women's writing accounting for less than one third of publications.

WIT (women in translation) books represent twenty-one languages and twenty-five countries, as figures 1 and 2 show respectively.

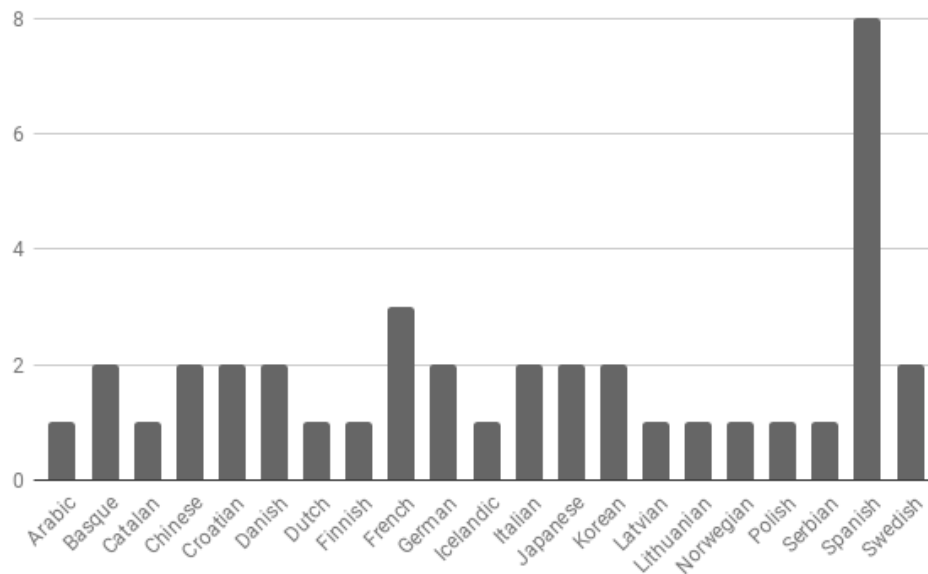


Fig. 1. WIT books by language

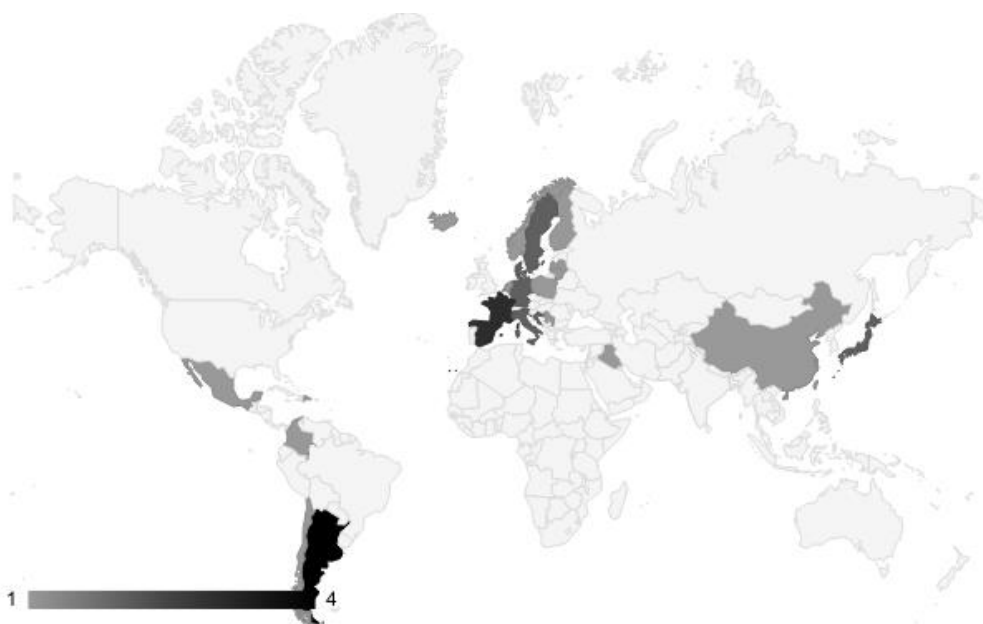


Fig. 2. WIT books by country

Translated literature by women writers in the UK remained determinedly Eurocentric in 2018. Only fifteen of the thirty-nine books come from non-European source literary systems, in five different languages. The existence of specific series devoted to WIT (e.g. Parthian's *Europa Carnivale*) and publishers' commitment to specific European geographical areas (such as Istros Books, Norvik Press or Parthian's series) clearly helps; Charco's focus on Latin America also accounts for two of the Latin American books (see Fig. 1). Translations into English from stronger literary languages such as French, German and Italian (the three having a colonial tradition) came in all cases from the metropolis. This trend is the direct opposite of the case with translations from Spanish, as all books come from Latin America. Our survey shows a timid openness towards writing representing 'lesser translated languages' or 'smaller European nations,' that we can only hope might grow and extend to other continents in the years following the YPW.

There are three particularly striking absences: firstly, the absence of some 'strong' European languages such as Portuguese (seventh most spoken language), despite the focus of Charco Press on Latin American authors (which would have included Brazilian Portuguese); secondly, the absence of writers from Spain who write in Spanish (the three books from Spain are written in Basque and Catalan); and thirdly, the absence of languages with an official status within the UK such as Welsh – the YPW could indeed have been used to disseminate Welsh-speaking women writers in the rest of the UK, and although Parthian Books publish many titles in Welsh, and some in both Welsh and English, no Welsh women-authored books were translated into English in 2018. Equally surprising is the scarcity of literatures in languages spoken by first- or second-generation migrant communities settled in the UK, especially those with strong literary traditions and among the most spoken languages in the world, such as Arabic and Chinese.

The one continent with no representation at all for either men or women writers (apart from the English-speaking territories of North America and Australia) is Africa, with nothing translated by African women authors writing either in African languages, in Arabic, or in colonial languages such as French or Portuguese; this is clearly a priority area in translated literature more generally.

MIT (men in translation) books also represent twenty-one languages, spread across thirty countries, as shown in figures 3 and 4.

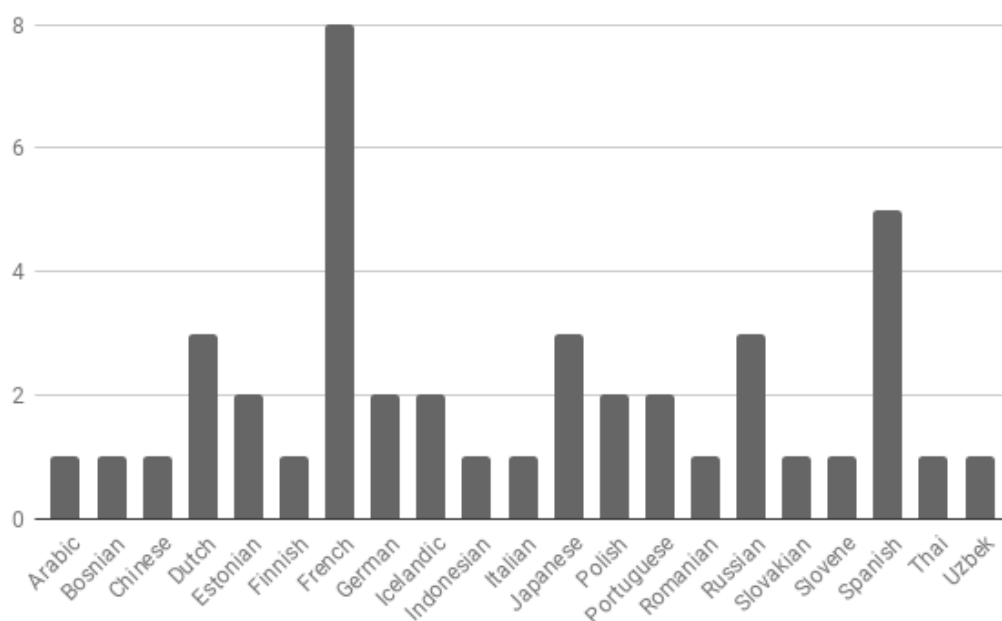


Fig. 3. MIT books by language



Fig. 4. MIT books by country

A similar Eurocentric trend in translated literature in the UK can be perceived when it comes to foreign men writers. In quantitative terms, twelve books (out of forty-five) are from non-European source literary systems; in qualitative terms, however, those twelve books span nine different languages spoken in the Americas and Asia (see Fig. 3), adding to the non-European texts a diversity not quite as evident in the women-authored translations. As was the case for WIT, publishers' commitment to specific European geographical areas is responsible for some of the areas of emphasis evident in the results.

Although MIT has less variety in Spanish-speaking Latin American countries than WIT, it has more variety of spaces when it comes to other metropolitan/colonial languages. MIT also had a greater geographical spread in 2018, though the linguistic spread was even between both women and men writers. However, quantitatively speaking, the number of spaces and literary traditions represented by men writers and not women, and *vice versa*, is very similar; as such, we can begin to distinguish between those issues that are important for translated literature more generally, and those which specifically affect women writers.

The main gender-specific issues in our corpus of publishing translated adult prose into English in the UK in 2018 by small independent presses is a quantitative one: despite 2018 being the YPW, fewer books by foreign women writers were published in English translation by small presses in 2018 than books by men writers, and overall fewer literary systems were represented. Other issues encountered are true of both MIT and WIT, which suggests that they are geopolitical issues, and that this should be considered alongside the gender issue. Yet, when looked at from a gender approach some trends can still be identified. For example, there is slightly less diversity in languages and literary spaces in the case of WIT. This happens mainly in two areas: first, translations from non-European literary spaces; and second, translations from European colonial languages used in non-European spaces. These findings raise questions of the correlation between different forms of cultural and gendered dominance that the YPW brings to light.

Through the analysis of which women writers entered the literary Anglosphere in the YPW, we wanted to participate in a transnational feminist practice by bringing new insights into the power relationship between languages and literary systems. We argued that flows 'from-the-Rest to-the-West' (and more specifically in this case, to the Anglosphere) were

crucial for two reasons: first, to add geopolitical diversity while addressing a gender gap. Translation has a particularly important role here: it is a powerful means to give voice to women who are doubly silenced – because they are women and because they do not speak a dominant world language which, as Mansell notes, symbolises the “gatekeeping power” essential to the publication of literature in translation (2017, 50); and second, to facilitate dialogues with different women writers that have an impact on canon formation and the British literary landscape. Studying the role of translators as cultural mediators would be of paramount importance, inasmuch as the inexorable ideological interventions in-between texts would determine the reception of the translated works. This is especially true at the present time, with the cautious opening up of the translation book market, especially to small European literatures.

This study has had a very specific scope. In order to assess the impact on the literary landscape, further studies beyond the stage of “creation” (Nelson and Maher 2013, 1) analysed in this chapter would be necessary, specifically addressing the stages of circulation and reception. It would be fruitful to undertake studies that also consider the gender of the translator, and common ‘gender pairings’ in this respect, as this would shed light on how often women or men translators work with women or men writers. Another aspect worth researching would be the historical period when the source texts were published to ascertain the ratio of contemporary books being published as opposed to ‘classics’ or rediscovered/ reclaimed texts from other historical periods; this would also show the type of contemporary or historical alliances made possible between women. A further possible area of enquiry is the allocation of translation grants (from the UK or from the source system) to specific areas or languages. Finally, a similar study to the one conducted here, but considering major publishers and big publishing corporations would be necessary to be able to assess whether our findings are representative of the publishing industry as a whole, or whether small presses and major publishers show distinct patterns.

4. FUTURE DIRECTIONS AND LASTING EFFECTS: TOWARDS GENDER PARITY IN TRANSLATED LITERATURE?

The extent of the legacy of the YPW will emerge over the months and years to come, and this long-lasting effect was Shamsie’s main concern when she challenged literary stakeholders to commit to a YPW. Towards the end of her 2015 talk at the Hay Literary Festival, she posed another subtler challenge:

What will it look like, this changed landscape of publishing in 2018? Actually, the real question is what will happen in 2019? Will we revert to the status quo or will a year of a radically transformed publishing landscape change our expectations of what is normal and our preconceptions of what is unchangeable? (Shamsie 2015, online, n.p.)

Though it might not have been “a year of a radically transformed publishing landscape,” and in the course of 2018 it might have seemed that the YPW was having little impact, we propose that there is reason to be cautiously optimistic: early in 2019, retail sales analysis adviser Nielsen Book found that sales of translated literature had risen to 5.5 per cent (see Flood 2019b), and the proportion of WIT in our YPW corpus (46 per cent) is significantly more encouraging than the traditional 28 per cent. One first lasting impact is the recognition from several publishing houses that the lack of gender parity needs to be addressed: following the YPW, a number of small presses have increased the percentage of women-authored books in translation in 2019⁹. For example, Peirene Press (who publish primarily translations) committed to publishing only women writers in 2019, and Oneworld Books included four WIT in their 2019 catalogue. Charco Press also included four women writers (out of a total list of six), and after a quiet year in 2018, Les Fugitives (a small press focusing on translating women

writers originally published in French, announced five publications of French women's writing in translation for their 2019 catalogue. Other publishers not included in our study have also made commitments to fostering inclusivity and diversity: most notably, the 2019 catalogue of Manchester-based UK publisher Comma Press (a press specialising in short stories, not included in our corpus because their WIT title for 2018 was pushed back to 2019) included two single-author collections by women in translation (one from Palestine and one from Sudan). This all bears out Carson's claim that "[t]here is no lack of women writers in any literary culture: the question is how to find them" (Carson 2019, 39), and we have highlighted the crucial activist role of publishers in combatting this invisibility of women writers worldwide.

Another very clear way in which the YPW can have a lasting impact is in terms of literary prizes. For example, if *And Other Stories* normally puts forward eight books for the Man Booker International Prize, of which up to half are by women, then in 2019 this figure doubled; indeed, one of the YPW books was shortlisted for the prize (Alia Trabucco Zerán's *The Remainder*, translated from the Chilean Spanish by Sophie Hughes). It can be no coincidence that directly after the YPW, eight of the thirteen books on the 2019 Man Booker International longlist and four of five on the shortlist were by women authors,¹⁰ and this move towards gender parity might be connected to the already mentioned rise in the representation of independent presses on the longlist (see Vassallo 2019). Thus, *And Other Stories'* commitment to YPW has generated some positive transformations that will hopefully lead to a lasting change not just in our expectations of what is normal, but also in the reality of a move towards gender parity in translated literature. The more publishing houses that publish WIT, the more women's writing will be put forward for these prizes and, given the attention that the longlist and shortlist receive, this means that more women's writing in translation will be given media coverage and publicity.

The increasing importance of technological advances for the growth of translated literature is a further source of encouragement. More specifically, WIT were disseminated via blogs, crowdsourcing campaigns, podcasts or social media such as Twitter or tumblr, and new formats are constantly emerging – for example, the first Women in Translation Edit-A-Thon workshop took place on 18 April 2019, organised by Goethe Institute New York, and there is a new Project Plume initiative launched in June 2019, which champions women's writing in translation from under-represented languages with the publication of a yearly anthology focused on a particular literary tradition. As such, it is urgent to develop a new methodology which sets into dialogue the theory produced by academics with the kinds of technological 'word-of-mouth' highlighted by the *Translating the Literatures of Smaller European Nations report* (Chitnis et al. 2017); this dialogue is exemplified by Project Plume's inaugural interview with Vassallo (Benaissa 2019) and we hope that our study here will encourage more to adopt this approach.

A fourth positive change is the perception that the awareness of this lack of equality is "going mainstream" (Danek 2018, online, n.p.) and awareness is the first step towards action. A move in this direction is the announcement in September 2018 that PEN International (the worldwide writers' association) will team up with VIDA (a non-profit organisation monitoring gender and diversity in the literary arts) to create a new PEN/VIDA count to monitor gender disparity in publishing. Chronicling disparity and inequality is the first step towards challenging and changing them, and so the YPW is not an isolated historical benchmark, but a catalyst for change and the start of a potentially seismic – if slow-burning – shift in the translation industry.

Another positive step revealed by our study with small independent presses pioneering translation is an increasing tendency to greater diversity, with some smaller nations and regions being represented in translation, mainly from European languages. This geopolitical diversity is especially true for MIT (and slightly less prominent for WIT). Despite this preliminary progress towards enlarged understanding of what 'women writers' means (not just from

hegemonic, metropolitan languages), it is in this area of diversity that the most important challenges remain; for example, our study revealed some unjustifiable (and easily filled) gaps such as African, Asian and South American authors writing in colonial languages (e.g. Portuguese or French) and authors writing in widely spoken languages by migrant communities settled in the UK (e.g. Arabic or Chinese); in all cases, easily filled since plenty of qualified literary translators work with these language combinations. Challenges to diversity in translated women's writing had already been anticipated in August 2018 by Theodora Danek (at the time, Translation Manager at English PEN) when the YPW was at its highest:

while I would say that it is not exactly the Year of Publishing Women I think that there is a shift where there is more of an awareness and more of an appreciation that we do need to bring more equality into the publishing industry, not just in publishing women, but in publishing voices that might not have been heard as much as they should be until now. (Danek 2018, online, n.p.)

But the geopolitics of women's writing in translation is just one aspect of diversity. In order to embrace all those "publishing voices that might not have been heard" we must remember all the different social categories (such as race, class, ethnicity, age, religion, sexual identity, etc.) that intersect with gender to create intertwined systems of privilege or discrimination. The limited scope of our study, focused on geography, ideally should be complemented by other analyses that help strengthen debates about diversity in translation. In this way, recent efforts to discuss diversity in UK publishing industry (Akbar 2017; Saha 2019) could be extended to translation, in order to develop strategies that help to better understand the needs and challenges faced by (women) writers in translation who belong to minority groups.

Despite the limited direct response to Shamsie's challenge, YPW led to various initiatives and forms of activism that had a demonstrable impact in translation. Although there is much more work to be done, we believe that the YPW can indeed be considered a platform for collective change and, as such, there is much to celebrate. Our study focused on small presses who are advocates for translation. So we would like to finish with a call for action so that the 'going mainstream' also means that major publishing houses start behaving proactively to end the gender imbalance in translation, while ensuring diversity. For the months and years ahead, we hope that this activist agenda will expand and extend, and that by talking about and advocating for WIT, we may come closer to equality.

5. FURTHER READING

Resnick, Margaret and Isabelle de Courtivron, eds. 1984. *Women Writers in Translation: an Annotated Bibliography 1945-1982*. New York: Garland.

First annotated compilation of more than 700 texts by women writers in English translation that had been published between 1945 and 1982. Each section of the book focuses on a specific geographical area and language, and includes a socioliterary context about the visibility of women authors in their source literary field and cultural system.

Büchler, Alexandra and Giulia Trentacosti. 2015. *Publishing translated literature in the United Kingdom and Ireland 1990 - 2012 statistical report, Literature Across Frontiers*.

First report on literary translation into English published between 1990 and 2012 in Ireland and Great Britain, commissioned by the European Platform for Literary Exchange, Translation and Policy Debate 'Literature Across Frontiers'. The report justifies the corpus and analyses data gathered paying attention to source languages and genres. It offers a final case study, focused on the translation of Balkan literatures into English.

Chitnis, Rajendra, Jakob Stougaard-Nielsen, Rhian Atkin and Zoran Milutinović. 2017. *Report: Translating the Literatures of Smaller European Nations: A Picture from the UK, 2014-2016*.

Final report of the AHRC-funded project on recent translations into English of literature from smaller European nations. The report identifies trends and challenges, and specifically highlights the need for greater focus on women in translation and understanding of how modern communication methods affect literary success.

6. RELATED TOPICS

women in translation, translation and publishing, the politics of literary translation, UK-based small independent presses, translated women in the UK

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8. APPENDICES

Appendix I: Women in Translation in our corpus (2018)

Publisher	Language	Country	Author	Translator	Title
And Other Stories (2009)	Spanish	Dominican Republic	Indiana, Rita	Obejas, Achy	<i>Tentacle</i>
	Italian	Italy	Jaeggy, Fleur	Parks, Tim	<i>Sweet Days of Discipline</i>
	Catalan	Spain	Kopf, Alicia	Lethem, Mara Faye	<i>Brother in Ice</i>
	Spanish	Argentina	Lange, Norah	Whittle, Charlotte	<i>People in the Room</i>
	Spanish	Mexico	Rivera Garza, Cristina	Booker, Sarah	<i>The Iliac Crest</i>
	Spanish	Chile	Trabucco Zerán, Alia	Hughes, Sophie	<i>The Remainder</i>
Balestier Press (2015)	Chinese	Taiwan	Shih, Chiung-Yu	Sterk, Darryl	<i>Wedding in Autumn</i>
	Chinese	China	Yan, Ge	Harman, Nicky	<i>The Chilli Bean Paste Clan</i>
Charco Press (2016)	Spanish	Colombia	García Robayo, Margarita	Coombe, Charlotte	<i>Fish Soup</i>
	Spanish	Argentina	Maliandi, Carla	Riddle, Frances	<i>The German Room</i>
Fitzcarraldo Editions (2014)	French	France	Ernaux, Annie	Strayer, Alison L.	<i>The Years</i>
	German	Germany	Kinsky, Esther	Galbraith, Ian	<i>River</i>
	Polish	Poland	Tokarczuk, Olga	Lloyd-Jones, Antonia	<i>Drive Your Plow Over the Bones of the Dead</i>
Istros Books (2011)	Croatian	Croatia	Drndić, Daša	Hawkesworth, Celia	<i>Doppelgänger</i>
	Serbian	Serbia	Jovanović, Biljana	Cox, John K.	<i>Dogs and Others</i>
	Croatian	Croatia	Tulić, Tea	Petkovich, Coral	<i>Hair Everywhere</i>
Norvik Press (1980s)	Danish	Denmark	Brøgger, Suzanne	Allemano, Marina	<i>A Fighting Pig's Too Tough to Eat</i>
	Swedish	Sweden	Lagerlöf, Selma	Graves, Peter	<i>The Emperor of Portugallia</i>
	Swedish	Sweden	Lagerlöf, Selma	Shenck, Linda	<i>Banished</i>
	Norwegian	Norway	Skram, Amalie	Messick, Judith and Hanson, Katherine	<i>Betrayed</i>
Oneworld Books (1986)	Arabic	Iraq	Al Rawi, Shahad	Leafgren, Luke	<i>The Baghdad Clock</i>
	French	France	Julien, Maude	Hunter, Adriana	<i>The Only Girl in the World</i>
	Finnish	Finland	Lindstedt, Laura	Witesman, Owen	<i>Oneiron</i>
Parthian Books (1993)	Basque	Spain	Agur Meabe, Miren	Gabantxo, Amaia	<i>A Glass Eye</i>
	Basque	Spain	Jaio, Karmele	Addis, Kristin	<i>Her Mother's Hands</i>
Peirene Press (2008)	Lithuanian	Lithuania	Grinkevičiūtė, Dalia	Valiukenas, Delija	<i>Shadows on the Tundra</i>
	Latvian	Latvia	Ikstena, Nora	Gailitis, Margita	<i>Soviet Milk</i>

Portobello Books (2005)	Spanish	Argentina	Enriquez, Mariana	McDowell, Megan	<i>Things We Lost in the Fire</i>
	Korean	S. Korea	Han, Kang	Smith, Deborah	<i>The White Book</i>
	Japanese	Japan	Murata, Sayaka	Tapley Takemori, Ginny	<i>Convenience Store Woman</i>
	Japanese	Japan	Tawada, Yoko	Mitsutani, Margaret	<i>The Last Children of Tokyo</i>
Pushkin Press (1997)	French	France	Frenkel, Françoise	Smee, Stephanie	<i>No Place to Lay One's Head</i>
	Spanish	Argentina	Gallardo, Sara	Sequiera, Jessica	<i>Land of Smoke</i>
	Dutch	Netherlands	Meijer, Eva	Fawcett, Antoinette	<i>Bird Cottage</i>
	Danish	Denmark	Nors, Dorthe	Hoekstra, Misha	<i>Mirror, Shoulder, Signal</i>
	Icelandic	Iceland	Ólafsdóttir, Auður Ava	Fitzgibbon, Brian	<i>Hotel Silence</i>
	Italian	Italy	Ortese, Anna Maria	Goldstein, Ann, and McPhee, Jenny	<i>Evening Descends Upon the Hills</i>
Scribe UK (1976)	German	Germany	Haratischwili, Nino	Collins, Charlotte and Martin, Ruth	<i>The Eighth Life</i>
Tilted Axis Press (2015)	Korean	S. Korea	Jungeon, Hwang	Yae Won, Emily	<i>I'll Go On</i>

Appendix II: Men in Translation in our corpus (2018)

Publisher	Language	Country	Author	Translator	Title
Balestier Press	Chinese	Singapore	Yeng, Pway Ng	Tiang, Jeremy	<i>Unrest</i>
Charco Press	Spanish	Peru	Cisneros, Renato	Petch, Fionn	<i>The Distance Between Us</i>
	Portuguese	Brazil	Fuks, Julián	Hahn, Daniel	<i>Resistance</i>
	Spanish	Uruguay	Mella, Daniel	McDowell, Megan	<i>Older Brother</i>
	French	France	Énard, Mathias	Mandell, Charlotte	<i>Tell Them of Battles, Kings and Elephants</i>
Fitzcarraldo Editions	Spanish	Chile	Zamora, Alejandro	McDowell, Megan	<i>Not to Read</i>
Istros Books	Bosnian	Bosnia	Avdić, Selvedin	Petkovich, Coral	<i>Seven Terrors</i>
	Romanian	Romania	Eliade, Mircea	Bartholomew, Christopher	<i>Gaudeamus</i>
	Slovene	Slovenia	Flisar, Evald	Limon, David	<i>A Swarm of Dust</i>
	Slovakian	Slovakia	Vilikovský, Pavel	Sherwood, Julia & Sherwood, Peter	<i>Fleeting Snow</i>
Norvik Press	Estonian	Estonia	Tammsaare, Anton	Moseley, Christopher and Shartze, Olga	<i>The Misadventures of the New Satan</i>
	Estonian	Estonia	Taska, Ilmar	Moseley, Christopher	<i>Pobeda, 1946</i>
Oneworld Books	German	Switzerland	Beck, Peter	Bullock, Jamie	<i>Damnation</i>
	Portuguese	Portugal	Chagas Freitas, Pedro	Hahn, Daniel	<i>The Day I Found You</i>
	French	Belgium	Colize, Paul	Rogers LaLaurie, Louise	<i>Back Up</i>

	Polish	Poland	Dehnel, Jacek	Lloyd-Jones, Antonia	<i>LaLa</i>
	Icelandic	Iceland	Helgason, Hallgrímur	Fitzgibbon, Brian	<i>The Woman at 1,000 Degrees</i>
	French	Canada	Thériault, Denis	Hawke, Liedewy	<i>The Boy Who Belonged to the Sea</i>
	Russian	Russia	Vodolazkin, Eugene	Hayden, Lisa C.	<i>The Aviator</i>
	Russian	Russia	Vodolazkin, Eugene	Hayden, Lisa C.	<i>Soloyov and Larionov</i>
Peirene Press	Icelandic	Iceland	Thorsson, Guðmundur Andri	Cauthery, Andrew	<i>And the Wind Sees All</i>
Portobello Books	Spanish	Spain	Barba, Andrés	Dillman, Lisa	<i>Such Small Hands</i>
	French	France	Mingarelli, Hubert	Taylor, Sam	<i>Four Soldiers</i>
	Spanish	Spain	Barea, Arturo	Barea, Ilsa	<i>The Forging of a Rebel</i>
	Russian	Russia	Gazdanov, Gaito	Karenyk, Brian	<i>The Beggar and Other Stories</i>
	Dutch	Netherlands	Hermans, Willem Frederik	Colmer, David	<i>An Untouched House</i>
	German	Germany	Herrndorf, Wolfgang	Mohr, Tim	<i>Sand</i>
	Japanese	Japan	Horie, Toshiyuki	Howells, Geraint	<i>The Bear and the Paving Stone</i>
	Norwegian	Norway	Houm, Nicolai	Paterson, Anna	<i>The Gradual Disappearance of Jane Ashland</i>
	Indonesian	Indonesia	Kurniawan, Eka	Tucker, Annie	<i>Vengeance is Mine, All Others Pay Cash</i>
	French	France	Merle, Robert	Kline, T. Jefferson	<i>Fortunes of France 4</i>
	French	France	Merle, Robert	Kline, T. Jefferson	<i>Fortunes of France 3</i>
	French	France	Merle, Robert	Kline, T. Jefferson	<i>Fortunes of France 1: The Brethren</i>
	French	France	Merle, Robert	Kline, T. Jefferson	<i>Fortunes of France 2: City of Wisdom and Blood</i>
	Turkish	Turkey	Mumcu, Özgür	Wyers, Mark David	<i>The Peace Machine</i>
	Japanese	Japan	Nosaka, Akiyuki	Tapley Takemori, Ginny	<i>The Cake Tree in the Ruins</i>
	Japanese	Japan	Okada, Toshiki	Malissa, Samuel	<i>The End of the Moment We Had</i>
	Dutch	Netherlands	Reve, Gerard	Garrett, Sam	<i>Childhood: Two novellas</i>
	Italian	Italy	Righetto, Matteo	Curtis, Howard	<i>Soul of the Border</i>
	Arabic	Syria	Sirees, Nihad	Weiss, Max	<i>States of Passion</i>
	Finnish	Finland	Statovci, Pajtim	Hackston, David	<i>My Cat Yugoslavia</i>
	Polish	Poland	Wittlin, Józef	Corness, Patrick	<i>Salt of the Earth</i>
Scribe UK	Dutch	Netherlands	van der Kwast, Ernst	Vroomen, Laura	<i>Giovanna's Navel</i>
Tilted Axis Press	Uzbek	Uzbekistan	Ismailov, Hamid	Rayfield, Donald	<i>The Devil's Dance</i>
	Thai	Thailand	Yoon, Prabda	Poopakakul, Mui	<i>Moving Parts</i>

- ¹ This research has been funded by the Project “Bodies in Transit 2: Difference and Indifference”. Ref.: FFI2017-84555-C2-2-P, MINECO-FEDER.
- ² This report was commissioned by Literature Across Frontiers, a platform for literary exchange, translation and policy debate. This report also shows that while all translations represent a 3 per cent of the market, translations of creative writing (fiction, poetry and children’s books) are slightly higher at 4 or 5 per cent. Despite these low percentages, translated literature is growing significantly, proportionally to the increasing number of books published in general.
- ³ There are varying exact percentages from year to year and in different English-language countries, but the rough figure of one-third is standard throughout (see Radzinski 2014a).
- ⁴ The compilation *Women Writers in Translation: an Annotated Bibliography 1945-1982* included more than 700 women-authored texts in different genres translated into English from German, Castilian and Latin American Spanish, French, Italian, Portuguese or Russian. In their introduction, the two editors shared their intention to create ‘a starting point for studies in a field that is richly deserving of thoughtful, informed, and committed exploration’ (Resnick and de Courtivron 1984: viii).
- ⁵ In line with this, in her Twitter account, Radzinski (2017) defines the #womenintranslation project as ‘international, intersectional, and built around the notion that all women* (*and transgender or nonbinary or intersex individuals) deserve to have their voices heard. This project is committed to giving voice to women from all countries, all languages, all religious, all ethnicities, all cultures, all sexualities, all marginalized gender identities, all abilities, all bodies, all classes, and all ages...’
- ⁶ The notion of ‘less translated languages’ applies ‘to all those languages that are less often the source of translation in the international exchange of linguistic goods, regardless of the number of people using these languages’ (Branchadell 2005: 1), including widely used languages such as Arabic or Chinese and long-neglected minority or minorised languages.
- ⁷ Having a book translated and available ‘in circulation’ is only the first step in enabling such encounters between foreign women writers and English-language readers that can only access those texts via translation. Attention should also be paid to *how* those narratives are translated, which is beyond the scope of this chapter.
- ⁸ We considered imprints of larger presses if they had a defined separate identity and published a significant proportion of translation. To be included in the survey, the presses must have published at least three books in 2018, at least one of which must be by a woman author in translation. When selecting titles published, we focused on adult prose (including fiction, non-fiction, and single-author short story collections) published in the UK in 2018, regardless of the year of publication in the original language; but did not include academic books, multi-authored anthologies, poetry, children’s books or Young Adult fiction. Our corpus only includes original releases, not re-editions or paperback releases if the hardback was released in a previous year.
- ⁹ The YPW has also had an impact on English-language publishers who do not publish translations; for example, Yorkshire-based Bluemoose Books will publish only women authors in 2020.
- ¹⁰ It is also worth noting that in four years of the Man Booker International Prize (relaunched in 2016 after merging with the Independent Foreign Fiction Prize), it has been awarded to a woman author on three occasions (South Korean Han Kang in 2016, Polish Olga Tokarczuk in 2018 and Omani Jokha Alharthi in 2019). All four winning translators were women: Deborah Smith in 2016, Jessica Cohen in 2017, Jennifer Croft in 2018 and Marilyn Booth in 2019.