

Vassallo, Helen. 2023. Towards a Feminist Translator Studies: Intersectional Activism in Translation and Publishing. New York: Routledge.

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Towards a Feminist Translator Studies (2023) by Helen Vassallo is a publication that aims at providing an overview at the publishing and editorial market in the UK through the lens of feminism and inclusion, highlighting and presenting current praxis in the industry. Translation, therefore, becomes a central concept to achieve what she, citing Ngozi Adichie (2014, 46), calls the “full humanity of women”, this is, to ensure the representation on the market of women writers is not just limited to white, middle to upper class, English-speakers. Besides, Vassallo is also concerned with centring the figure of the translators, by studying their practices from a gender perspective. As she mentions, drawing from Chesterman (2009, 14), Translation Studies usually foreground the text and conceives the part-takers as secondary. Therefore, the book by Vassallo undertakes the necessary research regarding the translator’s place within translation production.

Articulated in five chapters, Vassallo combines theory and practice through the exploration of five key notions for the development of feminist translator studies, namely: action, representation, responsibility, risk and hospitality. Each chapter and notion is represented by a case study of a publisher which carries out its activity according to certain values. Thus, the first chapter, centred around the publisher And Other Stories, describes actions taken by the publisher to ensure the publication of women, such as the fostering of the so-called Year of Publishing Women, which encouraged publishers to only bring to the market women-written works. Thus, Vassallo aims at exploring how we can commit to gender activism. The second chapter, which deals with representation, explores the case of Charco Press and their impact on the UK publishing industry. Charco Press, which is dedicated to “bridge” between Latin America and Anglophone cultures, is an interesting starting point for reflecting on the very notion of the “bridge”. Thus, drawing from Martin Ruano’s (2021) and Polizzotti’s (2018) reflections about bridges and borders, Vassallo shows how “[t]he authors and their work arrive in a space not shaped by or for them, but the knowledges and world they bring with them can enrich the previously bordered context they entered” (Vassallo, 2023,57). In this vein, the very own notion of bridging is questioned, and the author reflects on a topical debate for Translation and Translator Studies regarding the issue of the elimination of difference to make it digestible for the target readers/culture.

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The third and fifth chapters, titled "Responsibility" and "Hospitality" both focus on publishing against the mainstream and what the author calls the "proven formula". Chapter three analyses the case of Comma Press, a politically compromised publisher which specialized in the short story that aims at making the industry more accessible. As Vassallo explains, the example of Comma Press is relevant because it focuses not only on "the process of translation but also [on] the context of how those acts of translation come about" (72). That would constitute what she calls the shift from *skopos* to *telos* that "underpins feminist translator studies" (*ibid.*). Furthermore, this is a publisher that is committed to alternative and diverse publishing models against the complacency of sales or the "proven formula". In chapter four, which case study is Tilted Axis Press, a publisher that also goes against the mainstream, Vassallo explores the decolonization of translation. Decolonization of translation involves practices that eliminate exoticization or the exclusive publication of voices that fit cultural stereotypes, a common practice that highlights the existing hierarchy among global literatures, which possibly brings translators back to the age-old adage of domestication versus foreignization. In this vein, in this chapter the notion of "hospitality" is introduced, as the encounter which alters guest and host and not just guest. Also moving away from what is already familiar, chapter four focuses on the notion of risk and power-dynamics shifting, through the case of Fitzcarraldo Editions. As Vassallo explains, activist translators face problems related to the promotion of women authors of non-European origin because they are not the only actors involved. The role of gatekeepers and their tastes is central in this regard. However, if, as Mounzer (2017, 137) suggests, translation is an intimate act that puts the individuals and their relationship in the centre, activist translators that advocate for the translation of certain authors would play a key role in the publishing market.

Towards a Feminist Translator Studies is an interesting and relevant work that explores the underlying dynamics of the publishing market and the literary world, highlighting the work of independent publishers and underlining the activist role of women translators in giving space to authors from other cultures or writing in other languages. The overview offered throughout the five chapters compose what the author calls the "toolkit" of the feminist translator studies (Vassallo, 2023, 141), and foregrounds the intersection between gender perspective, society, culture and translators.

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