



## Literature Festivals

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### ► To cite this version:

Gisèle Sapiro. Literature Festivals. Journal of World Literature, 2022, 7 (3), pp.303-331. <10.1163/24056480-00703002>. <halshs-03929310>

**HAL Id: halshs-03929310**

**<https://shs.hal.science/halshs-03929310v1>**

Submitted on 8 Jan 2023

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## Literature festivals: a new authority in the transnational literary field

Gisèle Sapiro

**Abstract:** Literary festivals have become authorities in the literary field, which promote works through the charismatic persona of their author, and operate a transfer of symbolic capital from the most famous ones to the newcomers. Some of these festivals are international, and thus play a role in the making of world authorship and of world literature. This paper focuses on the way international literary festivals reflect, all the while they shape, the structure of the transnational literary field. International festivals tend indeed to mirror the unequal conditions of access to world authorship and the power relations that structure the world market for translations. However, some of them develop strategies to counter these power relations. They are also more politicized, and try to construct a more diverse and inclusive transnational public sphere, where writers act as public intellectuals. The analysis is based on a quantitative and qualitative study of 38 international literary festivals.

**Key words:** Literature Festivals; Literary authority; Public intellectuals; Transnational Literary field; World authorship.

### Introduction

Fields are regulated by specific authorities which play a major role in the recognition, legitimation, and consecration of those who take part in their activities (Bourdieu *Rules of Art; Microcosmes*). National literary fields have established themselves as relatively autonomous spaces thanks to specific authorities of distribution and consecration: academies, journals, publishers, prizes (Sapiro "Metamorphosis"). The Nobel prize fostered the unification of the international literary space at a moment of the nationalization of literature (Casanova; Sapiro "The transnational literary field"; on the nationalization of literature, see Thiesse). Translation and translation prizes have contributed to the formation of a transnational literary space, relatively autonomous from the global market for translations (which is embedded in the global book market). While this global market is organized around books fairs, international literary festivals play an equivalent role of circulation, exchange and networking in the transnational literary field. By contrast with the commercial orientation of book fairs, international literature festivals act as authorities contributing to the selection and valuation of books on the international literary scene, and thus help them be recognized as "world literature", as defined by Damrosch.

The rise of literature festivals, starting in the 1980s, has coincided with globalization and with the urge to democratize culture. Both these noble objectives converged with market interests, of which they were euphemized expressions. The book market was, at the time, experiencing unprecedented concentration and rationalization of costs, by mergers and acquisitions (Squires; Thompson; Bourdieu "A conservative revolution"). New markets were opening thanks to the end of authoritarian regimes (Francoism, and communism after 1989) and their strict control of cultural importations and exportations (Popa; Guijarro Arribas). Book fairs were multiplying around the world. However, the Anglophone market was the most advanced in this rationalization process. Multinational conglomerates were forming. A "world literature" in English was emerging, which was claiming to be more global and more diverse, including female-authors and ethnic minorities, taking into account the lessons of feminism and of the civil rights movement in the United States. This world literature in English had its own authority, the Booker Prize, that had rewarded Salman Rushdie in 1980, but whose diversity assessment was limited and covering commercial interests (as showed by Norris; see also Todd). Parallel to the Booker Prize, which was challenging the Nobel Prize, the rise of literary festivals helped the unification of the Anglophone literary space.

The Anglophone space had been a pioneer in establishing this type of literary event. The first festival of literature in Europe (and perhaps in the world), Cheltenham, was founded in 1949, and remained for a long time the only one of its kind. In 1974, Authors at Harbourfront Centre was established in Toronto. In France, the model of literary festivals first appeared at the margins of the literary field, for genres in search of legitimacy such as the graphic novel (Angoulême, 1974) and crime fiction (Reims 1986). By that time, the United Kingdom had seen the foundation of the Edinburgh International Book Festival (1983), and the Hay-on-Wye Festival of Literature and the Arts was soon to be launched in 1988. The number of festivals started then rising: over 350 festivals are now listed in the UK.<sup>1</sup> In France, in 2014, 132 literary events were counted in the region Ile-de-France, which includes Paris.<sup>2</sup> Some of these festivals are regional, some are national, some are international, although the borders between these categories are porous, as it is often not only a matter of orientation but also of budget and of attractiveness.

Despite their growing importance in the making of world literature, literature festivals have driven little scholarly attention so far, and were approached from the perspectives of the democratization of culture (Giorgi "Literature festivals"; "Between tradition"), cultural consumption (Oomundsen), audience experience (Weber), and the construction of continental identity in the case of African festivals (Ducournau "African literary festivals"). I am more

interested here in the role festivals play in the legitimation and professionalization of writers (Sapiro "Metamorphosis"), and in their access to international visibility. In other words, I consider here how literary festivals reflect and contribute altogether to shape the structure of the transnational literary field. Having conducted a collective study on a national literature festival (Les Correspondances de Manosque) in its different functions (Sapiro et al.), and proposed a methodological framework to approach international festivals and their role in the making of world authorship (Sapiro "Festivals"), I shall focus in this paper on a quantitative study of a sample of 38 international festivals. I define here international festivals as those which include authors coming from different countries *and* writing in different languages.

By the selection they operate, the connections they create between writers from different countries, and their introduction to a national audience, festivals participate in the making of world literature. However, as pointed out by Pascale Casanova, the conditions of access to the transnational literary field are unequal (Casanova *World Republic*). To which extent do international literary festivals reproduce these inequalities? Festivals first reproduce these inequalities by their own economic, cultural and social capital, which structures and hierarchizes the space of festivals, and by their relative autonomy towards commercial or political constraints. Secondly, festivals reproduce the inequalities in the program and in the organization of their space.

After discussing the social functions of festivals, I shall analyze the space of international literary festivals and its principles of differentiation: foundation, geographic location, audience, number of invited authors, and number of countries represented. I shall then turn to two case studies illustrating the reproduction of inequalities within the festivals' program and space, despite the attempts of cultural intermediaries to overcome them: the Brooklyn book festival and festival America illustrate the domination of American literature in the transnational field. However, the strategies deployed by some international literary festivals are more successful in securing cultural and linguistic diversity. These strategies imply various forms of politicization, that will be examined in the cases of the World Voices Festival in New York, Etonnants-Voyageurs in Saint-Malo, and the International Literature Festival Berlin. Diversifying the networks within the transnational literary field, these festivals also construct an alternative transnational public sphere.<sup>3</sup>

## **The social and literary function of literary festivals**

Since the seventeenth century, the literary value was fabricated within small cenacles of insiders like the academies, or, later, meetings in private gatherings such as the brothers Goncourt's '*grenier*'. This value tended to differ from that produced in the high society *salons* or, starting in the nineteenth century, by the market (Bourdieu, *Rules of art*). The salons implied the author's presence, and sometimes some oral performance (especially for poetry), and a contact with their potential public. By contrast, the market sold to anonymous readers. Nevertheless, the growing personal involvement of the authors in the promotion of their books through interviews and public talks offered opportunities for encounters with the potential readership, without the mediation of the literary critic or of the bookseller. Charles Dickens was famous for his theatrical performances in his public readings. However, these events were occasional and even if an author was touring, he featured as a solitary star.

Literature, or writers' festivals designate public events where a selection of authors are invited to read and comment on their works and to discuss them with specialists: critics, academics, translators, or to perform them with interpreters such as comedians, singers, artists, film directors or choreographers. Showcasing the writers in person, like in public readings, they involve their physical presence in the construction of the value of their work, using at the same time the fame of some of them – and of other guests such as musicians or comedians – to produce the symbolic value and attractiveness of the whole event. One of the founders of the Manosque festival spoke, in an interview, of "live literature." Cultural mediators – commentators, critics, translators, interpreters, actors, singers, etc. – are assigned a significant role in this initiation. Literature festivals distinguish themselves from other events such as book fairs through their programming, i.e. a selection process of books and participants, especially more or less famous writers, at times centred around a specific theme, a genre (noir, graphic novel) or a region of the world (Africa, Europe, the Balkans...). The time, attention and discussion dedicated to the authors, around their new books, and to public reading, also contrasts festivals with book fairs where writers sometimes feel they are used as a marketing appeal for selling the product.

Festivals furthermore distinguish themselves from book fairs by the convivial setting, and the festive dimension that gives its meaning to the word 'festival'. This festive dimension is often amplified by combining literature with other arts, especially performing arts (music, dance), but also film, fostering the transfer of symbolic capital between cultural producers of different disciplines. For the audience, the collective experience of attending a public reading or a debate with the author, creates a commonality and a space for sharing their experience,

judgement and emotions. Closer to the performing arts, this collective experience contrasts with the solitary cultural practice of reading that prevails since general access was given to education, as well as with the 'non-live' media where writers appear (newspaper, radio, TV interviews), all the while connecting all these different incarnations of the author. However, against the tendency to conceive of them as democratizing access to literature, it can be argued that festivals perform a sacralization of the writer by building a community of believers who experience the magic of literature in a ritual that reinforces rather than reduces the distance between authors and audience, through the charisma their physical presence exerts (on charisma, see Weber). Festivals thus reinforce what Bourdieu calls the *illusio*, that is to say the collective belief in the value of literature at large and of specific authors in particular (I will leave aside here the growing presence of non-fiction in these events). This function also characterized the previous forms of literary gatherings, in particular cenacles, but, unlike these predecessors, which sustained the cohesion of a group of peers and the circles formed around charismatic leaders such as André Breton in the case of the surrealist avant-garde, literary festivals aim above all to feed the belief of the public of laypersons by featuring the magical presence of the charismatic author's body and voice.

In addition to the encounter of the authors with their audience, which offer vibrant live experiences of their recognition, festivals are for authors an occasion to meet and socialize among themselves and with critics and translators, thus triggering the formation of literary networks. For debut authors, they offer a unique opportunity to socialize with their elders and to be discovered by the audience. Thus, while confirming and enhancing the notoriety of established authors, who often serve to attract a wider audience to the event, festivals play a significant role in the discovery and introduction of new authors, along with the literary agents and the publishers.

Lastly, festivals more and more partake in the professionalization of authors. Literary festivals play a role in the symbolic recognition of authors and in maintaining their presence (and identity as writers) in the interval that stretches between the publication of two books, in a conjuncture of overproduction of books and of concentration of media attention on a few number of best-selling authors. Moreover, they have growingly become a complementary source of income. Not only do they allow them to promote their books, but in countries like the United States, or Germany, authors are often paid for their participation, in addition to covering the costs for their travel and accommodation. In the United Kingdom, the amount of fees varies between festivals. Scottish festivals pay a standard rate of £150, the Edinburgh international book festival a little more, £200 per author per event (Armitstead and Cain). The Cambridge

literary festival offers authors £100, but the Oxford Literary Festival accepted to reward its guest authors only after Philip Pullman, the patron of the festival, resigned (for this reason) in 2016, backed by 30 writers who signed a letter calling to boycott the event (Khomami). In France, the struggle was led by the Société des gens de lettres and by some festivals which gathered in an association called Relief to further the professionalization of the author by paying for their participation in festivals (Sapiro "The writing profession").

As said, the impact festivals have on the symbolic recognition of authors applies not only to debut writers, for whom festival invitations contribute to the legitimizing of their work, but also to established writers, whose reputation they help maintain and strengthen. The programming designates indeed a process of selection by the organizers, which contributes to making certain festivals a consecrating authority for the authors invited. A transfer of symbolic capital operates from the most famous to the newcomers, and to the whole event, which builds its own reputation and credit by attracting some literary (and non-literary) celebrities all the while producing a collective symbolic capital which benefits to all participants. Moreover, the invitation to an event increases one's chances of being invited to another one, and of attracting the attention of critics, a phenomenon coined by American sociologist Robert Merton as the Matthew effect (Merton).

However, international festivals tend to mirror the unequal conditions of access to transnational authorship. These conditions depend upon the relative position occupied by the language, the country and the cultural intermediaries (literary agent, publisher) within the power relations that structure the world market for translations. Invitations to festivals depend on visibility and thus on the capacity of cultural intermediaries to impose an author on the transnational scene, through translations, readings in other countries, and invitations to festivals which, as said above, obey the Matthew effect law.

### **The uneven space of international literary festivals**

Like the other cultural intermediaries, the consecrating power of festivals vary according to their symbolic and economic capital. Their authority may operate at different levels: local, national, international. Unlike music or art festivals, international literature festivals raise the issue of communication (it can also happen in regional festivals who choose a dialect, for instance Breton, rather than the national language but this is a voluntary decision to form a community and legitimize the dialect as a literary and intellectual language). There

are international festivals in English, others only in French, some in Spanish and in other vehicular languages, and some are multilingual.

The consecrating power of festivals can be more or less dependent, for the preselection of authors, on the publishers, who are themselves dependent on the literary agents, especially in the Anglophone space, but also in the German and Spanish ones. The dependency upon the publishing field is even higher in the case of international festivals, since an implicit condition for a foreign author to be invited to a festival is to be translated into the language of the festival, and there are few exceptions to this rule (we will see one with the Berlin International Literature Festival). Consequently, we can expect international festivals to reproduce the linguistic asymmetries that structure the world market for translations (Sapiro, "Festivals"). These asymmetries can be measured through flows of translations (Heilbron, 1999): the chances to be translated are determined by the centrality of the original language, the country, and the cultural intermediaries (literary agents, publishers) within the power relations that structure this market (Sapiro, "How do literary texts").

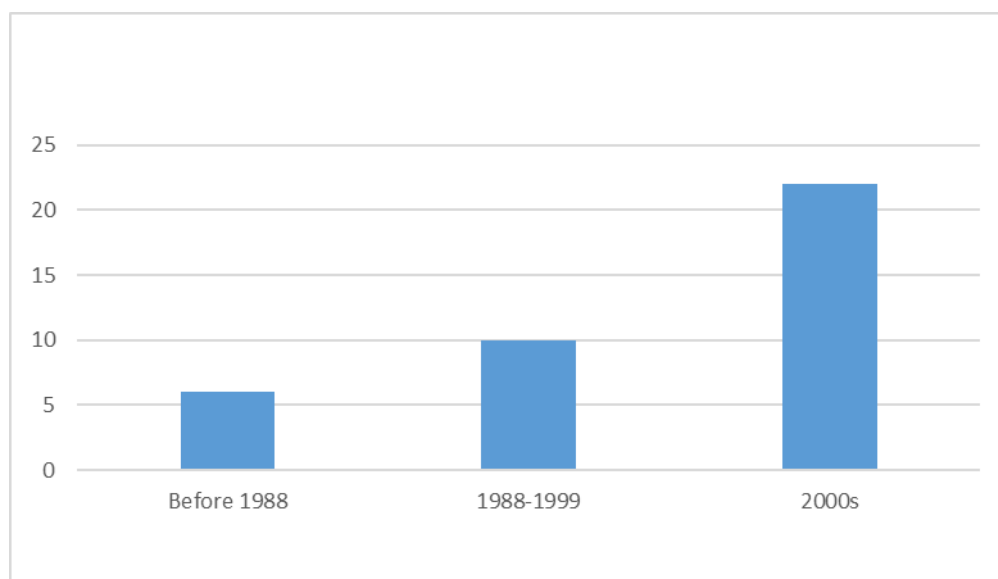
According to Bourdieu ("A Conservative Revolution"), the field of publishing is polarized between small-scale and large-scale circulation. This observation that Bourdieu made at a national level also applies to the global market for translations (Sapiro Translation). Languages are unevenly distributed between these poles: at the global level, the pole of large-scale circulation of the publishing field, driven by profitability, is almost entirely dominated by the English language, whereas the pole of small-scale circulation, where aesthetic and intellectual criteria prevail, is characterized by linguistic diversity. The pole of large-scale circulation is more and more ruled by the dominant literary agents, i.e. the large British and American agencies, whereas informal networks of authors, editors, publishers, critics, and small independent agencies form the pole of small-scale circulation (Sapiro and Leperlier).

International festivals can also be situated between large-scale and small-scale circulation. Those who occupy a dominant position have the means to invite world 'celebrities', such as winners of international prizes, whose agents demand very high honorarium fees, alongside debut authors who are promoted by these powerful agencies, while the smaller gatherings try to construct niches for authors from peripheral countries, writing in (semi-)peripheral languages, who are in most cases not represented by agents, and who are published by small independent (and sometimes non-profit) publishers. However, the seize of the audience is not sufficient to determine the position of festivals in the transnational literary field: their geographic location, whether in central vs peripheral (or semi-central and semi-peripheral) countries, impacts their consecrating power.



The geographic concentration of international festivals reflects that of cultural intermediaries, at least regarding the countries (because many festivals take place in the provinces rather than in the cultural capitals). Focusing here on the 38 most significant international festivals, the space of international literature festivals can be described thanks to the data collected for a series of variables: their geographic location, the date of their foundation, the number of visitors, of invited authors, and of countries represented (the data was collected for the year 2018 from the festivals website and from the press, some additional qualitative data will be added for other years in some cases).

We first observe that most of them are located in Europe (15, only 2 of which in Eastern Europe; another one was launched in Sofia in 2013, which is not in our data base) and North America (10), 8 of which in the US and 2 in Canada. 9 are spread in Asia (1 in China, 2 in Hong Kong, 2 in India, 1 in Bhutan, 1 in Indonesia, 2 in the Middle-East: Jerusalem and Dubaï). There are 2 (Melbourne and Sidney) in Australia, and only 2 (Paraty and NGC Bocas Lit Fest) in South America, where the most important literary events are organized in very large book fairs (see below). The festival phenomenon is also spreading to Africa, where some were first set up in partnership with European ones, such as Etonnants Voyageurs (Bamako) and Paroles Indigo. A new one, Festival international de literature de Dakar (FILID) has been inaugurated in 2022 in Senegal.



**Graph 1: The rise of international literary festivals**

The rise of international literature festivals started in 1988 (see graph 1). Before this date, only 4 were established from the start as literature festivals: Cheltenham (1949), Toronto (1974), Edinburgh (1983), and Melbourne (1986). Two others were book fairs, focused on trade and professional exchange, but also open to the public, who added a writers' festival at some point: such is the case of the Miami Book Fair (1984) and of the Gothenburg Book Fair (1985), which was initially a trade fair (for librarians and teachers), before becoming the second largest book fair in Europe after the Frankfurt Book Fair, and launching the largest literary festival in Scandinavia. By the same token, the Jerusalem Book Fair established in 1963 adopted a more international strategy in the 1980s: a biennial fellowship program was implemented in 1985, sponsored by the George von Holtzbrinck Publishing Group, to train a group of selected promising young editors and agents during a professional week-long seminar, focusing on significant issues of current interest to the international publishing community. In 2012, a writers' festival was set up (it appears in our data base at the date of its establishment). In 2018, the book fair was transformed into the Jerusalem International Book Forum, a professional meeting, which runs parallel to the Writers' festival and establishes connections with it.

Two other examples of important book fairs which invite authors from abroad can be added, that are not included in the data base. First, the Buenos Aires Book Fair, founded in 1975 at the instigation of the Argentinian Society of authors (SADE), and which is the most important literary event in Latin American (publishers of up to 40 countries are represented), and includes a poetry festival. Spread on three weeks, the book fair attracts 1,2 M visitor. Were invited in the past authors such as José Saramago, Paul Auster, John M. Coetzee, Mario Vargas Llosa, José Mauro de Vasconcelos, Italo Calvino, Jorge Amado, Susan Sontag, Ray Bradbury, Elena Poniatowska, Doris Lessing, Julián Marías, Hanif Kureishi, Eduardo Galeano, José Donoso, Camilo José Cela, Tom Wolfe, José Mauro de Vasconcelos, Wilbur Smith, Cees Nooteboom, Carlos Fuentes, and Henning Mankell. The second example is the Istanbul Book Fair, founded in 1982 by 28 publishers, and which attracts now more than 600,000 visitors.

By that time, international book fairs began multiplying around the world, for instance in New Delhi (1972), Tunis (1985), Guadalajara (1987) - the largest book fair in the world after Frankfurt -, Hong Kong (1990), or Ouagadougou (2000). In 1988, the Frankfurt book fair started inviting a country as guest honor, thus fostering the globalization process by highlighting every year another national literature. This model was followed by many of them, for instance the Salon du livre de Paris the same year, and the Istanbul Book Fair (whose guest of honor in 2022 is Korea). While reinforcing the national perception of literature (which became a source of tension when for instance Catalonia was invited in 2007, as it was judged by contenders as

supporting Catalan nationalism), this trend toward the internationalization of the book market triggered the intensification of translations (+50 percent in the world between 1980 and 2000, according to the Index Translationum; Sapiro "Globalization") and the rise of international literary festivals.

In 1988, two new international festivals appeared. Initially dedicated to poetry, the Hay-on-Wye was to open to more commercial genres and become a large event, whereas Vancouver is a smaller one. They were soon followed by 9 others: Étonnants Voyageurs in Saint-Malo (1990), the Norwegian Festival of Literature (1995), Los Angeles Times Festival of Books (1996), Texas Books Festival (1996), Oxford Literary Festival (1997), Melbourne Writers Festival (1998), Festivaletteratura Mantova in Italy (1997), Sydney Writers Festival (1997), Litquake, San Francisco (1999).

Since 2000, at least 22 new ones were founded: International Literature Festival Berlin (2001), Lit. Cologne (2001), Hong Kong International Literary Festival (2001), The Library of Congress National Book Festival (2001), Festival America in Paris (2002), International Literary Festival of Paraty, Brazil (2003), Ubud Writers and Readers Festival (2004), Brooklyn Book Festival in New York (2005), World Voices Festival of International Literature New York (2005), Le Marathon de mots, Toulouse (2005), The European Borderlands Festival (2006), Jaipur (2006), the Bookworm International Literary Festival, Peking (2007), The International Writers Festival, Jerusalem (2008), Conrad, Kraków (2009), International Poetry Nights in Hong Kong (2009), Emirates Airline Festival of Literature (2009), Mountain Echoes literary festival, Bhutan (2010), Louisiana Literature Festival, Copenhagen (2010), NGC Bocas Lit Fest, Trinidad-and-Tobago (2011), Worldstock, Portland (2014), Kerala literature festival (2016). This list is not exhaustive, as attested by other smaller events that are not in our data base but that will be evoked to illustrate some point, like the SILF established by the Bulgarian Book Association in Sofia in 2013, parallel to the book fair, and the Festival Paroles Indigo launched in 2012 at Arles by an association to promote francophone African literature (since 2016, it is held in two sessions, one at Arles and one in an African country).

| Nbr of visitors/Nbr of invited authors | 10-149    | 150-299  | 300-449  | 450 et plus | Total     |
|--|-----------|----------|----------|-------------|-----------|
| 1 000 - 49 000                         | 12        | 5        |          | 2           | 18        |
| 50 000 - 150 000                       | 2         | 2        | 3        | 2           | 9         |
| 150 000 +                              | 1         |          | 1        | 6           | 8         |
| NR                                     | 1         | 1        |          |             | 3         |
| <b>Total</b>                           | <b>15</b> | <b>8</b> | <b>4</b> | <b>10</b>   | <b>38</b> |

**Table 1. Number of visitors and number of invited authors**

These events can indeed be differentiated by their size (table 1). 8 are large-scale festivals with more than 150,000 visitors. Most of them (6) are located in the United Kingdom (150,000 visitors at the Cheltenham in 2018, 250,000 at Edinburgh, 300,000 at Hay), and the United States (150,000 at the Los Angeles Time, 200,000 at Miami and at the Library of Congress). But the largest is the Jaipur festival, with 350,000 entrances in 2018 and 400,000 in 2019, where the audience is also attracted by Bollywood stars.<sup>4</sup> The younger Kerala Lit Fest, established in 2016, already attracted 150,000 visitors in 2018, for 450 invited authors from 10 countries. Most of these festivals have the means to invite more than 450 authors: in 2018, the Hay-on-Wye and the Los Angeles Times invited 500 authors (respectively from 25 and 10 countries), the Miami 607 from 49 countries, the Cheltenham 760 from 40 countries, and the Edinburgh reached 900 from 55 countries that year. 383 authors from 36 countries were invited to Jaipur the same year, and 115 from 10 countries at the Library of Congress.

9 festivals are mid-size events, with 50,000 to 150,000 visitors. Five of them are located in Europe, two in Australia, and two in the US. Except for the two Australian festivals, who invited 450 authors in 2018 (from 30 countries at Melbourne, 19 at Sydney), all of them had that year between 100 and 350 guests: the Texas Book Festival (320/15), the Brooklyn Book festival (300/15), Göteborg (111/30), Marathon (135/18), LitCologne (172/24), Etonnants-Voyageurs (292/43), Mantova (327/30).

Half of the festivals (19) are small-scale, according to the number of visitors (less than 50.000 visitors), and this is also probably the case of the two for which the data about the number of visitors was missing: the Conrad and the Jerusalem festivals. Two of these smaller-scale events may invite as much or more authors than the large-size: the Oxford Literary Festival invited 450 in 2018 (for 40,000 visitors), and the San Francisco Litquake rose from 650 scheduled in 2016 to 700 in 2018 (for 21,000 visitors), and to 860 in 2019 (the festival's 20<sup>th</sup> birthday). Both festivals last 10 days. 6 of these small-scale festivals invited in 2018 between 150 and 250 authors, from 30 to 55 countries. These are Berlin (55), Conrad (33), PEN World Voices (50), Toronto (30), Ubud (30) and Emirates Airline (50). In 2018, the Conrad literary festival invited 158 authors of fiction and non-fiction, 33 of which from abroad (Argentina, Bosnia, Czech Republic, Haïti, India, Germany, Greece, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Norway, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Sweden, Syria, Tunisia, the UK and the US...).

The 12 remaining have less than 150 invited authors per session: from 11 at the Borderlands to 111 at the Bookworm in 2018). Most of these are located in peripheral countries

or places: Brazil (Paraty), China, Hong Kong, Norway, Denmark (Göteborg), Israel (Jerusalem), Bhutan, Trinidad and Tobago, Vancouver (100 guest authors and 15,000 visitors in 2018) and the moving Eastern European Borderlands Festival, but there is also one in the US (Wordstock in Portland), and one in France (Festival America in the Northern suburb of Paris; see below). In 2017, the International Poetry Nights in Hong Kong had 23 guest poets from 16 countries, in 2018 42 from 12, and in 2019, 30 from four continents and 26 countries, among which 13 were from Europe (with two thirds coming from Eastern Europe); 9 from Asia (with 6 speaking Chinese); 5 from North and Latin America; 2 from the Middle East and 1 from Africa.

In variable proportions, these festivals all combine literary standards and strategies for broadening their public. They operate in between the poles of large-scale and small-scale circulation of the literary field: best-selling authors are invited, but the most commercial genres, romantic novels and thrillers, are generally excluded. Authors of Noir were however present at 26 of these events. Most of these gatherings (35) include youth literature (the only who do not are the Hong Kong poetry festival, the Jerusalem and Borderlands), and 30 invite authors of graphic novel (31 if we count the Jerusalem festival, which invited one in 2022 for the first time). In order to attract a large audience, 22 combine literature with music performans, and 17 with film screenings (15 among which feature both). However, although most of the largest events have either music or film, there is no clear relation between their inclusion and the size of the event, since some of the smaller often promote independent cinema and films produced in the periphery of the Hollywood dominated market. 25 address political themes (see below).

33 of these festivals are not specialized. Only 5 of them claim a specialty. They are located at the periphery of the transnational literary field. The Hong Kong festival is the only one in our data base specializing in a genre, poetry (as we saw, the Hay started as a poetry festival, but diversified the genres, and most of these festivals do not feature poetry), but other international poetry festivals exist. They represent the extreme edge of the pole of small-scale circulation of the space of festivals (Dubois and François; on the poetry translation, see Blakesley). 4 other events specialize on their region or country. Two of them use this international scene to promote their literature (a strategy that can also be observed in events which do not openly promote their national authors, like the Jerusalem festival): Paraty on Brazilian literature, the Kerala on Malayalam literature. Festival America in Paris focuses on the American continent (see below). The Borderlands festival aims at connecting Eastern European authors from the two sides of the European border. These regional events, to which one could add the Sofia festival, who focuses on the Balkan, differ from the African literature

festivals, who also have a geographic and cultural identity, but in their case the postcolonial dimension is prevailing (Ducournau, "African literary festival").

The international character of these festivals can be attested by the number of countries represented. 20 festivals invited authors from 5 to 19 countries, and 18 from 20 countries or more, among which 7 have more than 40. The lower number of countries is correlated to the low number of invited authors (14 of the 16 festivals who invite less than 150 authors feature less than 20 countries, 2 have 20-39), but the largest are not systematically the most diversified (see table 2). The most diversified representation of countries is featured by the category of festivals who invite 150 to 299 authors (7 out of 8 have more than 20 nationalities represented), although European writers are usually overrepresented (more than American ones whose agents request very high fees as already said).

| Invited authors/<br>number of countries | 1_19      | 20-39     | 40-59    | Total     |
|---|-----------|-----------|----------|-----------|
| 10-149                                  | 14        | 2         |          | 16        |
| 150-299                                 | 1         | 3         | 4        | 8         |
| 300-449                                 | 2         | 2         |          | 4         |
| 450+                                    | 3         | 4         | 3        | 10        |
| <b>Total</b>                            | <b>20</b> | <b>11</b> | <b>7</b> | <b>38</b> |

**Table 2. Number of invited authors and number of countries represented**

If we calculate the ratio of the number of invited authors per number of countries represented, it appears that the small-size events are the most diverse: thirteen of them had a ratio between 1 and 7, and five between 7 and 16, whereas all the eight large-size festivals have a ratio superior to 7, five of which is higher than 16 and up to 50 for the Los Angeles Times. Hence, contrary to the idea that the largest an international literature festival is, the more diversified in terms of countries represented, the data base shows that the smaller festivals are those who invite the most geographically diverse group of authors.

| Visitors/Ratio invited authors per countries | 1_7       | 7_16      | 16_55     | Total     |
|--|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| 1 000 - 49 000                               | 13        | 6         | 2         | 21        |
| 50 000 - 150 000                             | 2         | 4         | 3         | 9         |
| 150 000 +                                    |           | 3         | 5         | 8         |
| <b>Total</b>                                 | <b>15</b> | <b>13</b> | <b>10</b> | <b>38</b> |

**Table 3. Ratio of diversity: number of authors per number of countries**

International literature festivals have multiplied exponentially since 1988, but they are unevenly distributed across countries and cultures. The oldest, like the Cheltenham, Edinburgh, Hay and Etonnants Voyageurs, have accumulated symbolic capital, irrespective of their size. But this symbolic capital also varies in different linguistic areas: while the British festivals are dominant in the English-speaking area, Etonnants Voyageurs is more visible in the Francophone linguistic area, and the Berlin International Literature festival is the most international (see below).

Concentrated in Europe and in North America, the space of literature festivals appears structured by an opposition between more central events and peripheral ones, their position being less the reflection of their size or number of invited authors (although the most peripheral ones are the smallest), than of their location (the UK and the US), language (English) and means, but also their connections with the most powerful intermediaries. In between we find however more diverse European festivals like Etonnants Voyageurs and the Berlin International Literature Festival, who try to resist the domination of English. Before turning to them, let us consider how the asymmetries can be observed within the space of the festival, and which strategies are deployed to counter them.

### **Asymmetries within the space of the festival**

In his study of the Frankfurt book fair, Gustavo Sorá observed that the spatial organization of the book fair reproduces the inequalities between centre and periphery and between Northern and Southern countries (Sorá: 191-217). A similar spatial organization can be observed in literary festivals, as the comparison between the Brooklyn Book Festival in New York and Festival America in Paris illustrates. While the first reflects the very marginal position of translation in the American book production and its even more marginal place on the American book market, the second features the centrality of American literature.

#### *The Brooklyn Book Festival*

Combining a writers' festival and a book fair, the Brooklyn Book Festival is a mid-size event, but still New York City's largest free literary festival, which attracted 40,000 visitors in 2011 (Kral), and 50,000 in 2018. Despite its openness to small presses and to translations, an ethnographic observation of the 2010 edition revealed asymmetrical spatial organization. Events around famous American authors, such as Paul Auster, were scheduled in the lecture hall. Dozens of people had been waiting in a line for one hour to buy tickets. By contrast, the

international stage was set in an open space on a rainy day, and despite the fact that it was free, it was attended by less than a dozen. 'International literature' was the theme of the first event (including several authors), and the others concerned more commercial genres such as the graphic novel or the 'International Noir', and themes like 'food' or 'foreign destination and destinies'.

In the 'International literature' event, four publishing houses were represented: an independent prestigious old one (New Directions), and three young not-for-profit presses (Archipelago, Ugly Duckling, and Zephyr). The editors introduced their authors, the Russian poet Marina Temkina and the Polish poet Miłosz Biedrzycki, and two translators, Susan Bernofsky and Karen Emmerich, read or recited from the others' work. Bernofsky expressed gratitude to the publishers for investing in translations that are less profitable than works in English. This was all the truest that the chosen genre, poetry, was a clear manifestation of distinction from the fiction-dominated trade publishing (Sapiro "Publishing poetry").

Bernofsky's statement needs to be understood in the context of the mobilization that constituted translation as a cultural and political cause in the United States around 2002. The revelation of the very low rate of translation in the American book production, 3 percent, provoked an acute surge of emotion and was presented by the authors, translators and editors involved in this movement as a 'pretty embarrassing' problem (Allen; Sapiro "Globalization"). 3 percent was the name ironically given to a website dedicated to the promotion of translation as vehicle of cultural diversity, whose founder, Chad Post, also launched a journal entitled *Words without borders*, with the aim to "introduce exciting international writing to the general public [...]", and to "help foster a 'globalization' of cultural engagement and exchange, one that allows many voices in many languages to prosper."

A relatively small and marginal event compared to the big festivals in English, the Brooklyn Book Festival offers a stage for these militant publishers and translators, all the while reproducing the inequalities within its space. In 2018, 300 writers were invited, but only 15 countries were represented.

### *Festival America*

Festival America presents a reversed picture. Established in 2002, this festival is organized by an association, in partnership with the department (Vincennes), the region (Ile-de-France), the Centre national du livre, the US government, the Canadian government, as well as with private cultural institutions (like journals). 40 percent of the costs are covered by the partners, the rest by income from the entrance tickets and the sales of the book fair – which



illustrates the economic function of festivals.<sup>5</sup> Including music and movies, the festival is dedicated to North American literatures and cultures.

Although participants are invited from all over the continent (for instance Canada, Mexico, Cuba and Haïti), most of them come from the US. Moreover, the dominant position of American authors in the French market for literary translations is reflected in the 'starring' position they occupy in the festival. Illustrating the critical function of the festival, the second edition held in 2003 organized discussions of the coming elections in the US. Canada was the special focus of the third one. Diversity (in the American sense) was the underlying theme of the 2008 edition, attended by 27,000 visitors, and which belatedly echoed the mobilization around this cause in the US:

'America: a World': it was around this theme that Festival America brought together for its fourth edition fifty three writers who weighed up our planet and grasped its contours. A great number of our writer guests this year were not born in North America. Sometimes they are the bearers of a double, or even a triple culture: that of the place they left and that of their multi-faceted adopted land. They all share a vision of literature as transcending rifts and boundaries, as denouncing totalitarianism and injustice, as observing men and societies. Their works literally take on the world and whether they vibrate with echoes from Africa, Europe, Asia, South or North America, they always end up telling us about ourselves, as if we were invited to an extraordinary blending of cultures and identities, to a 'crossing of the minds' which would be the primary stakes of a globalization which is so much decried.<sup>6</sup>

In 2010, the attendance rose to 30,000 visitors. This fifth edition was dedicated to the theme of the city. The inclusion of youth literature and graphic novels signalled an opening to popular culture in order to widen the audience. Among the 63 invited writers, more than half of them came from the US. Welcomed by a full lecture hall, Bret Easton Ellis was the superstar. In a video turned while he was signing his books, he enthusiastically described his French public as: "excited, they're just excited, they're shaking when they meet me, they're fans!"<sup>7</sup> A quote which illustrates how festivals reiterate the *illusio* by featuring the charismatic presence of the author's body, but also how they reproduce the asymmetrical power relations within the book market. The festival kept expanding its audience, which reached 40,000 in 2018. That year, 108 writers from 10 countries were invited.

Presenting a quite symmetrical reversed picture of these asymmetries, these two festivals illustrate the strategies deployed by the cultural intermediaries to counter them, but also the obstacles they encounter. These strategies imply a form of politicization which takes different forms as we saw, from the promotion of translation and linguistic diversity as a cause to the introduction of critical debates.

### **Politicization: an alternative transnational public sphere**

Many international literary festivals also have a political agenda, such as the promotion of multiculturalism or internationalism, and are conceived as spaces for critical debate (Giorgi "Between tradition"). Three forms of politicization will be presented here. First, the World Voices Festival of International Literature promotes translations and international literature on the very territory of the dominant language, in New York, triggering the internationalization of critical debates in the American public sphere. Second strategy, the festival Etonnants Voyageurs has defended since the beginning of the 1990s diversity in the francophone literary field and upheld the advent of a "world literature in French" ("littérature-monde en français"), all the while taking into account the postcolonial dimension, and other political issues: it thus contributed to the transnationalization of the French literary field and to the inclusion of the francophone peripheries. Third case-study, the International Literature Festival Berlin is the most international, the most multilingual, the most openly politicized, and also the most autonomous from the book market: it has aimed, by knitting international networks, at creating an alternative transnational public sphere, where writers act as public intellectuals for an international audience.

Some connections exist between these three events. The founder of the Berlin festival, Ulrich Schreiber, was a co-initiator of the World Voices Festival (he were also to co-initiate in 2007 an international literature festival in Mumbai, and in 2015, one in Odessa). And all three festivals belong to the Word Alliance which formed a strategic partnership in 2010 with three objectives: to secure authors for international travel, to share knowledge about local markets, and to generate funding from an international body of donors.<sup>8</sup> Apart from these three, the eight founding festivals included: the Edinburgh International Book Festival; the International Festival of Authors, Toronto; the Melbourne Writers Festival; The Bookworm International Literary Festival, Beijing; and the Jaipur Literature Festival. Attesting to the networking that these festivals are operating in the (semi)peripheries against the dominant Anglo-American festivals in order to further a more diverse and inclusive world literature – for which the code name is "international literature" -, the Alliance seeks to associate new member festivals from the Global South such as Africa and Latin America. Indeed, the number of countries represented in these festivals is much higher than in the former cases: in 2018, except for the Bookworm in China, the Alliance festivals had all invited writers more than 30 countries, and more than 40

in the case of the three festivals explored below. They hence play a significant role as consecrating authorities for these authors from the peripheries of the transnational literary field.

In a conjuncture which sees the place devoted to literature and to intellectuals in the media shrinking, these festivals also construct an alternative and much more diverse and inclusive transnational public sphere for critical debates, for voices from all over the world, including 'non-Western' and female ones, that express critical views on current events in order to nourish the democratic debate. This sphere is connected on the one hand to the publishing field, and on the other to the field of the media, providing an intermediary space between the two<sup>9</sup>: inviting international authors to festivals offers them a platform in the local media, an act that also may promote the local translation of a book,<sup>10</sup> or in some cases suggests it. In turn, the media amplify the transnationalization of intellectual voices.

In these debates, authors are conceived of as spokespersons of their country as well as public intellectuals, reviving in the West the figure of the writer as a committed intellectual, which has declined since Sartre's death in the 1980, due to the growing division of expert labor (Sapiro "Modèles d'intervention"). Writers appear in the space of the festival as modern prophets, in Max Weber's sense, meaning they derive their authority from their personal charisma (or symbolic capital to use Bourdieu's concept), and not as representatives of an institution, like clerics. The charismatic presence of the authors in person also reinforces their authority as public intellectuals – a figure that is increasingly feminized.

The function of festivals as arenas for an alternative transnational public sphere is confirmed by cases of censorship, like the governmental menace of cancellation of the 2015 Ubud Writers & Readers Festival which had programmed events honoring the victims of the 1965 mass killings in Indonesia, or the pressures by fundamentalist Islamic communities on the Indian government to prevent Salman Rushdie to come to the Jaipur festival in 2012 (Weber "Literary Festivals," 204-207).

### *The World Voices Festival of International Literature*

The World Voices Festival of International Literature was launched in 2005 by the PEN American Center under Salman Rushdie's presidency, at the instigation of the translator Esther Allen (Allen). The PEN also launched a translation prize. Their foundation was part of the mobilization against the decline of translations in the American book production and their devaluation, as Rushdie explained in his opening speech for the 2009 edition, citing the low share of translations in the US (3 percent) as an evidence: they were a response to "the deep concern that, in the climate of those days, the conversation between the US and the rest of the

world was breaking down".<sup>11</sup> In 2006, the World Voices Festival attracted 10,000 visitors according to the figure provided by the organizers, who claim to have "reached hundreds of thousands more through Internet, television, and radio broadcasts". (Rushdie et al.) In 2010, the festival brought 150 writers and translators from 40 countries, with the official sponsorship of more than a dozen of them. The rate of women among participants was one quarter to one third (57 out of 151 in 2007; 66 out of 174 in 2008; 42 out of 173 in 2009). In 2018, 165 authors from 50 countries were invited.

The themes illustrate the critical function of festivals. In 2007: postcolonial writing, 'History and the Truth of Fiction', identity, environment, 'Prison Writing as a Political Act', 'Dirty Wars' (testimonies of abuses of basic rights and international law by the US in the war on Terror). In 2008: 'Writing Genocide', 'Political Engagement', 'African Wars', 'Writing and Political Responsibility in Theatre'. In 2009: 'Left/Right Literature: the Politics of Taking Up the Pen', 'Innocence and Guilt' (on responsibility of the citizen and the writer), 'Standing before History: Remembering Ken Saro-Wiwa'.

### *Étonnants Voyageurs*

A festival of literature and movies which takes place in Saint-Malo (France) since 1990, Étonnants Voyageurs was founded by the writer Michel Le Bris. Developing a strategy to connect the peripheries of the transnational literary field and to promote cultural and geographic diversity, the festival started in 2000 to have offshoots in cities in the Global South: Missoula, Dublin, Sarajevo, then Bamako which inaugurated in 2001 the first Sub-Saharan francophone book festival (it became a biennial in 2006; Ducournau "African literary festivals"), Haïti in 2007, Haïfa in 2008, Brazzaville in 2013, and Rabat-Salé in 2014. It also promoted film directors and artists from these peripheries.

Parallel to the festival, Le Bris promoted the notion of "world literature in French", a transposition of the American notion of world literature to the French-speaking area, in order to promote authors from this area's periphery, all the while replacing the very notion of "francophone literature" and its load of postcolonial connotation. He is the author of the manifesto "Pour une littérature monde en français" published in *Le Monde* on March 15, 2007 and signed by 44 writers (among which J.M.G. Le Clézio, who would be awarded the Nobel Prize the following year). The manifesto argued that francophone authors had more to say about the world than the Parisian elite writers, whom he blamed for being self-centred and formalistic, and hence unable to tell stories (a conception echoing a vision of French literature which prevails in American publishing; Sapiro "Translation and Symbolic capital"). As shown by

Claire Ducournau, however, the network of signatories was strongly connected by a dominant Parisian publisher: Gallimard, indicating the limits of the autonomy of such initiatives from the logics of the publishing field (Ducournau, *La Fabrique des classiques africains*). It did not prevent the manifesto to establish this notion of world literature in French.<sup>12</sup>

In 2010, 200 writers from 36 different countries were invited to the Saint-Malo festival, including some from peripheral countries and French overseas regions like Reunion Island, Mauritius, Madagascar, the Comores and the Cook Islands. 60,000 persons visited the festival (58,000 in 2009).<sup>13</sup> Under the umbrella title 'Zones de fracture: Russie, Haïti, Afrique, France. Que peut la littérature dans le chaos du monde?' ('Fracture Zones: Russia, Haïti, Africa, France. What can literature accomplish amidst the chaos of the world?'), the themes highlighted the critical role of writers in society. The choice of Russia was due to the Franco-Russian year, but the organizers claimed that they had been free to select writers and filmmakers bringing a different perspective on their country than the official one, an illustration of the margin of autonomy they negotiate with regards to governmental directives. Another focus was on African writers, to celebrate the 50<sup>th</sup> birthday of the independence of 17 African nations, 14 of which from the French colonial empire. To mark this birthday, the festival highlighted political issues such as the colonial fracture, immigration and 'national identity'. Destroyed by the earthquake, which prevented the festival to take place there that year, Haïti was the third theme, under the patronage of the consecrated writers Lyonel Trouillot and Dany Laferrière. However, despite its politicization, the fact that these two authors are published by French firms indicates the limits of the autonomy of the festival towards the French book market. The festival continued, nevertheless, to diversify its guests: in 2018, it featured 292 authors from 43 countries (following their count, which does not exactly correspond to the national entities, and includes France, yet is still very diverse and inclusive towards the African and Arab writers especially): Algeria, Austria, Belgium, Bosnia, Canada, Congo, Congo RDC, Czech Republic, Denmark, England, France, Haïti, India, Indonesia, Irak, Iran, Island, Israel, Italy, Mali, Mauritius, Morocco, Nigeria, Norway, Peru, Poland, Quebec, Romania, Russia, Scotland, Senegal, Slovenia, Soudan, Switzerland, Syria, Togo, Tunisia, Turkey, Ukraine, the UK, the US, Venezuela and Vietnam.

### *The International Literature Festival Berlin*

Founded in 2003, the International Literature Festival Berlin is a rather small event, attracting between 28,000 and 34,000 visitors, but it is the "most international of the international literature festivals", as claimed by its director Ulrich Schreiber at his opening

speech for the 17<sup>th</sup> edition in 2018. The festival indeed featured that year 224 authors from 55 countries. The website's announcement emphasized this geographic diversity and the presence of authors from the Global South:

Experience a literary state of emergency! Arabic poets and American short story writers, South Korean poets and their Russian colleagues, South African novelists and Albanian novices – each year in September, the International Literature Festival Berlin presents the literary diversity of contemporary prose and poetry from around the world.<sup>14</sup>

Invitations do not depend on being translated into German. The organizers make their choices based on their discovery of authors in other festivals and networking. Reading are often made in the original language and in translation. Some extracts may be translated for the occasion by the festival. Schreiber could not answer the question whether these invitations helped some authors get translated into German, but the festival certainly introduced some to the German audience (and also to the international visitors who attend the festival) for the first time.

The Berlin festival is also the most politically engaged. It presents itself as "committed to human rights, a cosmopolitan outlook, multiple perspectives, dialogue, and hospitality".<sup>15</sup> The online presentation of the 2018 edition made it explicit that "the festival is not primarily about entertainment but about promoting democracy and freedom of expression - values that are currently under siege in many parts of the world, including Turkey." In an interview, Schreiber said: "This was one part of our basic concept. Very good novels, very good poetry, political discussions or themes which are important" (May 15, 2019).

The role of the festival as an alternative transnational public and of the feminization of the figure of the public intellectual can be illustrated, in this case, by two examples. In 2009, the opening speech delivered by the Indian writer and activist Arundhati Roy was entitled "Democracy's Failing Light." An opponent of the right-wing government that came to power in India soon after she published her successful novel *The God of Small Things* (2006), Roy raised the following questions:

So the question here, really, is what have we done to democracy? What have we turned it into? What happens once democracy has been used up? When it has been hollowed out and emptied of meaning? What happens when each of its institutions has metastasized into something dangerous? What happens now that democracy and the Free Market have fused into a single predatory organism with a thin, constricted imagination that revolves almost entirely around the idea of maximizing profit? Is it possible to reverse this process? Can something that has mutated go back to being what it used to be?

An excerpt from this essay was read in the worldwide reading event against populism held on the 7<sup>th</sup> of September 2016, and which took place simultaneously in Germany, Finland, Lithuania, Croatia, the Netherlands, Spain, Sweden and the USA.<sup>16</sup> Initiated by Ulrich Schreiber, the worldwide readings were launched in 2006 by the Peter Weis Foundation for Culture and Politics in Berlin, on the occasion of the third anniversary of the outbreak of the war in Iraq. These readings involve cultural institutions such as literature houses, theatres and interested individuals in various cities. In 2016, they were taken up by the International Literature Festival Berlin.

Invited again, the following year, to the festival, Arundhati Roy was asked whether she is an activist more than a writer. In her answer, Roy rejected the term as a label created by the market. In her eyes (following Sartre), writing is political:

People seem to have reduced the definition of what a writer is. It's almost as if when you write politically, then you're not a writer, you're an activist, which I find very sad. What is being done to the place of literature? We have to be really careful how we are used as writers. (cited in Peschel)

The editor and translator Sabine Peschel described Roy in terms that evoke a prophetic figure:

When Roy speaks, she has a powerful presence. It's clear that this is someone who stands for what she believes in. She has fought against the construction of dams which would have displaced millions, and spoken out against the destructive consequences of globalization, global politics and multinationals, Hindu nationalism and the independence of Kashmir. (Peschel)

In 2018, the festival was opened by Turkish writer Elif Shafak, an author with a worldwide reputation. Her 13 books, some of which written in English, are translated into 40 languages. Ever since the release of her 2006 novel *The Bastard of Istanbul*, in which the persecution of Armenians in Turkey after World War II is designated a genocide, Shafak has been attacked by the pro-government press in Turkey. Regarded as a critic of the State, she was prosecuted for "degrading Turkishness." Acquitted in court, she lived for two years under threat, before moving to London in 2010. Addressing the menace on democracy in her opening speech, she urged writers to become prophetic voices of resistance in times of crisis:

But perhaps today there is so much immediacy and urgency that more and more authors across the world are feeling the need to respond 'during the event'—while things are happening. In a paradoxical way, at a time when tribalism and populism are on the rise, culture could flourish. Culture and arts can become an open space to say the unsayable, to make the invisible visible, to generate an all-inclusive humanism and to turn empathy into a voice of resistance.<sup>17</sup>

In addition to offering opponents and exiles the festival as an alternative public sphere, Ulrich Schreiber also (co)edits, a festival book series published by Verlag Vorwerk with the support of the Peter Weis foundation, which includes collections and anthologies in German or in bilingual editions (English and German). For instance, the anthology *Woher ich nicht zurückkehren werde/From where I shan't return* (2015), gathered 22 authors from 15 countries to "contemplate the fates of refugees and asylum-seekers in literary form", a project funded by the Heinrich Böll Stiftung. With the support of the Peter Weis foundation, he also coedited a volume of translated literary testimonies by eight refugees entitled "Arrivals": *Ankunft. Literarische Reportagen geflüchteter Autorinnen und Autoren*, published in 2018 with Verlag Hans Schiler (Schreiber, Soldo).

Thus these three festivals illustrate different strategies of politicization which converge in the construction of the literary festivals as a more diverse and inclusive literary authority with the transnational literary field and as an alternative transnational public sphere for writers to intervene as public intellectuals.

## Conclusion

This article has discussed the role of international festivals in the making of world literature. A new authority in the transnational literary field, which contribute to the professionalization of writers and to their visibility beyond their country of origin, international festivals tend to reproduce, and often reinforce, the power relations that structure the global book market, namely the center-periphery asymmetry, and the dominant-dominated position of intermediaries (literary agents and publishers). The space of international festivals is itself polarized between center and periphery, and between large-size and small-size events, the latter featuring the highest diverse group of authors, according to their country of residence. These asymmetries are reproduced within the space of most festivals. Cultural intermediaries who try to counter the linguistic domination of English or the hegemony of American literature encounter structural obstacles.

Notwithstanding these obstacles, a group of international festivals, who gathered in an Alliance, develop deliberate strategies to subvert these power relations by promoting authors from the peripheries of the transnational literary field – those writing in peripheral languages, or living in the (postcolonial) peripheries of the dominant linguistic areas, and more generally authors from the Global South. Asserting their (relative) autonomy from governments and



G. Sapiro, "Literature festivals: a new authority in the transnational literary field", *Journal of World Literature*, 7, 2022, p. 303-331.

from the book market, they develop strategies to overturn the domination of English and of the powerful Anglophone cultural intermediaries, by building multilingual transnational networks. Three different strategies were identified: internationalizing the dominant American literary sphere by bringing foreign authors (World Voices), constructing a transnational Francophone literary field including its peripheries (Etonnants-Voyageurs), and constructing a politicized transnational, multilingual and diverse public sphere (Berlin). They furthermore initiated similar events in these areas, including more and more authors from these peripheries in transnational networks. They also build an alternative and more diverse and inclusive transnational public sphere that showcase writers – including female and 'non-Western' authors- as public intellectuals and as modern prophets amidst global crisis.

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<sup>1</sup> [http://www.literaryfestivals.co.uk/list\\_of\\_literary\\_festivals.html](http://www.literaryfestivals.co.uk/list_of_literary_festivals.html)

<sup>2</sup> Le MOTif, *Livre en scènes*, novembre 2014 :

[http://sgdl.org/phocadownload/Actualit%C3%A9s\\_2014/LeMOTif\\_livre\\_en\\_scenes.pdf](http://sgdl.org/phocadownload/Actualit%C3%A9s_2014/LeMOTif_livre_en_scenes.pdf).

<sup>3</sup> On the relevance of the concept of public sphere for sociological studies of the contemporary period, see Calhoun, *Habermas*; Fraser.

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.swf.org.au/about-us/>; <https://vacationidea.com/ideas/best-literary-festivals-world.html#slide22>.  
<https://micebreakingnews.com/zee-jaipur-literature-festival-2019-ends-with-a-footfall-of-400000/>

<sup>5</sup> Interview with Francis Geffard, the founder and one of the two directors of the festival, and website of the festival.

<sup>6</sup> Philip de la Croix et Francis Geffard, 'edito'; <http://www.festival-america.com/Edito.htm>

<sup>7</sup> [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cv2FRDnM\\_y0](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cv2FRDnM_y0)

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.literaturfestival.com/ablage-en/about-en/the-word-alliance-en>

<sup>9</sup> An attempt to connect the notion of public sphere with field theory can be found in Calhoun, "The Public Sphere."

<sup>10</sup> This risky strategy of promoting untranslated authors contrasts with that of most festivals who invite only authors who have a book translated in the dominant language of the country, thus securing the support of the publisher and of the country of origin.

<sup>11</sup> <http://www.viddler.com/explore/Mediabistro/videos/303/>

<sup>12</sup> A sign of its establishment is its recuperation by the Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie in order to protect the category of "francophone" and reassert the domination of French cultural power in its former colonies, as argued by Madeline Bedecarré. The festival Etonnants Voyageurs is however autonomous from the OIF (even though the OIF can be partner in some events) and tries to create a less unequal space of exchanges.

<sup>13</sup> According to the festival's website <http://www.etonnants-voyageurs.com/>.

<sup>14</sup> <https://convention.visitberlin.de/en/congresscalendar/ilb-international-literature-festival-berlin> (consulted 14.3.2019)

<sup>15</sup> <https://www.dw.com/en/elif-safak-tells-writers-how-to-support-democracy-in-turkey-and-the-world/a-40404048>.

<sup>16</sup> <https://www.dw.com/en/worldwide-reading-event-aims-to-boost-democracy-combat-populism/a-19531356>

<sup>17</sup> [http://www.literaturfestival.com/medien-en/texte-en/opening-speeches/OpeningSpeech\\_korrES\\_EN.pdf](http://www.literaturfestival.com/medien-en/texte-en/opening-speeches/OpeningSpeech_korrES_EN.pdf)