

BOOK REVIEW

THE EMERGENCE OF THE CONTEMPORARY TRANSNATIONAL IBERO-AMERICAN BOOK MARKET

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Edición y circulación del libro en Iberoamérica desde el final de la Segunda Guerra Mundial, Daniel Melo e Isabel Araújo Branco (Eds.), Ediciones Trea, 2020, 144 pp, 18€, ISBN 978-84-17987-85-5.

Translation matters for the establishment of the publishing market, book circulation and, broadly speaking, for the dynamics of a transnational cultural field, a term I draw from Pierre Bourdieu's seminal work (1993). Publishers, translators, critics and cultural authorities in general are gatekeepers because they influence the dynamics of the cultural field, regulating book circulation and educating readers. Bourdieu contended that political, social, economic and cultural circumstances determine the structure and evolution of the cultural field, influencing power relations among the various agents involved. As regards the influence of translation in the book market, Johan Heilbron's research (2010) establishes that the more central the international position of a language is, the lower the translation rate within that language, whilst the more peripheral the language is, the higher translation rates in a given book market are, evidence that has less to do with the number of world speakers than with the world book market's strategic decisions, with an impact on the dynamics of the cultural field. Hence, the peripheral position of the Portuguese language influences the fact that the Portuguese book market has been flooded with translated titles, whilst the semi-centrality of Spanish secures a 1-3% of books translated into Spanish in the world book market. On another note, the establishment of network alliances are critical to secure the dynamics of the cultural field and the use of a common language is an important bias in the course of those alliances. The fact that the Ibero-American cultural field operates in less central languages enhances its strategic challenges.

Edición y circulación del libro en Iberoamérica desde el final de la Segunda Guerra Mundial [Book Edition and Circulation in Ibero-America from the end of the Second World War], edited by Daniel Melo and Isabel Araújo Branco, is a timely publication that examines the dynamics of the Ibero-American cultural field, where translation has been critical to shape the rise of publishing industries in South America, including the organization of their book catalogues, insofar as business strategies also intertwine with postcolonial relations

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between South America and the Iberian countries, thus, influencing rates of export of translated titles from the strong Spanish publishing industry. Ibero-America is the research object of this book, but it also constitutes the comparative methodological research tool that enables contributors to discuss the extent to which national cultural fields overlap and develop separately in this territory.

The book is a collection of eight essays, authored by academics based at Argentinian, Brazilian, Spanish and Portuguese universities, and drawing on presentations delivered at the international symposium *Edição e Recepção do Livro na Iberoamérica desde o Pós-II Guerra Mundial até 2000* [Edition and Reception of the Book in Ibero-America between the Post Second World War and 2000], held at NOVA University of Lisbon, in June 2016. They depict the transnational Ibero-American cultural field, with particular emphasis on the action carried out by publishers, public libraries, governmental legislators, and intellectuals. In this respect, these essays make it plain that the transnational Ibero-American cultural field has largely been conducted in Spanish. Brazil and Portugal have been second-level players for historical reasons that have determined that Spain enjoys privileged relations with most South American countries.

The essays written by João Vanderlei de Moraes Filho and Daniel Melo offer insights into the implementation of national policies regarding reading and book publishing in Brazil, Colombia, Portugal and Spain, and the extent to which their dictatorships during the second half of the 20th century hindered mass reading. Whereas Filho examines the effect of the Brazilian policies, comparing them with the Colombian ones, Melo expands the scope of this comparative approach to also include Portugal and Spain. Their essays establish that national reading policies, alongside with the democratization of books, have fundamentally been fostered by private cultural institutions and transnational representative organizations, such as the UNESCO and the Organization of Ibero-American States, having achieved far-reaching results when democracy was implemented, and comprehensive efforts were devised within Ibero-America to make this territory one of the major world book exporters of nowadays. In addition, contextual regional specificities become clear when they are taken into account within Ibero-America. This perspective shows, for example, that the Iberian dictatorships were more interested in enhancing their colonially nostalgic national projects, educating their elites and favouring book exports to their former colonies than in decreasing the levels of illiteracy within their frontiers. In this respect, the Portuguese Estado Novo was less committed to exporting books to South America than on sending books to their African colonies. Although present-day disproportionate number of Spanish exports to Latin America convey the legacy of those projects, they are also manifestations of the issues South America has had to struggle with, despite having endured dictatorships during shorter periods of time: massive rates of illiteracy, multilingualism and widespread lack of means to tackle these issues and accelerate massive reading.

The essays authored by Gustavo Sorá, Fernando Larraz Elorriaga, Isabel Araújo Branco and Rui Beja focus on Ibero-American sector. Sorá's and Elorriaga's essays complement

each other's discussion; while Sorá discusses the emergence of a multipolar publishing industry in South America, with major hubs in Mexico and Argentina, using the history of the expansion of publishers Fondo de Cultura Económica and Siglo XXI to illustrate his arguments, Elorriaga examines the influence of the Spanish publishers exiled in Mexico and Argentina during Franco's dictatorship in the making of their industries. Ideological interests were the cornerstone of a globally united Spanish-language publishing industry in South America that, despite local divergences, were successful in responding to the needs of their businesses and readership, that involved importing translations of world classics and essays and exporting translations of their own authors, essential for their international promotion. In addition, the experience of the exiled Spanish publishers was critical to publishers in South America. At the same time, they ensured the vitality of a secular, Republican, progressive and democratic publishing production that would not have made it in dictatorial Spain but was essential for the boom of Spanish American literature. Branco examines the reception of this literature in Portugal since the 1960s to contend that Portuguese translations have mainly been those of widely appraised bestselling Spanish American authors. The decision to publish these authors was largely influenced by the knowledge and impressions of Portuguese readership about the political and social changes in Latin America. Only at the beginning of this century has the diversity of translated titles widened and, as Branco shows, followed the Spanish American literary canon closer. Rui Beja's essay emerges from his professional experience as chairman of the board of *Círculo de Leitores* [CL], part of the Bertelsmann conglomerate. The establishment of CL in Portugal took place in the last years of Portuguese *Estado Novo* and expanded swiftly after the 1974 Revolution, having also later established business in Brazil. Portuguese readership of Latin American bestsellers and other renowned foreign authors was accelerated after 1974. CL's business model, based on the Anglo-American conglomerate business model, played an important role in this expansion because it published titles at more affordable prices, especially to a still flourishing middle-class readership in Portugal and, later, in Brazil.

Maria Fernanda de Abreu and José Horácio Costa are the authors of the two last essays, centered on the translation and reception of Portuguese writers Fernando Pessoa's and José Saramago's works, respectively, in South America. Abreu's essay pays tribute to the work of Fernando Pessoa's deceased translators in the Spanish language, whose work was largely responsible for the promotion of Pessoa's work in Ibero-America from the 1960s, particularly that developed by Rodrigo Alonso and Octavio Paz during the early years of that decade. Alonso's Galician family background facilitated his growing awareness of Pessoa's work, and his critical collections of Pessoa's poems, grounded on the literary criticism by contemporary eminent Portuguese critics, had an impact on South America, far beyond Argentinian borders. Paz was responsible for the promotion of Pessoa's works in and beyond the Mexican frontiers after he came across Pessoa's poems in Paris. Abreu contends that scholarly studies and translation were critical to the nurturing of the transnational interest in Pessoa, thus, encouraging the continuing publication of his work. Costa focuses on the impact of his doctorate research work on Saramago, relatively

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unknown in the US in the mid 1990s and whose literary success preceded interest in academia. His dissertation on Saramago warranted him little recognition by his examination panel at Yale University because the panel believed that, despite his literary worthiness, Saramago was a minor author. Costa's dissertation was published by Editorial Caminho, Saramago's publisher, in Portugal and appraised as groundbreaking research to be published shortly later by the Fondo de Cultura Económica. This shows the extent to which Ibero-America was critical for Saramago's symbolic prestige, strengthened widely after the Nobel Prize.

This volume offers innovative multidisciplinary research that contributes to an all-encompassing understanding of the Ibero-American cultural field, relevant for all those interested in getting a grasp on this entangled field.

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