

SPANISH (INTER)NATIONALITIES AND THE MARKETING OF LATIN AMERICAN NOVELS

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I first wrote about the ways in which the globalization of the publishing business has affected Spanish identities for a paper I presented at LASA 2001, on September 7, 2001. In that paper, forthcoming in Iberoamericana, I explained how a series of articles published in El País in 2000 and 2001 regarding the global and national changes in publishing, reflected the ways in which Spaniards have imagined—and wish to imagine—themselves in relation to Europe and the Americas. The book industry, I have argued, is particularly apt for revealing the contradictory intersections of culture, national identities, and capitalist forces in the relatively recently-forged public sphere of post-Franco Spain. The paper I am presenting today will attempt to re-frame some of my earlier argument in light of the attacks on September 11 and the collapse of the Argentine economy. These two events, in effect, have revealed the negative consequences of a series of idealizations of both Europe and the Americas, particularly in relation to economics, politics and civil life.

Bookstores

Although the sense of loss entailed in the disappearance of small bookstores and publishers in the face of competition from media conglomerates is generalized throughout Europe and the Americas, the El País articles from Summer 2000 link books, publishers and bookstores specifically to dissident politics under the Franco regime. Books and bookstores had a particular political significance in Franco's Spain, where censorship limited what could be published and read, and in what language. In that context books meant freedom to their readers, and buying, publishing and selling them (not to mention stealing them, a common vice among

impoverished intellectuals) implied a real personal risk, and not just an economic one. Booksellers were the gurus of the younger generations, and their stores provided meeting-places and safe havens for silenced dissidents and censored books, as Rodolfo Serrano explains in an article about the closing of the Miguel Hernández bookstore:

A Angel [Escarpa, el dueño de la librería] lo detuvieron por vender libros. Y está orgulloso de ello. Le secuestraron Galicía mártir, de Castelao. El, con otros como él, editó y vendió el Libro rojo del cole. Y el Gobierno de UCD lo detuvo. Que ahora parece que fue un paseo triunfal. Y no es tan verdad. Que no hace tanto que algunos libros estaban mal vistos y algunas ideas eran inconfesables. Y la historia—se cuente o no, luego—se hacía con librerías detenidas y con librerías destrozadas y obreros y estudiantes muertos. The content of the books sold under the counter corresponds closely with censored utopian ideals associated with the Left in Spain during the Second Republic and the Civil War: the defense of regional autonomy, Marxism, feminism, the avant-garde. Reading those books was a way of keeping the Left alive, despite the exile of its principal thinkers and writers, and the article makes this point through the personification of the books and their rhetorical identification with bookstore owners, workers and students, all of whom resisted the authoritarianism of the government. Latin American literature, in particular, signified the possibility of rebellion, not only in an aesthetic sense, but also in a political one, since that writing was linked in the popular imaginary with the banned avant-garde writings of the exiled Republicans, and with Leftist guerrillas continuing in the Americas the battle lost in Spain. Due to heavy government censorship, closed economic and cultural borders, and horrendous economic conditions in the first decades of the dictatorship, these ideas were kept alive largely through the clandestine circulation of forbidden texts in the back rooms of independently-owned bookstores.

The closing of these bookstores, then, represents much more than the inefficiency of small businesses: it symbolizes the loss of a particularly Marxist international solidarity forged between Spaniards and Latin Americans within their walls. It also marks the loss of political power by the Left since the late 1980's, when the dividing line between the Left and the Right began to blur, centrist politics to dominate, and the hard-liners on both sides to attenuate the

extremist elements of their language. Since that time, the poor have no longer been presented with the two political options of Right and Left, the former oppressive and the latter liberating. The new world order has enfranchised them—at least rhetorically—as consumers and voters, even if it does not necessarily offer them political and economic choices outside the logic of globalized capital and neoliberal democracy. The owner of the closed Miguel Hernández bookstore implicitly recognizes this change:

Dice Angel Escarpa que la librería la cierra “el Gobierno fascista del PP. Esta cultura contra la cultura”. Pero hay algo de amargura cuando habla del barrio, casi en reproche cariñoso. Echa en falta el apoyo que antes, en el franquismo y la transición, le daban sin pedirlo. Ahora hay en su librería hasta pintadas nazis. Ese fuera rojos que se creía olvidado.

The ideals of the old Left have not been able to compete with the promise of material well-being, despite the reality that, for most of the world’s poor, that promise has been broken, particularly in countries that are not members of the two largest trading blocs, NAFTA and the EU, economic entities whose politic implications have become clear since 9/11.ⁱ Recent revelations of extreme corruption among the directors of leading corporations have also revealed unequivocally that the free market is not impartial, but subject to manipulation for the profit of those with knowledge unavailable to the general public, who have suffered the greatest losses after the economic bubble burst. The connection between politics and the market, which may be exemplified in the U.S. by the questionable past business practices of both President Bush and Vice-President Cheney, have put into question as well the freedom, justice and equality

ⁱ See, for example, the editorial, ¿Americana o europea? in El País, which reduces the current political choices to two: the “European” attention to internal national issues or the aggressive “American” (read “U.S.”) focus on international policing.

associated with modern democracies.ⁱⁱ

For those who see globalization and neoliberalism as the fulfillment of democratic promise, the disappearance of small bookstores signals the death only of an authoritarian Marxist cultural elite. That is the conclusion that Mario Vargas Llosa reaches in an article published in El País on July 9, 2000: by reducing prices on books, the free market makes them more broadly available. What is more, the invisibility of the bookseller on the Internet and in the mega-stores increases the freedom of readers to choose what they read: “Porque la libertad de elección es siempre preferible, aunque, la gran mayoría, a la hora de elegir una novela, una película o una canción, yerre en su elección” (Vargas Llosa 16). In this free-market formulation, the individual expresses agency primarily through the consumption of products, and freedom is conceived as the freedom to buy. Note that Vargas Llosa co-opts the watch-words of the Left—“libertad de elección,” “la gran mayoría”—in order to promote the concept, not of freedom, but of the free market. He assumes, of course, that the great majority will still have the same options from which to choose freely; the changes in the publishing industry (and in politics), however, suggest that this will not be the case.

Publishing Houses

Given that the same media conglomerates responsible for the mega-bookstores also own the publishing houses, it should not surprise us that changes in the Spanish publishing business, like those in book-selling, should reflect a national identity crisis. Publishing was also linked to a politics of resistance in the Franco era. Independent publishing houses resisted the cultural authority of the government by publishing new domestic and foreign authors in Spanish and in

ⁱⁱ Even before these revelations, Eric O. Clarke remarked in his book, Virtuous Vice: Homoeroticism and the Public Sphere, that: such that publicity practices have been indissolubly woven into the fabric of specifically capitalist social formations. This commercial mode of value determination thus highlights with peculiar brilliance the tense contradictions between public sphere ideals of distributional justice and equality, and capitalism’s inegalitarian modes of determining and distributing value. (11)

the suppressed national languages of Spain, particularly Catalan. They also published Latin American fiction, which represented for them the continuation of Leftist ideals on American soil, where many exiled Spanish intellectuals made their homes after the fall of the Second Republic.

A handful of Leftist intellectuals in Spain came to be the most influential editors in the Hispanic world in the 1960's. These include Carlos Barral, Jorge Herralde, Esther Tusquets, herself an important writer, and Beatriz de Moura. Not surprisingly, the books published by their firms (Seix Barral, Anagrama, Lumen, and Tusquets respectively) reflect their values. They all combated tyranny in the form of government censorship, and they shared the belief that the writing, reading and publishing of literature were political acts.ⁱⁱⁱ These politics included, not only the traditional values of equality associated with liberalism, but also the particularly Spanish concern with regional nationalisms. The autonomy of the Basque region, Catalunya, and, to a lesser extent, Galicia, was one of the goals of Spanish Leftists under Franco, who had banned their languages, literatures, and histories in order to promote the idea of a monolithic Spanish identity. The Leftist editors mentioned above, along with some other, smaller concerns, published works written in those forbidden languages, despite the prohibition of government censors. Seix Barral also awarded an annual literary prize—the Biblioteca Breve—between 1958 and 1972 to Spanish and Latin American fiction writers, and in some sense launched the careers of the greatest male Spanish and Latin American novelists of the time, most of whom were heterosexual and all of whom adopted a political position critical of dictatorship on both sides of the Atlantic.

Economic concerns were not entirely absent from the editors' agendas, however. Mario Santana in Foreigners in the Homeland argues that the boom in Spanish publishing during the

ⁱⁱⁱ I do not mean to imply that these were the only Leftist publishers. On the contrary, there were many small publishers, but the three I focus on here grew into large corporations in the post-Franco period.

1960's was a direct result of the Spanish dominance of Latin American markets, the publication of novels in all the national languages of Spain, and the success throughout the Spanish-speaking world of the Latin American Boom novels, which were published by Seix Barral. What is more, in the early 1960's, Carlos Barral pushed to form an international consortium of sorts to corner the market for high-end literary products:

With the participation of representatives from six prominent publishers—Gallimard (France), Rowohlt (Germany), Einaudi (Italy), Wedienfeld & Nicholson (United Kingdom), Grove Press (USA), and Seix Barral—the Second International Colloquium on the Novel was not only an occasion for such cultural publishers to discuss their role in establishing literary tradition and trends, but also the cornerstone of a larger cultural operation: it was there that the Formentor Group was officially founded thanks to the initiative of Carlos Barral and Giulio Einaudi. The original group was eventually joined in their meetings by other publishers—among them: Bonnier (Sweden), Gyldenfeldt (Norway and Denmark), Meulenhoff (Holland), Choukorow-Sha (Japan), and Arcadia (Portugal). It remained active between 1960 and 1968, conceived as an international, large-scale cultural operation that would serve its members to identify, influence, and control the publication of the contemporary literary avant-garde. (Santana 51)

The alliance was further consolidated in 1970, when Tusquets, Lumen and Barral Editores—Carlos Barral had broken with Seix Barral to form Barral Editores^{iv}—joined five other publishing firms (Edicions 62, Laia, Cuadernos para el Diálogo, Fontanella, and Anagrama) in a distribution network that extended to Latin America as well.

After the dictatorship ended in 1975, Seix Barral, Lumen, and Tusquets continued to thrive and become successful international businesses, so in a sense they represented the triumph of the Left after Franco. Their editors ceased to be figures combating political tyranny in the Hispanic world from the margins, and began to inhabit the economic and political center of Spain. In this sense, their fortunes may be linked to the formerly-banned political parties after the transition to democracy—not only did the socialist and communist parties become legal again, but the socialist party, the PSOE, actually dominated politics through most of the 1980's and part of the 1990's. During that period, Spain successfully transformed its image from one of an isolated, traditional, folkloric third-world military dictatorship to one of a democratic, liberal, thriving European state, with the help of considerable economic investment from the rest of Europe. Meanwhile, the particularly Spanish identity politics of regional nationalisms contested the former hegemony of Castille. In the case of the Basque country, this political project took precedence over issues of gender and sexuality, but, in Cataluña, they all flourished. It became clear, however, that the varied goals of a Left formerly unified against the Franco dictatorship were beginning to produce competing factions, or to exacerbate those divisions that had been just under the surface in the 1960's.

It was in part this fragmentation that eroded the euphoria and idealism associated with the

^{iv} The “official” issue was the Biblioteca Breve prize of 1970. Barral disagreed with the jury, which planned to award the prize to José Donoso for El obsceno pájaro de la noche. The prize was not awarded at all that year, Barral left, and Seix Barral published Donoso's novel in 1971.

triumph of the Left after Franco. With the fall of the Berlin Wall, and in Spain, the exposed corruption and secret police tactics of the Socialist government, the dividing line between the Left and the Right began to blur and centrist politics to dominate. We cannot underestimate the importance of globalization and neoliberalism in this process. Under the rule of the Socialist party, the PSOE, Spain joined NATO and the European Economic Community and became much more influential and prosperous. And, like other wealthy Western countries, it developed a rich corporate class and the resulting disparities with which we are all too familiar, not only within the country itself, but also in relation to Latin America, where Spanish corporations and NGO's now proliferate. Ironically, then, the solidarity with Latin America during the Franco years has developed into a form of neo-colonialism, with the former Marxists taking on the role of economic imperial powers. At the same time, however, many of those corporations ceased to be exclusively Spanish as they merged into international conglomerates, with headquarters in the United States, or elsewhere in Europe.

What is true for the country in general also holds true for the publishing business. Seix Barral now belongs to Planeta, the largest Spanish-language media group, which also operates branches in Latin America. Tusquets Editores is also associated with Planeta and has branches in Argentina and Mexico. Lumen was bought by Plaza y Janés, now owned by Bertelsmann. Bertelsmann owns Random House, and Random House recently merged with the huge Latin American Grijalbo-Mondadori Group. What is more, the publishing groups are merely one interest within huge media conglomerates that also control television, radio, film, and newspapers.

The purchase of important Spanish publishers like Lumen and Plaza y Janés by Random House implies a loss of Spanish cultural identity to the rampant capitalism of the United States. At the same time, however, the internationalization of the publishing business represents Spain's

incorporation into an international economy from which it had been exiled during much of the Franco dictatorship, when it was seen by much of the West as part of the Third World. It also symbolizes the entry of Spain into a specifically European community—Random House, after all, is now a subsidiary of Bertelsmann—and it thus implies a rejection of the Third-World cultures of Latin America in favor of an identification with the First-World economies, cultures, and governments of Europe. The linguistic affiliation between Spain and Spanish America permits the “motherland” to serve as a spokes-country to Europe for its former colonies, which have supposedly modeled their own modernity on that of Spain.

The national and transnational identity issues revolving around the publishing industry became particularly prominent in the Spanish press in Summer 2000, when Esther Tusquets was forced into early retirement after Lumen was bought by Bertelsmann, and the translation of André Schiffrin’s La edición sin editores, was published in Barcelona by Destino and reviewed in El País. Schiffrin worked for Pantheon Books (a subsidiary of Random House) for thirty years, and saw himself as a cultural publisher, in the sense described above. During his years at Pantheon, however, he witnessed the transformation of publishing from a cultural activity to a business motivated primarily by the desire for profit, and he comments in his book on the nefarious effects of buying, selling, and mergers on publishing. Random House was bought first by RCA, then by S.I. Newhouse, the owner of a chain of newspapers and magazines, who decimated the firm, firing most of its employees in 1990, and finally selling it to the international conglomerate Bertelsmann in 1998. As Schiffrin explains it, Pantheon Books, previously the defender of literary classics, was reduced to pandering to the tastes of an uncultured popular readership.

Schiffrin’s book speaks to a similar crisis in Spanish publishing houses, some of which, like Random House, have been bought by Bertelsmann (Lumen, Plaza y Janés, Debate) —and

others by a handful of conglomerates, including the Grupo Planeta, which owns Espasa Calpe, Destino, and Seix Barral, and the French firm Vivendi, which most recently bought the Grupo Anaya (which includes Alianza and Cátedra). Of course, it remains to be seen what will become of that the latter group following the resignation of Jean-Marie Messier in early July of this year. In the July 1, 2000 edition of the cultural supplement Babelia, on the same pages as Javier Pradera's review of Schiffrin's book, an article by Mauricio Bach presents the reactions of Spanish editors to it. Although none of their comments includes a specific reference to the issue of national independence, they indirectly reveal the ways in which book culture in Spain intersects with politics and national identity. The youngest editors—Claudio López (Grijalbo-Mondadori) and María Cifuentes (Taurus, of the Santillana Group)—believed that the Internet will take over the function of serious publishing (the article appeared in El País before the dot-com crash). The editors of large publishing houses already bought by conglomerates—Esther Tusquets of Lumen and Basilio Baltasar of Seix Barral—confided in the possibility that individual publishing groups would maintain their independence and identity, even after becoming incorporated into the multinational conglomerate, which would simply provide their subsidiaries with funds to distribute books and pay large advances to certain authors.^v This is much the same argument made by proponents of globalization, and, particularly, of the European Union and the euro—that each country will be able to maintain its cultural identity while simultaneously benefitting from the economies of size that the global market and the Union provide.

Editors of independent firms saw the matter differently. Their fear was that editors would lose their cultural role. Manuel Borrás, one of the founders of Pre-Textos, explained that editors

^v5. The article announcing Tusquets's early retirement appeared on July 6th, less than a week later.

have the moral obligation to form readers, not just to sell books: “Para mí la edición es una de las formas posibles de pedagogía y una de las formas más nobles de seducción. Nuestro deber como editores es no defraudar a los lectores, apostar por la calidad, tanto en la selección de títulos como en la realización física del libro. No hacer libros efímeros” (Bach 13). He noted, moreover, that the economic arguments are unsound because the marketing strategies of the large firms often backfire. Jorge Herralde, who has been the editor of Anagrama for over 30 years, presented the independent editor as an entrepreneur, one who takes risks and innovates. The large groups, in contrast, are monopolies, which discourage risk. He believed, however, that the problems outlined in Schiffrin’s book applied mainly to the United States: “estamos en la era de la hiperconcentración de grandes grupos, internacionales y multimedia Para sus directivos, el aspecto cultural simplemente no existe, ni siquiera pueden planteárselo, por lo que los grandes grupos son una eficaz escuela de cinismo” (Bach 13). Spain and Europe, he claimed, are not susceptible to every trend from the U.S.: “es un lugar común afirmar que lo que sucede en Estados Unidos sucederá a los pocos años en el resto de la planeta, al menos en la Unión Europea. Confiemos en que la extrapolación no sea tan mecánica en el ámbito editorial” (Bach 13). Spain and Europe, in other words, are not economic colonies of the U.S. empire, in Herralde’s opinion and in that of other editors in this article. The difference is both cultural and ethical, according to the Europeans: the new editors in the U.S. are dedicated solely to profits and marketing, whereas their European counterparts defend quality and the pedagogical function of books. This argument relies upon a view of books as something other, or more, than objects of consumption; they must embody agency and independent thought. If books become mere products, what then will become of human agency? As I mentioned earlier in the context of bookstores, it is this loss of agency and individuality that opponents of globalization fear. It is perhaps for this reason that Spanish Leftists, particularly those involved in the book industry,

have turned to Latin America, where the old models of repression and armed rebellion still seem to apply.^{vi} Ironically, however, the old Right has also set its sights on the former colonies, this time as a site of investment.

Spanish Publishing and Latin American Fiction

How does the globalization of Spanish publishing affect Latin America? Spanish firms, even though they may be owned by German, French or U.S. corporations, dominate the Latin American publishing industry, much as they have dominated Latin American utilities and banks in recent years. In Summer 2001 Random House merged with Mondadori, Grijalbo, Electa and Montena, to form an international group operating in the United States, Spain and Latin America, the second largest Spanish-language group after Planeta. These branches are not equal, however: they form a hierarchy with Random House/Bertelsmann at the top, followed by the Spanish firms, and, finally, Latin America.

^{vi}In an article published in summer 2001 in the Revista de Occidente, Fernando Escalante Gonzalbo claims that the success of the Zapatista movement resulted from the crisis of relevance experienced by Leftist European intellectuals and from the phenomenon of mass marketing. Another article in the same edition of Revista de Occidente repeats these accusation, interpreting the interest in Chiapas as a symptom of the disintegration of the Left, the desperate search for a new utopia in a post-utopian age. Like Vargas Llosa, Mauricio Tenorio Trillo accents the ironic rebellion of the Left against what would seem to be the fulfillment of its aspirations for freedom and democracy in the neoliberal state. In these readings, Leftist European intellectuals become the colonizers of Latin America, propagating violence in their quixotic attempts to recover their lost dreams of a peaceful, egalitarian utopia.

The other side of the coin, however, is that many of those economic and social problems are the direct result of the globalized free market and neoliberalism, which also employ violence—in the form of the malnutrition, illness, and death that result from both regional conflicts brought about by international politics, and the unequal distribution of food, medicine, and clean water worldwide and within particular countries. The sense is that the control over the public good has passed into the hands of corporations, whose focus is almost exclusively on profits, just as culture has become the property of media conglomerates. The intellectuals' frustration stems precisely from their lack of access to the inside information about the policies of corporations and governments regarding the environment, trade, politics, and the distribution of goods. They thus nostalgically wish for a return to those days when politics were Left and Right, oppressed and oppressor, good and bad, poor and rich.

The problem indeed is one of authenticity, but not necessarily of indigenous people per se, who become indeed symbolic rather than real, representing autonomy and agency in the cultural imaginary of the European and North American Left. In a society directed by an invisible elite, where corporate and government policies often benefit only that elite, many intellectuals convert the distant visible symbol of rebellion into a tool for voicing anxiety, and for marking the continued inequalities, injustices, oppression and violence produced by supposedly neutral free markets and neoliberal democracies. The problematic issue is the distance of the symbol, and the projection onto Latin America of struggles that are taking place as well in Spain, the European Union and the United States.

Seis miembros integrarán el consejo de administración de la nueva empresa, tres nombrados por Random House, que pertenece al grupo de comunicación Bertelsmann, y otros tres por Mondadori. Cavallero se establecerá en Nueva York, desde donde coordinará las actividades y operaciones de las distintas editoriales, que estarán divididas, a su vez, en tres entidades autónomas. Esta división se ha realizado teniendo en cuenta el peso específico de los distintos grupos dentro de la nueva estructura y, así, Plaza & Janés reunirá las actividades en España; Sudamericana lo hará en Argentina; Chile y Uruguay, y Grijalbo, en México, Colombia y Venezuela. . . . El nuevo grupo es una empresa distinta, no simplemente la suma de dos entidades preexistentes. En esos términos comentaba Ricardo Cavallero, que hasta ayer tenía el cargo de consejero delegado en Grijalbo-Mondadori y que fue nombrado consejero delegado de esta joint-venture, la firma con la que ayer nacía, dentro del mercado del libro de habla hispana, el segundo grupo en volumen de negocios dentro de la edición en lengua española (el primero es el Grupo Planeta). (Rojo)

In contrast to the articles published in 2000, Spain is not presented here solely as the victim of globalization, but also as an agent of it, responsible for managing the publication and marketing of books from and in Latin America, even though the entire business will be controlled through New York.

As Nestor García Canclini explains in La globalización imaginada: “La globalización de la producción literaria, la selección de lo que va a globalizarse o va a circular sólo en el propio país, queda bajo la decisión de las megaeditoriales” (152), and those conglomerates operate principally from New York and Spain. The selection and distribution of Spanish and Latin American novels reflects this neo-imperial hierarchy. Thus, for example, books accepted by the Central American branch of Alfaguara only circulate within that region unless the Mexican

branch approves them for circulation there as well, and, only after passing through Mexico would a Central American text be considered for circulation in Spain, the largest and richest market.

Néstor García Canclini also explains that, in the globalized culture market, we witness a “reconstrucción globalizada de los repertorios simbólicos locales, descontextualizados para volverlos más comprensibles en áreas culturales de distintos continentes. Al mismo tiempo, instalan filiales regionales o hacen acuerdos con productoras locales para ‘indigenizar’ su producción” (160). Indeed, an analysis of the recent Alfaguara literary prize winners suggests that Spaniards choose Latin American novels that reflect Spain’s imaginary creation of Latin America as a feminized, indigenized, exoticized, revolutionary trope. Spanish texts, on the other hand, present the new Spaniards as Europeans, with an entirely different mode of politics and personal identity formation, based upon liberal principles and classical Western myths.

The Alfaguara prize has fallen to three Latin American novels--La piel del cielo by Elena Poniatowska (2001), Caracol Beach by Eliseo Alberto (1998), and Margarita, está linda la mar by Sergio Ramírez (1998)--and two Spanish novels, Clara Sánchez’s Últimas noticias del paraíso (2000) and Manuel Vicent’s Son de mar (1999). In general terms, the Spanish novels dealt with intimate and sentimental issues, rather than political ones, and they were written in a “classical,” rather than avant-garde, style, whereas the Latin American novels were more concerned with the political and the historical and with violence.

Although Poniatowska’s prize-winning novel is not as clearly political or technically innovative as her earlier testimonios, the Mexican author herself is firmly linked in the popular imaginary with social commitment in general, and, more recently, with Zapatismo. What is more, although she has written sympathetically about armed rebellion, indigenous figures, and feminism, Poniatowska herself is charming, genteel, extremely sympathetic and of European

descent. Buying her immensely-readable book in Spain thus represents an easy distant identification with political activism.

The same may be said of Sergio Ramírez's novel, although Ramírez was himself a militant of the Sandinista Front and formed part of a revolutionary government. The description given of Margarita, está linda la mar when it won the Alfaguara reads as follows:

En 1907, Rubén Darío llega a León, Nicaragua, y escribe en el abanico de una niña de nueve años un poema inolvidable: «Margarita, está linda la mar». Medio siglo después, esa chiquilla y su hermana, convertidas en personajes esperpénticos, se ven envueltas en la trama de una conjura para matar al dictador Anastasio Somoza. Con esa historia, y con un lenguaje de constante belleza, Sergio Ramírez construye una novela en la que caben la poesía, la ciencia, las crueldades y los delirios de América en este siglo. Es una obra total, rebosante de pasión y de nobleza literaria.

The novel has it all: culture (Darío), politics (Somoza), and a kind of magical-realist exoticism, which includes “personajes esperpénticos,” wild twists of destiny, poetry, and delirium, all set, of course, in the far-off land of “América en este siglo.” Eliseo Alberto's Caracol Beach, in contrast, is portrayed as a hybrid novel, one that combines the “locuras” and violence of Latin America and Latin Americans with the classical inheritance of Europe.

These turns of fate, extreme cruelties, political plots and dictators are wholly absent from the Spanish prize-winners, which manifest the “European” preoccupation with the individual, whose consciousness has been formed by classical Greco-Roman cultures. Never mind that Spanish culture is at least as much Arab as Roman, or that the greatest violence and political turmoil of the twentieth century took place on European soil. This analysis makes it clear that, although Spain resents the economic control of its cultural products emanating from the financial capitals of the West, it has not hesitated to impose its own cultural norms on Latin America,

while simultaneously interpellating its former colonies as bastions of the revolutionary ideals that have disappeared in Spain, in the case of Communism, or need to be actively suppressed, in the case of ETA.

Events since September 11th have corroborated my earlier thoughts, but they have also added new twists, particularly in regard to the alignment of national and trans-national identities during the current war and following the collapse of the Argentine economy. In particular, the idealization of social resistance that comes across in many of the Summer 2000 articles seems unimaginable in the current anti-terrorist climate, in which clandestine plans and radical ideologies form part of the “axis of evil” and may be crushed at will. This applies as much to the FARC, the Sendero Luminoso, and ETA as it does to the Middle East. U.S. economic aid to countries harboring terrorists depends upon a concerted military campaign against those subversives. At the same time, however, Spanish judge Baltasar Garzón, who has assumed an international role in punishing the past abuses of authoritarianism in Latin America, has turned his gaze, not only to ETA, but also to U.S., which has sought exemption from international standards of justice during the current war. Human rights abuses during the Franco years have escaped his attention, however.

Argentina, meanwhile, has become the whipping boy of globalized capital: it received international aid for its free market system, but has had to stand alone in its collapse, as if national economies were the equivalent of corporations, some of which inevitably fail. This is, after all, the ideal of capitalism; in reality, however, international trade is never really free or fair, and, even within capitalist countries, some corporations cheat and steal their way to power and are never punished, while law-abiding ones disappear. In the case of failed corporations, at least, the unemployed workers can move to new corporations. Immigration quotas, however, make this model impossible on the international level. The war against terrorism and the Argentine crisis

have, then, revealed the authoritarian, anti-liberal, anti-democratic, and anti-free-market face of neoliberalism and globalization.

Conclusions

The globalization of the Spanish bookselling and publishing business brings to light the contradictions of the new economic and political orders, which in turn affect the particular ways in which Latin America is “read” from Spain, and the ways in which Spain “reads” itself—and hopes to be “read”—in relation to Europe and the Americas. In the new globalized publishing industry, Spain has simultaneously claimed the Spanish-language center for itself, distanced itself from any responsibility for the post-colonial struggles still lingering in the Americas, and also claimed the international rights to the representation, consumption, marketing and circulation of a timeless, eternalized (and thus, essentialized and neutralized) image of Latin America as the feminized, exoticized trope of perpetual revolution that emerged in the nineteenth century. For Spanish Leftist intellectuals, Latin American economic and ethnic politics—in contrast to domestic issues surrounding ETA, African immigration, uneven development, strikes, etc.—remain a struggle between the center and the periphery, and, in this struggle, they identify themselves with an idealization of revolution in an attempt to voice their discontent and resist their erasure—their own marginalization—within the atomized economic, political, and cultural systems of neoliberalism. The new economic Right, on the other hand, deploys a modern image of a philanthropic and democratic Spain to buy and sell contemporary Latin America as an unfortunate, flawed, but thrilling relative on the global market. To recreate their own image, however, they must erase Spain’s imperial and dictatorial past from the national and international memory, thereby hiding their nation’s past identification with anti-liberal ideologies, as well as its culpability in the post-colonial and neo-colonial woes of Latin America. This analysis, far from denouncing a particular political or national group, reveals the anxiety surrounding political

agency in neoliberalism, as well as the ideological components and implications of globalized economic practices, particularly when they touch upon cultural products.

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