

**“ ‘AGAINST SPANISH CONSCIENCE’: THE TRANSLATION OF
NORTH-AMERICAN CLASSICS IN POST-WAR SPAIN
(1950S & 1960S)”**

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I: Introduction¹

The literature produced in the United States of America had had two historical disembarkments on Spanish soil before the Spanish Civil War.² The first can be dated as early as the mid-19th century. It was inaugurated by the Spanish translations of some of the short stories by Edgar Allan Poe –via, of course, the French translations previously carried out by Baudelaire. Poe’s oeuvre enjoyed great repercussion both in France and in Spain, becoming the object not just of translations but also of critical studies which can be dated as early as the 1840s.³ Like Poe, other writers of what today is known as ‘the Great Renaissance’ of North-American literature –another example would be Nathaniel Hawthorne- were translated into Spanish in their lifetime, therefore reaching Spain within a short period of time between the original publication and its translation.

The second golden age of North-American literature translations can be dated between the two Great Wars. Some significant changes may be established with the previous period. First, Europe witnesses the arrival not only of the translations of texts, but also of the great names of North-American literature, who find their personal meeting point in Gertrude Stein’s Parisian *atelier*. Stein became, if anything, a powerful link for the literary expatriates known today as ‘the Lost Generation’ and, thus, the great mistress/lady of one of the most famous literary salons of all ages: a space which could one minute be described as a museum (walls coated with Picasso and Matisse bore witness to this), “except there was a big fireplace and it was warm and comfortable” (Hemingway

¹ Our research methodology here is structured around two issues: the search for bibliographic material about publishing in post-war Spain (Hurtley, Moret, Parcerisas), and the exhaustive revision of editorial catalogues provided by the Biblioteca de Catalunya (Janés, Caralt, Seix Barral, Destino), to whom the authors would like to express their gratitude.

² Hereafter, ‘the Civil War’.

³ Please see López Guix for more information on the publication of the first translation of Poe in the Spanish milieu.

in Watson: 10), and the next minute an interesting centre for “transcontinental gossip” (Mellow: 170). Whether museum or social venue, Stein’s and Toklas’s atelier in Paris became an operations centre to which Sherwood Anderson and Ernest Hemingway, among others, went on their own literary and personal pilgrimage. The physical presence in Paris, the arty place-to-be at that time, invested North-American literature with a new, international dimension comparable to that of the ‘great’ European literature allowing it to overcome the recurrent inferiority complex which prevailed in North-American letters from the 19th century.

Catalonia before the Spanish Civil War: there appear some Catalan translations of North-American authors. The likes of Walt Whitman, Mark Twain, Washington Irving, Edgar Allan Poe, Nathaniel Hawthorne, James Fenimore Cooper and Jack London all find their space in the collections issued by Editorial Catalana, Biblioteca Univers, Quaderns Literaris (Parcerisas: 41) or, even, in the popular library of the journal *Avenç* at the beginning of the 20th century. Over the 1930s, it is the big names of William Faulkner and Ernest Hemingway who enjoy popularity through the translation of their work. Suffice as an example the translation of *Torrents of Spring* (in Catalan, *Torrents de Primavera*), edited by Josep Janés under the collection “Rosa dels Vents” in 1937. This is one of the first European translations of the work of Hemingway; we owe it to the work of the translator Josep Ros-Artigues.

Our research revolves around the translations which appeared over the period which covers the end of the Spanish Civil War and the late 1950s a moment in which in Europe, according to Francesc Parcerisas, the

Penetration and initial knowledge of young North-American narrative exploded in a vertiginous way [...] Until this moment, intellectual contacts between both sides of the Atlantic had been migrated and the financial well-being of the United States had not imposed on Europe as yet, at least not with the strength it would through the economic superiority which the Plan Marshall later meant (40).⁴

At such a moment of consolidation of the United States as a worldwide economic power, the presence of North-American literature in the Spanish

⁴ Translated from the original Catalan by the authors. All subsequent quotes in Spanish or Catalan will be translated by the authors.

publishing sphere coincides with the massive introduction of North-American narrative in Europe. In relation to this, our thesis will be that the choice of books edited and translated over this period conforms a web of thought on the part of vocational publishers who would take care of every single detail in the editing process, including having to confront serious logistic problems, both on the financial and the ideological fronts.

We need to remember that these years of Catalan edition also had their echo in South America. Provided that publishing in Spain had become nearly impossible over these decades, a vast number of Argentinian and Mexican publishing houses took hold of a big part of the market (Moret: 155). As an instance, the *Editorial Sudamericana*, which published a great number of North-American authors such as Faulkner, was founded in 1939 in Buenos Aires by a group of intellectuals among which one finds the name of Catalan editor Antoni López Llausàs. Llausàs was the owner of the popular bookshop Catalonia (located in Barcelona); he migrated to Argentina at the end of the Civil War (Moret: 156).

Hereafter, we will analyze the publishing production of North-American literature in translation over the decades of the 40s and the 50s, focusing exclusively on literary production. Although, as has been argued above, we have been working directly with the catalogues of Janés, Caralt, Seix Barral and Destino kindly provided by the Biblioteca de Catalunya, we need to remark that there are many publishing houses which appeared over this period and beyond. In the long run, we will find the names of Josep Janés, Luis de Caralt, José Manuel Lara, the Bruguera family, Joan Grijalbo, Carlos Barral, Jaime Salinas, Carmen Balcells and Jorge Herralde, amongst many others.

II: 1939-1949

The atmosphere over this decade is usually described as ‘devastating’, for it is a period clearly marked by the exile of a great part of the Spanish intellectual classes. According to Moret, “[According to Equipo Reseña,] ‘the defeat of the Republican Government brings about the flee of 90% of Spanish *intelligentzia*. Two thousand school teachers, 200 high-school teachers and 118 university teachers went on exile [...], besides a vast number of novelists, poets and playwrights” (11). Apart from the feeling of distress that any Civil War

brings about, special reference needs to be made to the censorship of the new regime on all matters, including cultural movements. In the publishing sector, there could be felt repression and invigilance. State censors made sure that they blocked the entry of “evil foreign ideas” (Moret: 13), as stated by the Ley de Prensa (Press Law) of 1938, which would later be reformed by Minister of Culture Manuel Fraga Iribarne into the Nueva Ley de Prensa (March 1966). Through the early Ley de Prensa, all cultural activity was prey to a permanent state of exception. This would mean banning a great number of books and blocking the path to any book written in any language other than Spanish. Further, “any sign of leftism or separatism, even of democracy, would be subject to immediate prohibition” (Moret: 15). Let us not forget that State censorship would remain active until 1976 and it would affect also booksellers (even those who sold books published previous to the Civil War). As an instance, we would like to remember here the decision taken by Minister Gabriel Arias Salgado, who rejected the work of Marcel Proust under the presumption that it was morally reprehensible (Moret: 16). Besides the perverse omnipresence of censorship and the inherent difficulties experienced by any society under a strict regime of repressive control, we need to consider the financial difficulties (such as the lack of paper on which the texts could actually be printed).

In spite of these difficulties, publishing literature enjoyed a paradoxical moment of splendour, as González Palencia explains in 1947 through the following words:

If an American scholar would visit the Book Fair, which is being held this very moment in Madrid (June 1st to 20th), he would see with his own eyes the material extent of the Spanish publishing market and might be admired by the volume and the quantity of our book production today. Having to tow with the difficulties involving paper and further financial problems, it is shocking that so many books are actually being published. It is a pity they are a bit expensive, at least for our own pockets (317).

Our analysis of the catalogues we have been working with disallows such an optimistic statement; still, we admit that in such a dismal scenario, the translations of foreign authors backed by Janés and Caralt shine with peculiar light. In fact, Moret assesses the excess of translations which characterized this period mostly amongst Catalan publishers. The effect of this was the public complaint of many falangists, who identified Janés and Caralt as ultimately responsible for such ‘evil’ practise (Moret: 64). The presumed excessive

presence of foreign authors in the catalogues of the two Catalan publishers brought about the pact of a quota and “at a meeting at the Book Council [Cámara del Libro], according to editor Miquel Arimany, there were talks of imposing on editors a quota by which one text by a Spanish author would be published for every three foreign texts” (Moret: 66).

The volume of translations gave way to polemics also on the front of payment of foreign rights -“Spain in the 40s was an isolated country and foreign currency was not easy to get, which gave way to some instances of picaresque and books were published without being paid” Moret: 64)- and also to open complaints of a nationalistic nature. Moret explains:

[In spite of protests], there was no clear politics on books, and Janés and Caralt could continue to publish translations, in spite of those voices that claimed they were going against ‘Spanish conscience’ [...] [Publishing house] Juventud, which used to publish prior to the Civil War in a wide scope, acquired a quality line under the literary direction of Catalan poet Marià Manent. Many interesting authors were published under the collection *Obras Maestras*, amongst which we find Charles Dickens, Rudyard Kipling, P.C. Wren and Stefan Zweig (65).

Indeed. If we compare the editorial production of Janés, Caralt, Destino and Seix Barral over the decade, the differences among the catalogues are a case in point. Both Janés and Caralt characterize themselves for the great presence of foreign authors in their lists over the 40s and the 50s.

Josep Janés, as argued by Jacqueline Hurtley in her seminal study on the figure of this publisher (*Josep Janés. El combat per la cultura*), used to have a pragmatic view on how to avoid the mechanisms of censorship. As censors would unleash their fierce politics upon the isolated book, he created collections such as ‘Los Clásicos del Siglo XX’, ‘Los Premios Pulitzer de Novela’, ‘Club de Lectores’, ‘Serie Policiaca’. All these allowed him to publish a great numbers of literature in translation (39). As regards North-American literature, Janés pioneered the publication of classics such as Hemingway, an author who would become iconic both for his literary aspect and for his aura of glamour linked to bullfights and social venues in Madrid. Janés’s catalogue for this decade witnesses the huge amount of foreign names and the combination of canonical authors –Hemingway, Sinclair Lewis, John Dos Passos- with popular authors – Jack London, Pearl S. Buck.

The other important catalogue as regards the translation of North-American literature was Caralt's. Luis de Caralt was a falangist, art collector and Counsellor at the Barcelona Town Hall who decided to initiate a long trajectory in the publishing world. His publishing enterprise started in 1942 and, already in 1943, he was running different collections such as "Gigante", "Cultura histórica" and "Vida vivida", all of which were characterized by a great presence of foreign authors.

Caralt's catalogue, although less than Janés's, includes canonical names from Modernist literature, such as Faulkner, Steinbeck, and Dos Passos, combined with the more popular Cecil Roberts or Pearl S. Buck. Over the 40s Caralt publishes four North-American texts: two by Sinclair Lewis and two by John Steinbeck.

It is interesting to note the coincidence in both catalogues: both publish Sinclair Lewis. No doubt the two publishers were driven to this author as a result of his Nobel laureate in 1930, but there is more to Lewis than that. Let us not forget that his production is characterized by a fierce critique of the values of the more materialistic North-American society and the middle classes, which would initially seem to fit in better with the political approach displayed at all times by Janés, not Caralt.

This is also the period which witnesses the consolidation of Seix Barral as a publishing house, after the birth of the firm as a printing enterprise in 1914. Seix Barral acquires a new flavour and starts to publish volumes related to popular topics.⁵ Much later, this publishing house would live a time of splendour through the so-called 'Latin American Boom' (García Márquez, Vargas Llosa, et al) but over the 40s it devotes its printing enterprises strictly to national authors. We would like to highlight Martí de Riquer and his 1947 *Resumen de literatura catalana* which became a seminal text for academics all over the world.

As regards the catalogue of Destino, we have noticed a great number of translations of canonical literature from the British Isles, particularly that produced over the 19th and beginning of the 20th centuries (Emily Brontë,

⁵ Some examples would be "Aviación sin motor" (1941), "Globos y dirigibles" (1942), "Por qué vuela el aeroplano" (1945) all of which were written by Juan J. Maluquer.

Thackeray, Dickens, Conrad, Woolf) with no appearance of translations of North-American classics.

III: 1950-1959

The decade of the 50s witnesses some changes in the Spanish social context. The dismal atmosphere which had prevailed over the previous decade begins to give way, and Spain timidly starts to come out of the isolation which we have made reference to above. This aspect will have its fruits in an important increase of foreign translations. Many issues contribute to the movement of aperture. The Eucharistic Congress which took place in Barcelona in 1952, the reestablishment of the relations with the United States in 1953, and the entry of Spain into the United Nations in 1955 all have their share of importance at the political level. On a more cultural level, we have to make reference to the huge impact which winning the Palme d’Or at the Cannes International Festival had for Carlos Berlanga’s film “Bienvenido Mister Marshall”; together with this, the granting of the Nobel Prize to Juan Ramón Jiménez in 1956 also contributed to a movement by which the world started to direct its gaze to Spain (Moret: 117).

An important source of publication of translations of North-American literature over this period is conformed by the journal *Espadaña*. This is one of the most active and relevant literary journals of the time (1944-1951) and it had illustrious contributors, such as José M^a Valverde. Its founders, Antonio González de Lama, Eugenio García de Nora and Victoriano Crémer, also signed some of the translations which appeared in the journal, and they always preserved their critical and innovative spirit, thus positioning themselves against other journals such as “Garcilaso” (1943-1946), the official journal for ‘new writers’ of postwar Spain, or “Escorial” (1940-49), which included neoclassical poetry amongst its publications.

Apart from the already mentioned Valverde, “Espadaña” also enjoyed such contributors as Pablo Neruda, Miguel Hernández and Blas de Otero. In the words of López de Aviada, Eugenio de Nora had already identified the ‘Garcilasista’ aesthetics as an objective to move away from in an attempt to distance his journal from the traditional formalism which characterized the poetry compiled by “Garcilaso”:

The group [de Lama, Crémer, de Nora] characterized itself, almost from the very beginning, by its firm will of renovation, its inconformist character and,

provided that the journal appeared in a small city, by its intention to decentralize culture. Besides, its proposal was to offer new poetic values which would prove an alternative to officialized poetry, recovering the ‘Generación del 27’ and informing about new and important publications of poetry (both Spanish and foreign). With these aims in mind, it is not strange that polemics would become one of the characteristics of *Espadaña* (184).

Espadaña offered a significant presence of translations of literature in English, probably owing to De Nora’s intervention who, at the time, was teaching Spanish in Berna and had, therefore, free access to all sorts of publications censored in Spain (López de Abiada: 185).

What we find here is that the milieu of literary journals becomes active as regards foreign translations. On their part, Josep Janés, Caralt and Seix Barral also offer their own contributions on this terrain over the 50s. Janés’s publications continue with their ascending tendency: there is a total of 357 publications over the decade, amongst which many are signed by foreign authors; we have identified a total of eleven translations of North-American literature. Although the popular Pearl S. Buck continues to predominate in the catalogue (with five titles), we can also find the names of Modernist North-American authors with which she shares her protagonism. Again, we find Sinclair Lewis (*Sangre de Rey* and *Obras de Sinclair Lewis*), Fitzgerald (*El Gran Gatsby*), Hemingway (*Fiesta*) and Dos Passos (*Tres Soldados*). Always daring, Josep Janés decides to publish the controverted author Radcliffe Hall in 1950 (*La lámpara que no ardió*). As regards the translation of 19th-century authors, we find an edition of *Historias extraordinarias: poemas*, one of the most popular titles by Edgar Allan Poe, an author which enjoyed great popularity over the previous century but whose texts seemed to have gone slightly downhill over this period.

A great quantity of foreign titles can also be appreciated in Caralt’s catalogue, a constant dynamics which sets both Janés and Caralt apart from other publishers as we have argued. In this sense, we note that Caralt published many popular authors of the time, just like Janés. As an instance, his catalogue includes *La casa de la araña* by Paul Bowles and two titles by Pearl S. Buck. Further, Caralt publishes five titles by William Faulkner, amongst which we would like to highlight the classic *Desciende Moisés*, whilst still betting on such a safe value as Hemingway, even though Janés takes the credit for having published this author first. Caralt publishes a total of three texts by the author:

Adiós a las armas, Cuentos, Las nieves del Kilimanjaro. The editor continues his interest on Sinclair Lewis, also included in Janés, and publishes *Obras completas* (1957) by another great classic, Steinbeck.

The publishing line by Seix Barral over this decade deserves special reference, since poet and editor Carlos Barral takes the credit for introducing the genre of *nouveau roman* in Spain. Evidence of this are the publications of novels by Alan Robbe-Grillet and Marguerite Duras. We have been surprised to find in this catalogue Henry Miller’s *El coloso de Marusi* (1957) and, particularly, the daring move to publish the translation of Carson McCullers’ *La balada del café triste y otros relatos* (1958). We would like to note that this publication appears only seven years after the original publication of this text in the United States, and it inaugurates Seix Barral’s future interest in the author.⁶

IV: Conclusions

Our research for this paper has focused around the translations of North-American literature in Spain over the 40s and 50s and the relation they may establish with the post-war editorial world. In this sense, we have seen how the translations of North-American literature in the Spanish context are linked to the interest raised by two antecedent periods: the mid-19th century and the period between the two Great Wars. Catalonia had witnessed translations of North-American authors before the Spanish Civil War, and some authors had enjoyed a great deal of popularity (Faulkner, Hemingway).

The 40s constitute a particularly dark and hard age, due to the strict repression and invigilance that the censorship effects over foreign influence (Ley de Prensa 1938). Even in these circumstances, the rigorous, tireless and persistent work of editors such as Josep Janés and Luis de Caralt allows the translations of foreign authors to shine with their own light.

The 50s witness an atmosphere of aperture as regards the rigid control of censorship. Evidence of this is that the arena of literary journals (some openly

⁶ Destino is not focused on the publication of North-American literature over this period. It does publish, however, translations of texts by authors of British origin, such as George Orwell and Virginia Woolf. It seems that Destino is, over the 50s, devoted to the promotion of new national voices, such as Carmen Laforet and Ana M^a Matute.

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positioned against the Franco regime) proves fruitful for the translation of some of the most interesting foreign texts. In any case, we also observe that Janés, Caralt and Barral pursue their translating tasks through texts which, on occasion, could have proved a real risks for these courageous Catalan editors.

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