
DOSSIER

Translation, Publishing and Circulation
in Contemporary Iberian Literatures

Presentation



This themed dossier is one of the outcomes of the second IberTRANSLATIO symposium dedicated to the overarching topic of “Writing and Translating within/between Iberian Literatures”. Hosted by the Department of Romance Studies of the University of Vienna in June 2023, the symposium was organised by the IberTranslatio group, which brings together scholars from the research clusters DIIA – Iberian and Ibero-American Dialogues and MOV – Circulations, Narratives and Archives in Translation at the Centre for Comparative Studies of the University of Lisbon.

The dossier assembles four articles exploring the reception of Iberian writers within contemporary Iberia (20th and 21st centuries) via translating, self-translating and re-translating. All articles give voice to intra-Iberian translators by methodologically focusing on their statements, correspondence, or interviews, which can be encapsulated under the broad term of “archives” (Cordingley & Hersant 2021).

When analysing the re-translations and the paratextual comments by the Portuguese writer João de Castro Osório (1899-1970), Esther Gimeno Ugalde underscores the practice of translation aligned with an openly political agenda during Portugal’s *Estado Novo* dictatorship. She puts forward the key concept of “restitution” (*restituição*) as a translation approach to Luso-Spanish bilingualism in such a politically biased context. Osório claimed for himself the task of rectifying an “historical error” (*erro histórico*) resulting from the Iberian Union (1580-1640), that of bringing back home the Portuguese translingual writers who used Spanish as a literary language. This task is ultimately framed in terms of re-translating, whereby Osório aimed to repay a kind of debt to his nation by re-establishing the link between the Portuguese language and literature as a single unit.

Fátima Fernandes da Silva explores an often neglected relationship, that between author and editor, by examining the published correspondence between Catalan author Mercè Rodoreda (1908-1983) and her editor Joan Sales (1912-1983), who was himself a literary author. The focus is placed on the role of translation within the correspondence spanning from 1960 to 1983. Silva addresses translation from Catalan as a vehicle for a minoritized literature and culture to reach wider literary audiences. The correspondence reveals not only the difficulties

of publishing in Catalan during the Franco dictatorship but also Rodoreda's and Sales's strong commitment to the Catalan language. The analysis of this epistolary exchange also considers Rodoreda's translation into Spanish as well as the circulation of her work in other Iberian languages (Portuguese, Basque, and Galician).

In her article about Asturian writer Xuan Bello (born in 1965), Maria Dasca explores his multifaceted role as both author and translator within the *Surdimentu* movement. Dasca also investigates Bello's connections to other Iberian literatures through his involvement in translation and self-translation. Her analysis sheds light on several key points. Firstly, the dynamic interplay between an "emergent literature", here Asturian, and the interconnection between reception and translation. Secondly, the relationship between Bello's poetry and prose, and his translations, mainly from Portuguese and Galician. Dasca places particular emphasis on Bello's reception within the Catalan context, where well-positioned agents have been instrumental in facilitating the translation of four volumes of his prose. According to Dasca, Bello's Iberianism originates from a deep cultural understanding with historical roots and this case study serves to illustrate the writer's impactful role (both as an author and a translator) in the Iberian literary system, particularly when dealing with an "emergent literature" such as the Asturian.

Drawing from an ethnographic approach to the field of poetry edition and translation from Spain in 21st-century Portugal, Isabel Araújo Branco brings in testimonies of several Portuguese translators who grant us access to their practices, experiences, working processes, and personal relationships with both the authors and texts they translate. Branco discusses the prevalence of the anthological genre in the reception of such poetry, as well as of bilingual editions, and its gatekeeping effect. In this sense, translators are depicted as "guardians", a powerful metaphor that underscores their pivotal agency in facilitating and preserving Iberian translation exchanges.

Translation is here approached as part of a wide network of relations between agents, such as translators, authors, editors, proofreaders, publishers, and critics (Milton & Bandia 2009). Without disregarding institutional frames, namely literary prizes, language and translation policies, support from cultural institutes, or the dynamics of the book market itself, the four articles emphasize translators' influence in shaping the circulation of contemporary Iberian literatures. Ultimately, translators' commitment to literary translation is both ideological and affective, almost certainly impacting on editorial decisions.

The role, function, and circulation of Iberian literary translations are therefore examined through an interdisciplinary lens. On the one hand, these articles follow a "savvy approach", combining cultural aspects with publishing policies and commercial factors (Venuti 2012: 159). This proves especially useful for examining translations that originate in texts which are culturally (and in many cases linguistically) close to one another. Branco's article clearly illustrates this approach. On the other hand, a multi-relational perspective sheds light on the cultural tensions, invisibilities, power relations, and other mediators defining the dynamics of the Iberian literary translation zone, that is a space of intense cultural, literary, and linguistic interaction featuring multifaceted translation practices

(cf. Pegenaute 2019; Gimeno Ugalde, Pinto & Fernandes 2021; Gimeno Ugalde 2023). Along those lines, Gimeno Ugalde's case study of a nationalist translator in early 20th-century Portugal demonstrates the importance of ideology in translation in the context of *Estado Novo*, while the research carried out by Silva and by Dasca provides evidence of Iberian authors, translators, and editors engaged in activism for their work and their languages. In a nutshell, the case studies presented in this dossier show that the Iberian Peninsula has been and remains an ongoing translation zone.

Bibliographical references

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