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➤ Globalization, Publishing, and the Marketing of “Hispanic” Identities

Summary: My article explores the complex Spanish reaction to recent changes in the Spanish-language publishing business as indicative of an ambivalence toward Spain's place in the new global order, particularly by liberal intellectuals who associate books and bookstores with resistance and solidarity. The purchase of important Spanish publishers by international media conglomerates also implies to some a loss of national identity and cultural values, at the same time as the internationalization of the publishing business represents Spain's incorporation into the European community and the world economy. The European Union, however, and Spain in particular, have globalized and marketed Latin America through business ventures, NGOs and cooperative efforts linked both to the embassies and to the international corporations. The resulting contradictions –the resistance to and welcoming of globalization, the nostalgia for, economic colonization of and rejection of Latin America– affect what is currently published in Spain by Spanish and Latin American authors and how it is marketed.

During the summer of 2000, a series of articles appeared in the Spanish daily *El País* addressing the changes in publishing, both in Spain and abroad, and the pernicious effects of those changes on the real and perceived relevance of bookstores, editors, authors, and books themselves, especially in comparison to the decades immediately following the Spanish Civil War and World War II. In those years, Leftist Spanish intellectuals sensed an affinity with their Latin American counterparts, and that alliance was forged and maintained in Spain through the often clandestine circulation of books by Latin American and exiled Spanish authors. In the 1960s, still under the Franco regime, Spanish editors –particularly Carlos Barral– also published Latin American fiction, which represented for them the continuation of Leftist ideals on American soil, where many Spanish intellectuals made their homes after the fall of the Second Republic.¹

The incorporation of Spanish publishing houses into international conglomerates and the disappearance of small bookstores in the face of competition from mega-stores follo-

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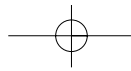
¹ Mario Santana (2000) has examined the relationship between the Spanish publishing business and the Latin American Novel.

wing Franco's death and the transition to democracy coincided with the triumph of neo-liberalism and globalization. The disappearance of those personal, regional establishments thus mirrors for many the perceived decline in the agency of individuals and individual nations in an increasingly faceless economic network. The purchase of important publishers like Lumen and Plaza y Janés by Random House also implies a loss of national identity to the rampant capitalism of the United States and its economic satellites. 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. It also symbolizes the entry of Spain into the European community—Random House, after all, is a subsidiary of Bertelsmann—and 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 European Union, however, and Spain in particular, have globalized and marketed Latin America through business ventures, NGOs and cooperative efforts linked both to the embassies and to the international corporations. This complex Spanish reaction—the resistance to and welcoming of globalization, the nostalgia for, economic colonization of and rejection of Latin America—has profoundly affected what is currently published and marketed in Spain by Spanish and Latin American authors, men and women, as well as which works and authors receive literary prizes.

The Political Role of Bookstores

In order to understand what is at stake for many Spanish and Latin American intellectuals in the globalization of the book business, I will begin by talking about bookstores. In a July 9, 2000 article in *El País* titled “Endecha por la pequeña librería”, Mario Vargas Llosa laments that the previous director of Waterstone's bookstore in Great Britain, “fue echado porque se resistió a seguir las instrucciones de sus jefes de reducir drásticamente los depósitos de nuevas publicaciones y privilegiar de manera sistemática la exhibición y venta de *best sellers*” (Vargas Llosa 2000: 15-16). For Vargas Llosa and other intellectuals of his generation, the bookstore represented what the café or bar had to writers at the beginning of the century: a meeting place, a forum of ideas, and, for the many exiled from their homelands, a new kind of home that fostered international solidarity: “Mi recuerdo de todas las ciudades en que he vivido es inseparable de estas instituciones que permanecen en mi memoria como una referencia familiar” (15).² Booksellers themselves were the mediums for the young writers —“Con ellos era posible conversar, y pasarse horas escarbando las existencias, en esa atmósfera cálida, inconfundible, de polvo intemporal y de religiosidad laica que tienen— que tenían las pequeñas librerías” (Vargas Llosa 2000: 15). This sentiment of lost camaraderie is confirmed in an article on the closing of the Miguel Hernández bookstore that appeared two days prior to

² Even though Waterstone's is a chain, that is, a store that replaced the dusty bookshops of Vargas Llosa's memory, it still served a public cultural function: “fue un eficiente promotor de la vida cultural, pues en casi todas sus librerías había siempre recitales, mesas redondas, presentaciones de libros, con asistencia de intelectuales y escritores de primera línea” (Vargas Llosa 2000: 15).



Vargas Llosa's piece: "Ya no hay clientes que vengan a hablar de libros, a pedir consejo o a recomendar. Ahora sólo quieren la novedad, la moda" (Serrano 2000: 8).

This sense of loss is generalized throughout Europe and the Americas –it even appears in such popular U. S. films as "You've Got Mail"– but 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. In the article about the Miguel Hernández bookstore, Rodolfo Serrano explains that:

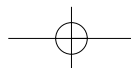
A Angel [Escarpa, el dueño de la librería] lo detuvieron por vender libros. Y está orgulloso de ello. Le secuestraron *Galicia mártir*, de Castelao. Él, con otros como él, editó y vendió el *Libro rojo del cole*. Y el Gobierno de UCD lo detuvo. Que ahora parece que fue un paseo triunfal. Y no es tan 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 libreros detenidos y con librerías destrozadas y obreros y estudiantes muertos (2000: 8).

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 rhetorical identification of 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. Not only that: Latin American writers –diplomats, human rights activists, news correspondents, presidential candidates– seemed to possess a real political power that their Spanish counterparts had not since the Civil War. Reading and selling their work under Franco gave Leftist Spanish intellectuals the sense that they were participating actively in politics within the bookstore itself. In the year 2000, the former owner of the Miguel Hernández bookstore still remembered

los tiempos en que, bajo cuerda, *pasaba* las ediciones de tapa blanca de Losada, con los versos prohibidos de Nicolás Guillén, de León Felipe, de Pablo Neruda, de Miguel Hernández [...] Cuando el régimen perseguía la poesía, que era –de verdad lo era– un arma cargada de futuro. Cuando vender era un riesgo. Y se conspiraba en la trastienda. Y allí se reunían comisiones de huelga, piquetes informativos, comités del *partido*. Allí se escondían la *vietnamita* y los panfletos (Serrano 2000: 8).

The closing of these bookstores, then, represents much more than the inefficiency of small businesses: it symbolizes the loss of the solidarity forged within their walls, and it evinces the fear that, despite the trappings of democracy, neoliberal governments will again promote the interests of the Right, but, this time, the books and bookstores will not be there to protect the interests of the poor:



Dice Ángel 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 (Serrano 2000: 8).

For those who see globalization and neoliberalism not as the co-option of the rhetoric of the Left by Rightist economic interests, but as the fulfillment of democratic promise, however, the disappearance of small bookstores signals the death only of an authoritarian cultural elite. That is the conclusion that Mario Vargas Llosa reaches: 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 the reader to choose what s/he reads: “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 2000: 16). Although he is elitist himself in relation to the uncultured majority, Vargas Llosa claims to mark an apparent ideological inconsistency on the part of Leftist intellectuals, who actually restrict the freedom of book choice although they purportedly strive for liberty and equality. His formulation, however, presents freedom in solely consumerist terms: the individual now expresses agency through the consumption of products, and freedom is conceived as the freedom to buy. What is more, he co-opts the watchwords 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, however, suggest that this will not be the case.

In these contrasting opinions, we can clearly see the transformation that has taken place in politics and ideology: the individual now expresses agency through the consumption of products, and freedom is conceived as the freedom to buy. This concept is clearly linked to the materialist ideals of intellectuals who were forced to pass books clandestinely among themselves, but solidarity and dialogue are lost as society becomes atomized into individual buying units.

Politics, Publishing, and Cultural Identity

Publishing, like book-selling, was linked to a politics of resistance in the Franco era. Independent publishing houses –including Lumen, Akal, and Seix Barral– resisted the cultural authority of the government by publishing new domestic and foreign authors –including many women and Latin Americans– in Spanish and in the suppressed national languages of Spain, particularly Catalan. The editors of those publishing houses were leading intellectuals and writers who believed that the writing, publishing, and reading of literature were political acts. These are the editors that are disappearing as publishing becomes big business, and, like their counterparts in the book-selling business, they represent the loss of a political commitment to social change in the new economy.

The issue became particularly prominent in Summer 2000, when Esther Tusquets was forced into early retirement after Lumen was bought by Bertelsmann, and the translation of André Schiffrin’s *The Business of Books* was published in Barcelona by Destino

and reviewed in *El País*. In addition to being an important novelist in her own right, Tusquets advanced the cause of women in Spain by publishing in Lumen not only works by Spanish women, but also important foreign theoretical and political books on feminism in Spanish translation. Her departure signaled the end of a certain editorial politics. Schifffrin parallels Tusquets in many ways: he worked for Pantheon Books (a subsidiary of Random House) for thirty years, and believed firmly in the cultural mission of publishing. During his years at Pantheon, however, he witnessed 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 Schifffrin explains it, Pantheon Books, previously the defender of literary classics, was reduced to pandering to the tastes of an uncultured popular readership.

Schifffrin'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). In the July 1, 2000 edition of the cultural supplement *Babelia*, on the same pages as Javier Pradera's review of Schifffrin's book, an article by Mauricio Bach presents the reactions of Spanish editors to the book. 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)– believe that the Internet will take over the function of serious publishing (the article appeared in *El País*, we should remember, 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– confide in the possibility that individual publishing groups will maintain their independence and identity, even after becoming incorporated into the multinational conglomerate, which will simply provide their subsidiaries with funds to distribute books and pay large advances to certain authors.³ This is much the same argument made by proponents of the European Union –that each country will be able to maintain its cultural identity while simultaneously benefiting from the economies of size that the Union provides.

Editors of independent firms see the matter differently. Their fear is that editors will lose their cultural role. Manual Borrás, one of the founders of Pre-Textos, believes that editors 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 2000: 13). He notes, moreover, that the economic arguments are unsound because the marketing strategies of the large firms often backfire. Jorge Herralde, who

³ The article announcing Tusquets's early retirement appeared on July 6th, less than a week later.

has been the editor of Anagrama for over 30 years, presents the independent editor as an entrepreneur, one who takes risks and innovates. The large groups, in contrast, are monopolies, which discourage risk. He believes, however, that the problems outlined in Schiff-frin's book apply 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 plantearse, por lo que los grandes grupos son una eficaz escuela de cinismo" (Bach 2000: 13). Spain and Europe, he believes, 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 2000:13). 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:

Cifuentes confirma que en España la situación no es comparable con la de Estados Unidos: "Evidentemente, el editor tiene que tener en cuenta la rentabilidad, pero en Taurus no renunciamos a publicar libros importantes aunque sean minoritarios, ya que nos compensan por el prestigio que dan al catálogo" (Bach 2000: 12).

The difference between the U. S. and Spain is reflected in the internal structure of publishing firms, according to an article published in *Babelia* three weeks later, on July 22nd, reviewing a study in *Publisher's Weekly* regarding the salaries of U. S. editors.

En primer lugar, allí la división del trabajo es bastante más compleja y especializada. En España, y dependiendo de las dimensiones de la empresa, una misma persona –o un reducido equipo– realiza tareas muy diversas. Además, existe la dificultad de la nomenclatura. *Publisher* en el mundo anglosajón significa editor en el sentido más genérico de la palabra: editor-propietario, responsable último de la empresa, director de una división editorial, etcétera. *Editor* [...] es una figura que, entre nosotros, sólo existe en los casos en que el editor se responsabiliza de un libro de encargo o aconseja al autor acerca de cómo sacar el mejor partido a su texto. Todos los editores españoles son, de un modo u otro, *editors*, aunque también realicen otros cometidos (Rodríguez Rivero 2000: 3).

The division of labor typical of U. S. businesses results in a reduced role for the editor and in a separation between those who work with books and authors, and those who direct the economic aspects of the publishing business.⁴ In Spanish firms, these functions have traditionally been performed by the same person, so there has been more balance between the economic and the cultural facets of publishing. If U.S. conglomerates take over Spanish publishing houses, it may be supposed that the structure of Spanish firms will change, and the editor will lose control and relevance, a loss reflected in the relative purchasing power of the editor, who earns much less than the CEO.

⁴ Of course, this was not always the case in the U.S., either.

This process has already begun, however. In Summer 2001, Random House, a subsidiary of Bertelsmann, 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:

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 2001).

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 Néstor 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 megaelectorales” (1999: 152), and those conglomerates operate principally from New York and Spain.

The Question of Gender and Ethnicity

Some of the anxiety about the changing role of the intellectual in the Spanish book business has been expressed in gender terms. As Laura Freixas explains in *Literatura y mujeres. Escritoras, público y crítica en la España actual*, women’s literature in Spain is de facto considered inferior, sentimental, unintellectual, trite, poorly written, and destined for an uncultured, though large, female reading public.⁵ The press correlates the increase in female publishers and female readers with the publication of trivial books, and concludes that those books are by, for, and about women: there are “dos ideas que funcionan como un círculo vicioso: las mujeres triunfan en lo comercial y mediático, y fracasan en la calidad y el prestigio” (2000: 41). In reality, the number of books by

⁵ This idea is not entirely new: Emilia Pardo Bazán argued in *La cuestión palpitante* – published in the newspaper *La Época* in 1882 and 1883 – that Spanish critics confused “las señoritas” with the female reading public in general.

women published by the major firms is minimal.⁶ Freixas explains some of the factors that contribute to this confusion:

- a) Gran visibilidad mediática, que tiene un triple efecto: aumentar las ventas; crear la sensación (falsa) de que las mujeres han conquistado la igualdad o incluso la mayoría en el campo de la literatura, y fomentar una hostilidad reactiva por parte de algunos sectores.
- b) Predominio femenino entre los lectores. [...]
- c) Interés de las editoriales y otras empresas e instituciones por captar mujeres. Ese interés es consecuencia de las tendencias que acabo de señalar: visibilidad mediática y lectura femenina. [...]
- d) Coexistencia, en el mundo editorial y cultural, de dos políticas: la una subraya la igualdad y tiende a la integración, la otra señala la diferencia y opta por la segregación. [...]
- e) Debilidad del sector universitario. Mientras que en otros países [...] la investigación académica sobre la literatura escrita por mujeres tiene una importante presencia en la opinión pública, en España raramente traspasa las fronteras de la Universidad.
- f) Escasa presencia de mujeres en las instituciones más tradicionales y prestigiosas, como la Real Academia, que cuenta con una sola (Ana María Matute) entre cuarenta y tres académicos.
- g) Circulación, en el ámbito de la crítica, de algunas ideas misóginas. Así, mientras que la identidad masculina de un escritor, de sus personajes o de sus lectores nunca es objeto de comentario por parte de los críticos, en cambio la identidad femenina se menciona con cierta frecuencia y prácticamente siempre con carácter peyorativo (2000: 38-40).

This gender anxiety also appeared in a Summer 2001 analysis of the crisis in the publishing business: an entire literary supplement was dedicated to “las editoras,” who appeared on the cover made-up, well-coiffed, and dressed in bright colors. The review of the *Publisher's Weekly* piece also emphasizes the growing power of women in the business: “Una de las conclusiones más interesantes que se desprende del informe de P. W. se refiere al progreso salarial de las mujeres respecto a sus colegas masculinos. En ciertas posiciones (edición, promoción), el salario medio de las mujeres ha conseguido, incluso, superar al de los hombres” (Rodríguez Rivero 2000: 3). However, like Freixas, the reviewer is forced to recognize the reality about the role of women in the new book business, that they may have more power than before, but they still have very little: “Claro que como colectivo siguen siendo minoría en los puestos decisivos (y mejor pagados) de las respectivas compañías” (Rodríguez Rivero 2000: 3). So, why feature them on the cover? The perceived feminization and globalization of the publishing industry, like the atomization of the economy, the book business, and society at large, represents to many intellectuals—even those who consider themselves Leftist—a loss of the prestige and solidarity associated with those literary spaces traditionally reserved for men—the bookstore, the publishing house, the university, the Real Academia, the anthology. As Freixas puts it:

⁶ Freixas explains that: “la lista oficial de las diez obras más vendidas en la Feria del Libro de Madrid incluía a tres mujeres [...] Por último, la misma *Qué Leer*, en su número de enero del 2000 daba, por fin, [...] cifras definitivas para todo el año 1999. Sobre los diez libros más vendidos en ficción, dos eran de mujeres; sobre diez de no ficción [...], dos también” (2000: 34). As far as publishing is concerned, the works of fiction by women in the major publishing houses reach only 24% of the total; poetry, 22%; and essay, 15% (Freixas 2000: 36).

¿Por qué los medios de comunicación dan a las escritoras una relevancia tan fuera de proporción con su importancia mediática? En primer lugar, porque la presencia de mujeres en territorios tradicionalmente –y todavía hoy, mayoritariamente– masculinos es una novedad, y como tal, es noticia. Nos hallamos además en una sociedad sin controversias ideológicas: los artistas ya no se definen por su opción política y hasta los debates estéticos parecen difuminarse; la prensa recurre entonces a la edad y al sexo para ‘etiquetar’ a los creadores. Y en una cultura cada vez más basada en la imagen, las mujeres destacan no sólo por ser minoría sino porque su imagen resulta más llamativa (2000: 37).

The same analysis has been applied to the recent surge of interest by Spaniards in Latin American politics, economies and literature. The analogy is particularly apt because Latin America has often been represented in Spanish literature and criticism in relation to the feminine and the indigenous, the non-Spanish and non-European.⁷ In an article published recently 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:

Con el zapatismo han encontrado los intelectuales de la vieja izquierda una ocasión ideal para volver a ser, de cara a su público, intelectuales de izquierda: pueden denunciar las injusticias del Tercer Mundo y abogar por un cambio radical sin decir nada concreto ni comprometerse a nada; pueden defender otra vez la violencia revolucionaria y la creatividad de la guerrilla, pero sin abandonar su buena conciencia humanitaria y pacifista; puede defender lo suyo con una pose más digna y en un escenario más exótico: ser a la vez europeístas y tercermundistas, radicales y moderados, estar a favor y en contra de la Historia. Y pueden ampliar su auditorio porque, aparte de todo el México de los indígenas rebeldes es tan pintoresco como siempre: primitivo, colorido y violento, folclórico y misterioso (2001: 28).

Another article in the same edition of *Revista de Occidente* repeats these accusations, 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:

Pero este culto es hoy a una guerrilla que pelea en contra de un Estado y su gobierno democráticamente electo, y no implica discutir ninguna propuesta concreta; es un byronismo postmoderno [...] sólo posible en la ignorante idealización de un lugar [...], en el cual el supremo bien y el mal son posibles, donde la violencia gana nuevamente su divina fuerza fortificadora, donde los maniqueísmos [...] pueden existir y donde la nueva clase de las sociedades opulentas –la progresía cosmopolita– puede ejercer una inédita forma de excursionismo: el turismo revolucionario (2001: 40).

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 pea-

⁷ See my study (2000), presented at LASA, as well as Sullivan (1990) and Kirkpatrick (1995). One result of this prejudice is the impetus on the part of Latin American *mestizos* to prove that they are, in fact, European, an anxiety that often leads to extreme discrimination against indigenous people.

ceful, egalitarian utopia. Unlike government functionaries and business conglomerates, however, they are not in control of the facts. What is more, they do not seem to realize that their utopias are in conflict with one another, and often cancel each other out, so their efforts are irrelevant and contradictory.⁸

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 violence 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.

Tenorio Trillo claims that European Leftist intellectuals intentionally ignore the important details of the Mexican situation because they complicate the utopian image they would like to construct. If they pay attention to the complex issues,

¿dónde queda la utopía grandota, la lucha de los globalizados contra los globalizadores? ¿No acabaremos hablando de inversión de Constituciones, de acceso a tecnologías, de carreteras, de educación, de poder? ¿Y entonces qué culturas indígenas, qué autenticidad, estaremos protegiendo en contra de la malparida globalización? (2001: 53).

One might interpret that ignorance differently, as an involuntary effect of the new economies and governments themselves. 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. As the *Revista de Occidente* articles suggest, traditional pre-1989 Leftist intellectuals, still focused on the common good, are out of the loop and out of touch with the complex realities of the new economics and the new governing system, just as they are now out of power in the publishing business. 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

⁸ “Ninguno de esos *literati* internacionales discute los acuerdos, habla de los problemas jurídicos de implementación, de la historia de las autonomías indígenas en México, de qué es y cuáles son las culturas, hábitos y costumbres que hay que proteger y por qué, de cómo es compatible el respeto de los derechos tradicionales de las comunidades (derechos indiscutiblemente masculinos) con los de las mujeres indígenas, de cómo los acuerdos solucionarían los problemas de tierras, la deforestación, el agotamiento de los suelos, los conflictos entre protestantes y católicos” (Tenorio Trillo 2001: 41-42).

struggles that are taking place in Spain, the European Union and the United States as well.⁹

The Case of Alfaguara

These complex intersections of politics, gender, (inter)national identities and the printed word play themselves out in the practices of the Spanish-language globalized publishing industry. To take one example, Alfaguara owns branches throughout Spain and Latin America, but the distribution of Spanish and Latin American novels reflects a clear neo-imperial hierarchy. Thus, books accepted by the Central American branch 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 Argentina or in Spain, the largest and richest market. What is more, upon acceptance, that text will not necessarily appear as a publication of Alfaguara itself, but of one of the other subsidiaries of the Santillana group (which, interestingly, includes the Ediciones El País).

Which Latin American texts do Spaniards choose as potential best-sellers in Spain? An analysis of the recent Alfaguara literary prize winners suggests that they choose those 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 *bb* (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:

⁹ Tenorio Trillo says: "Y en tanto en casa la progresía francesa, estadounidense o española, a regañadientes, acepta el juego burgués, exclusionista, imperfecto y mentiroso que son las democracias modernas, en México no vale eso, porque los malos siempre están en el poder" (2001: 43).

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 (*Alfaguara Home Page* 2002).¹⁰

The novel has it all: a literary culture recognized in Spain (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 prizewinners, 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. Alfaguara’s description of these novels also evinces the gender prejudice mentioned earlier, despite the nearly equal division between male (3) and female (2) prize-winners. The work by Sánchez is clearly not as cultured as that of her male colleague: Sánchez “crea un mundo coherente que se desarrolla a través de una cotidianeidad verosímil y una laboriosa y diáfana escritura”, whereas Vicent, “con una prosa nítida y rica en imágenes, [...] cuenta la aventura de una pareja cuyo destino está sometido a su propia pasión y al influjo de los mitos clásicos que se mantienen vivos en su fantasía” (*Alfaguara Home Page* 2002).

In the new globalized publishing industry, Spain simultaneously claims the Spanish-language center for itself, distances itself from any responsibility for the post-colonial struggles still lingering in the Americas, and also claims 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 thus remain a struggle between the center and the periphery, and, in this struggle, they identify themselves with an idealization of the marginalized indigenous population 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 its own image, however, it must erase Spain’s imperial and dictatorial past from the national and international memory, thereby hiding the nation’s past identification with anti-liberal ideologies, as well as its culpability in the post-colonial and neo-colonial woes of Latin America.

¹⁰ I cite these descriptions here because they are part of Alfaguara’s marketing scheme.

Conclusions

In this essay, I have tried to bring together several apparently different issues: the implications of the globalization process for the Spanish publishing business, the crisis of the Spanish –and European– Left in neoliberalism, the perceived feminization of literature, and the reconstruction of *zapatismo* from a European perspective. All of these reflect 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. 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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