

# THE **Spanish** RIVETER

WRITING FROM SPAIN

Edition Twelve, April 2023



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# CHANGING THE TRANSLATION LANDSCAPE FOR MULTILINGUAL SPAIN

by **OLGA CASTRO**

**S**pain has always been multilingual. Yet the way multilingualism has been approached over the years has differed considerably: at times it was ignored and even violently repressed; at others it was embraced and even partially celebrated. Despite this variation, multilingualism remains an incontestable fact in Spain today – almost half of the population lives in a territory where an autochthonous minority language is spoken, according to the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages.

The 1978 Spanish Constitution has arguably been a turning point in recent history, as it granted official status to Basque, Catalan and Galician after the attempted imposition of Castilian monolingualism during Franco's dictatorship (1939–1975). This paved the way for the explicit support for these now official languages and their literary traditions – to a greater or lesser degree – by regional governments with devolved powers regarding culture and language policy. It cannot be ignored, however, that a few other languages (Amazige, Aragonese or Asturian, among others) still lack official recognition today.

Regardless of these efforts at a regional level, it was not until quite recently that the central Spanish government took, somewhat timidly, multilingualism as an inherent characteristic of Spain as a whole, and not just in

relation to officially bilingual territories. In this regard, the participation of Spain as Guest of Honour 2022 at the strategically important Frankfurt Book Fair was seen by the Spanish government as a crucial opportunity to display Spain's multilingualism and diverse literary heritage, leaving behind the monolithic portrait of the country offered three decades earlier, in Spain's first Guest of Honour appearance in 1991. Indeed, 'Bibliodiversity and Linguistic Plurality' was one of the five strategic pillars of the Spanish Guest of Honour 2022 project, Spilling Creativity, highlighting that 'Spain is synonymous with diversity. In the Spanish territory there are a variety of cultures and languages that enrich the literary offer'. A similar message was disseminated in the video campaign #CaminoAFrankfurt (literally, '#OnOurWayToFrankfurt'), which explicitly mentions that 24% of the Spanish literary publishing industry and 25% of the Spanish authors write in languages other than Spanish.

As a translation-studies scholar with expertise in publishing and translation in non-hegemonic cultures, I became interested in how multilingualism may shape Spain's cultural diplomacy strategies, broadly understood as a government's international outreach programme. In other words, given the significant role that literary translation plays in the internationalisation of cultural and publishing markets, I wanted to find out how multilingualism was being branded and promoted internationally to broaden the understanding of Spain's linguistic and literary diversity abroad, not only reaching new audiences but also enabling new trading opportunities, especially with British publishers.

This is precisely the aim of my research project, *Changing the Translation Landscape from Multilingual Spain: Cultural Diplomacy and the UK Publishing Industry*, funded by the University of Warwick Arts and Humanities Impact Fund. More specifically, the project seeks to explore how multilingualism is materialised – and to what extent it is achieved – in recent cultural diplomacy strategies implemented by the Spanish Directorate-General of Books and Promotion of Reading at the Ministry of Culture, my main non-academic partner. My focus is on the internationalisation of the less-

translated literatures of Spain, analysing how literary projects in languages other than Spanish are reflected in initiatives put in place in preparation for, during, and in the aftermath of the Frankfurt Book Fair 2022.

In my previous project, *Stateless Cultures in Translation: the case of 21st-century Basque, Catalan and Galician literature in the UK*, funded by the British Academy (2018–2021), I had examined patterns of creation, circulation and reception of these literatures in English translation between 2000 and 2018, engaging with regional publishers' associations and policy-making institutions, namely the Institut Ramon Llull, Etxepare Institute, Xunta de Galicia and Generalitat Valenciana (the final workshop is available online). I found that foreign publishers interested in applying for grants to translate Basque, Catalan and Galician literature engaged almost exclusively with regional institutions, despite the Spanish Ministry of Culture's explicit inclusion of all official languages in their yearly call for translation grants (for more information, see Castro and Linares 2022)<sup>1</sup>.

Expanding on that previous work, in my current study I have found that the same trend persists up to 2022, not only regarding the annual Ministry of Culture



translation grants scheme, but also when analysing the newly open calls for translation grants introduced in 2019, 2020 and 2021 by the public agency Acción Cultural Española (AC/E), aimed at orchestrating the promotion and internationalisation of Spain's rich and plural artistic legacy. These three calls were part of an ambitious programme to increase the number of literary works from Spain available in English, German, French, Dutch and Italian translation before Frankfurt 2022. The approximately three million euros devoted to these translation support programmes made it possible to sell the translation rights for more than four hundred titles from Spain. With very few exceptions, however, it was mainly books, samples, illustration and anthologies originally published in Spanish that were put forward by foreign publishers and ultimately subsidised by AC/E. Despite the efforts to provide generous grants for the translation of minority languages, unfortunately, there were few Catalan, and even fewer Basque and Galician titles in the online translation rights catalogue, Books from Spain, hosted at the Frankfurt Rights website.

Having identified that more needs to be done to match the mission to increase the number of books from minority Spanish

languages with its practical outcomes, my Changing the Translation Landscape from Multilingual Spain project has a crucial impact and public engagement component. Through a number of activities involving different stakeholders, my aim is three-fold: first, to influence Spanish government translation policy-making so that positive action initiatives are introduced to internationalise the 24% of the literary works published in languages other than Spanish, ultimately allowing government to better operationalise their cultural diplomacy strategy; second, to build capacity in the UK publishing industry, responding to their need to diversify the literatures made available to British readers; and last but not least, to improve British readers' understandings of cultural and linguistic diversity in contemporary multilingual Spain. After all, readers deserve better. Stay tuned for further developments!

Olga Castro

1. Castro, Olga and Laura Linares. 2022. 'Translating the literatures of stateless cultures in Spain: translation grants and institutional support at the Frankfurt Book Fair.' *Perspectives* 30(5), 792-810. Available at <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/0907676X.2021.1987485>

**WEST CAMEL** is a writer, reviewer and editor. He edited *Dalkey Archive's Best European Fiction 2015* and is currently working for Orenda Books. He has written two novels, *Attend* and *Fall*. He is the editor of the *Riveter* magazine and the *#RivetingReviews* for the European Literature Network.

**HARKAITZ CANO** is a Basque poet, translator and writer of short stories, novels, poetry, chronicles and children's and youth literature. He has won the Imajina Ezazu Euskadi award, the Donostia Hiria award and the Ignacio Aldecoa Award. He has won the Euskadi Literature Award twice: in 2005 for *Belarraren ahoa* and in 2012 for *Twist*.

**OLGA CASTRO** is Associate Professor in Translation Studies and Deputy Director of Graduate Studies at the University of Warwick. She is also programme director of the MA Translation and Cultures. Her main research areas include feminist translation studies, women writers in translation, and translation in minoritised and non-hegemonic cultures.

**RAQUEL CATALINA** studied fine arts in Madrid and a master's in illustration in Valencia, where she currently lives. She has participated in several international exhibitions.

**CAMILO JOSÉ CELA** was born in Galicia and during the Spanish Civil War fought on the Nationalist side and briefly held a position as a Francoist censor. His debut novel, published in 1942, was chastised for its immorality, and his novel *The Hive* was banned in Spain. He was awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1989.

**JAVIER CERCAS** is a Spanish writer, professor of Spanish literature and columnist for the newspaper *El País*. He has published twelve works of fiction, for which he has won many awards. His 2001 novel, *Soldados de Salamina*, has been translated into more than thirty languages and won eleven prizes, including The Independent Foreign Fiction Prize.

**RAFAEL CHIRBES** was born near Valencia. He wrote nine novels and received the National Prize for Literature and the Critics Prize for *On the Edge*. He was also a prolific critic and journalist, writing on literature, travel and food. He is considered one of Spain's greatest writers of the twenty-first century.

**JACKY COLLINS** currently teaches Spanish and Latin American Studies at the University of Stirling. Her research, publications and teaching span Spanish cultures, queer popular culture, and international crime fictions. She is a member of the Editorial Board of *Queer Studies in Media and Popular Culture* and is Director of the Newcastle Noir crime-fiction festival.

**MELCIOR COMES** is a Catalan writer. After graduating in law, he published his first novel, *L'aire i el món* in 2003, which won the Ciudad de Elche prize. His next novel, *L'estupor que us espera*, won the Premi Documenta, and his fourth work, *El llibre dels plaers immensos* won the Premi Josep Pla.

**RACHEL CORDASCO** has a PhD in literary studies and founded the website *SFinTranslation.com* in 2016. She regularly writes reviews for *World Literature Today* and *Strange Horizons*, and translates Italian speculative fiction. Her book *Out of This World* was published by the University of Illinois Press.

**ANNA CROWE** is a poet and translator and the author of four poetry collections. She has translated three of Joan Margarit's collections, Anna Aguilar-Amat's *Música i escorbut* and, with Iolanda Pelegrí, an anthology of Catalan poetry. She is co-founder of StAnza, the Scottish international poetry festival.

**JUAN CRUZ** is a Spanish journalist. In 1976 he co-founded *El País* and began to work as a correspondent in London. He was also editor-in-chief of culture, and opinion for the newspaper. In 1972 he wrote his first novel, *Crónica de la nada hecha pedazos*, which won the Premio Benito Pérez Armas. He has written over forty books.

**BERTA DÁVILA** is a Galician poet and novelist. She recently received the Premio Xerais de Novela prize for *Os seres queridos*, which 3TimesRebelPress will publish in 2023 as *Loved Ones*, translated by Jacob Rogers. Dávila runs the independent publishing house Rodolfo e Priscila.

**SIMON DEEFHOLTS** has translated literary works from Spanish into English across a range of genres with his wife, Kathryn Phillips-Miles. Previous publications include translations of *Wolf Moon* by Julio Llamazares, *Inventing Love* by José Ovejero and *Nona's Room* by Cristina Fernández Cubas. For Dedalus they have edited and translated *Take Six: Spanish Women Writers*.

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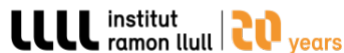
Ana Galvañ | Cover and Illustrations

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THE SPANISH RIVETER, Edition Twelve, April 2023

Produced by  
the European Literature Network for Sounds Right  
Funded by the Acción Cultural Española,  
Embassy of Spain in London, Instituto Cervantes,  
Etxepare Euskal Institutua, Institut Ramon Llull, Xunta de Galicia.

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ISSN 2754-1428 (Print)  
ISSN 2754-1436 (Online)