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Introduction

Literatures of the World and the World of Publishing: An Understudied Relationship

The debate around the concept of *World Literature* has reemerged in tandem with a period of globalization that began in the 1980s, and for the past two decades it has been in a highly charged, critical, and intense phase, even if recent developments suggest a fundamental shift in these dynamics¹. The challenge at the center of this field of scholarship has been to reformulate a concept with a long tradition behind it to account for the profoundly different conditions of contemporary globalization. These reformulations have concerned, on the one hand, the examination of unexplored links and trajectories of literatures between regions that had been traditionally marginalized by the Western perspectives². On the other hand, a fundamental issue for current scholarship has been an abundance of theoretical formulations with programmatic claims about the concept of *World Literature*³ that has been criticized for its remaining lack of critical awareness “to stress the most pressing and most basic material circumstances that determine how literature is made and read” (Brouillette 2016: 93). Even if in global literary studies there have recently been important claims of the fact that “there is no unmediated relationship between the practice of writing and the printed, commodified, and possibly consecrated text” (Helgesson 2016: 24), the specific dimensions of these mediations and their conceptual and material implications

1 See the contributions in Müller/Siskind (2019), who state that “[t]he overwhelming sense of political, economic, institutional and humanitarian crisis that defines the state of the world [. . .] makes it difficult if not impossible to continue to sustain that kind of self-affirming, hubristic culturalist confidence in the political power of world literature as a critico-theoretical frame capable of disrupting the process of neoliberal globalization or the resurgence of nationalistic and racist forms of xenophobia and ethnocentrism, or the disciplinary ability to make sense of the meaning of new kinds of global displacements and dislocations” (1).

2 For one example of this kind of “re-mapping” of World Literature see Müller/Locane/Loy (2018).

3 One of the best overviews about the multiple approaches to the concept is still to be found in D’haen/Damrosch/Kadir (2012).

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remain widely understudied. Current theory formation on *World Literature* has emphasized the importance of circulation processes insofar as, to use David Damrosch's well-known definition of the concept, *World Literature* is understood primarily as "a mode of circulation and reading" (Damrosch 2003: 5). This perception of circulation, one that has been formulated in a similar way by other prominent scholars in the field such as Pascale Casanova (2004) or Franco Moretti (2013), must be viewed both as critical and as insufficient inasmuch as it has been incapable of implementing, on the specific level of analysis, the knowledge that they themselves have formulated with regard to the significance of circulation in global literary fields and the concrete material and immaterial factors operating in these processes.

If it cannot be denied that these studies have highlighted the hierarchic dimension and inequalities of the world-literary system that is "one, and unequal" (Moretti 2000: 56), it is obvious, at the same time, that neither Damrosch's attempt to illuminate these processes by means of nine exemplary models in *What is World Literature?* nor Moretti's concept of *distant reading*, which endeavors to delimit the flow of material by shifting the perspective of inquiry to the level of literary history, ultimately shed much light on the question of how the complex interaction of the multiple material, economic, and literary factors actually functions.

In view of this lack of addressing of the specific processes, institutions, and actors involved in the global circulation of literature, the contributions of this volume aim to pay particular attention to the multiple material dimensions of the global cultural and literary market that can be understood, perhaps today more than ever, as being part of a "creative industry" (Caves 2002)⁴, run by a huge variety of "merchants of culture" (Thompson 2012). From perspectives informed by materialism, sociology, historiography⁵, and digital humanities, the articles of this book consider literature or, to be more precise, *books* as products that have to undergo a series of processes enabling a text to cross borders (or not)⁶ and to be transformed into globally circulating commodities, combining the complex operations of selection and the aggregation of different kinds of value. This does not imply that the (equally controversial) category of "aesthetic" value and the literary text as such is meaningless; however, to acquire

⁴ Note that we do not use this term in a presumably ideological-critical sense the way Adorno did but as a descriptive category departing from the notion that there does not exist virtually any cultural artefact outside the logic of the capitalist system.

⁵ This methodological approach harks back on groundbreaking studies on the materiality and sociology of the book as provided by Roger Chartier (1987) or Donald McKenzie (1999).

⁶ Sapiro (2016) mentions a matrix of political, economic, social and cultural factors that come into play at the moment of determining the potential of circulation of a literary work.

an effective “life” as *literature* – and particularly as and in *world literature* – a shift of attention to the particular instances that carry out – on a very basic, concrete, and therefore crucial level – these kind of value-creating operations is the point of departure for most of the contributions of this volume. By bringing the different stages, operational processes, and agents in a literary text’s journey from “writing” to publishing at local and global levels into focus, the articles also aim to overcome (at least to a certain degree) the widespread idea in the humanities that a “creative product’s success can seldom be explained even ex post” (Caves 2002: 3).

Latin America as a Paradigmatic Case for Analyzing Processes of *World Literature*

This book trains its vision of processes of global publishing and *World Literature* on the specific case of Latin American literature as Latin America represents, paradigmatically, the problems and prospects of a global perspective on cultural processes, and on literary circulation in particular. This paradigmatic function stems from several factors: first, the construction of Latin America – more than any other region of the world – as a geographic, cultural, and political space has taken place against the backdrop of Western processes of projection and designation. Based on this perspective, the idea that *World Literature* always implies the commodification of certain cultural imaginaries in turn must pose the question as to what role past and present images of Latin America play in the global reception and marketing of its literatures⁷. Second, compared with the substantially more heterogeneous cultural spaces of, for instance, Eastern Europe, Asia, and Africa, Latin America provides an exemplary object of research due to its linguistic, historical, and cultural similitude and consistency. This makes it possible to investigate in an exemplary way the processes by which *World Literature* is constructed. Further, the temporal focus of the book between the so-called *boom* of Latin American Literature and the present allows for a relatively exact exposition of the intensified global reception after 1959 in all of its stages⁸, which likewise

⁷ On this aspect see the contributions in Sánchez Prado (2006) and in Müller/Gras (2015); for a discussion on the “invention” of the idea of Latin American Literature see also Guerrero/Locane/Loy/Müller (2020).

⁸ For a panoramic view of the changes and challenges for Latin America and its literatures, see the recent studies by Sánchez Prado (2018), Guerrero (2018), and Locane (2019). How these global receptions of Latin American literature worked in a specific case (that of Gabriel García Márquez) is shown in the recent study by Santana-Acuña (2020).

contributes to the research object's unique capacity to be operationalized in a global context. And third, in the context of the acceleration phase of globalization that began in the 1980s, the example of Latin America is an excellent one for observing the processes of dynamization in the marketing of culture and literature; for example, global media concerns on the one hand, and the emergent countermovement of small independent publishers on the other⁹. An examination of the tensions between these poles promises heuristic potential for understanding transformations of the global market of culture against the backdrop of a worldwide framework of reception which is to no small extent informed by new media and digitalization¹⁰.

The Structure of the Book

Among the multiple factors of mediation within the publishing business of Latin American (World) Literature, the following are addressed in the different chapters of this book:

- **World Editors and Latin America:** Publishing houses remain the decisive institutional players on which the rest of the actors within the book market depend. Their editorial strategies, programs, and policies decide on processes of selection, translation, and circulation, while for their part simultaneously depending on global and local economic trends and developments. Accordingly, contributions to this chapter deal with different types of publishers' transnational agendas, ranging from the historical "invention" of an idea as "Latin American Literature" to contemporary trends and the recent and rising scene of small, independent, and alternative publishers in Latin America, the United States, and Spain.
- **The Politics of Translation and Literary Archives:** More than any other subject in current debates on global literary phenomena, translation as the *conditio sine qua non* of *World Literature* has been the center of attention¹¹.

⁹ For a general perspective of the specific role of publishers in Latin America see the recent study by de Diego (2019), and on the role of independent Latin American publishers see Gallego Cuiñas/Martínez (2017).

¹⁰ See once again the contributions in Guerrero/Locane/Loy/Müller (2020). Recent developments of the digital era are analyzed by Gainza (2018). For the importance of book fairs in this context see the contributions in Bosshard/García Naharro (2019).

¹¹ See, for instance, Venuti (2012).

However, the focus on rather theoretical questions of (un-)translatability¹² has often ignored the concrete “politics of translation”: these concern aspects such as public translation programs (especially important for Latin America), the role of specific translators as key-figures of processes of reception, and broader politico-ideological factors and networks. The material (re)resources of literary archives play a specific role in this context of reconstructing politics of translation and circulation and will be equally addressed by the contributions of this chapter.

- **Gatekeepers and Mediators:** Beyond the importance of publishers, the influence of so-called “gatekeepers” (Marling 2016) represents a research field of growing importance: literary agents, book festivals, and fairs – as in Frankfurt or, for Latin America, in Guadalajara – as well as the effects of literary prizes and critics as part of a global “economy of prestige” (English 2008) are crucial factors of mediation within international book markets whose concrete effects on the circulation of *World Literature* remain widely understudied and are investigated by this chapter’s contributions.
- **(World) Literature in the Digital Age:** This chapter gives credit to the rise of the Digital Humanities and the fundamental fact that “the movement of literary and cultural archives out of the vaults of rare-book rooms and into the public sphere of the World Wide Web impacts on the scholarly view of the ontology and phenomenology of literature” (Beebee 2012: 303). Digital Humanities provide traditional hermeneutics and literary studies (not only) on *World Literature* with innovative methodologies whose relevance and outreach have only scantily been discussed. Beyond the dimensions of digital tools for textual analysis, a key question addressed by the articles of this chapter is the exploration of new scenarios for *World Literature* and its canons in the light of changing uses of culture – and particularly literature – in the digital age.
- **Editing World Literature:** By integrating the transcription of two roundtables with important representatives of the publishing world in Europe and Latin America, the book’s final section allows for an unique insight into current problems and processes of global book markets as judged from the real “command bridges” of World Literature.

The articles gathered here are the outcome of a major international conference at Schloss Herrenhausen (Hannover/Germany) in July 2019 bringing together over

¹² See Apter (2013); a contrary hypothesis on translatability as a core-feature of global texts is presented by Walkowitz (2015).

30 scholars of Latin American literature, book studies, and digital humanities, as well as a dozen of editors, translators, literary agents, and other decision makers from the international book market. The conference was based on the cooperation MAP-LAT, established in 2017, between two major European research projects on global book markets and Latin American literatures: the Consolidator Grant of the European Research Council (ERC) “Reading Global. Constructions of World Literature and Latin America” at University of Cologne, and the research network “Médiation éditoriale, diffusion et traduction de la littérature latino-américaine en France, 1950–2000” at the École Normale Supérieure (ENS) in Paris. We would like to express our gratitude, in particular to the Volkswagen Foundation for their generous funding of the Herrenhausen Symposium and an important part of this publication. We would like to thank as well the European Research Council (ERC) for their additional financial support, and to Valeska Díaz for her support during the preparation of our symposium and the final corrections. Finally, we would like to thank Catherine Bijur and Jorge Vitón for correcting this volume.

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