

Title: Transatlantic Literary Networks during the Cold War: Emir Rodríguez Monegal, Reader for Gallimard¹

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Abstract: This paper addresses the issue of transatlantic networks and the circulation of literary paradigms between Latin America and Europe. I bring into focus a significant actor from the time of the well-known and still controversial “boom” of Latin American narrative, within the context of the Cold War (Franco 2002, Sorensen 2007, Alburquerque 2010). This was a key moment in the internationalization of Latin American writers, as José Donoso underlined in *Historia personal del ‘boom’* (1972, 1983). Donoso highlighted some names that served as nodes, such as Carlos Fuentes, who played an important role, thanks to his intersecting networks and extraordinarily skillful and natural handling of informal networks (Gras 2015). Among these names that had a specific weight in the process of international recognition of the “boom”, Donoso also highlights the figure of the Uruguayan critic Emir Rodríguez Monegal (1921–1985), to whom I will devote these pages. I will study the very specific and even anecdotal reading reports that Rodríguez Monegal wrote for the prestigious French publishing house Gallimard over a single year, 1967. I will also analyze the relative influence of a recognized critic in the configuration of a publisher’s catalog. This exemplifies his ability to direct, in some way, the attention of the French public to a handful of Latin American writers, based on his suggestions and proposals for translation. At the same time, it shows the challenges a gatekeeper (Marling 2016) had to endure, far from any idealization. In doing this, I also contribute to an understanding of the decision-making mechanisms of a publisher of the magnitude of Gallimard, which led to undertaking (or not) an expensive and risky translation process.

Keywords: *Boom* writers, Emir Rodríguez Monegal, circulation of Latin American literature, cultural gatekeepers, Gallimard.

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The year 1967 was a decisive moment in the projection of the “boom” writers, since it was the year in which *Cien años de soledad* by Gabriel García Márquez was published, and Miguel Ángel Asturias received the Nobel Prize for Literature. It was a year of maximum international diffusion of the Latin American narrative and, also, an instant of gaining important attention from major publishing houses around the world.

At that time, there was a debate within this emerging transnational literary field about what should be considered Latin American narrative. Opinion was divided between opposite ends of a continuum: the local one (supposedly isolated from the rest of the world, and as something from the past, which had to be overcome) and the global one (definitely connected to the world, as something specific to the present and, above all, leading to the future and to modernity²). An example of this discussion, multiplied across various international forums, including congresses and articles of the time, was the unfortunate but significant conflict between José María Arguedas and Julio Cortázar, initiated by the Argentinian in the magazine *Casa de las Américas*, n. 45, on May 10, 1967, and continued even after the suicide of Arguedas, in the pages of his posthumous work, *El zorro de arriba y el zorro de abajo* (1971). Others intervened in the controversy, for or against each side; for example, Vargas Llosa entered with his famous article published in *Marcha*, on January 10, 1969, “Novela primitiva y novela de creación en América Latina³”. As we will see, Emir Rodríguez Monegal's proposals regarding what he advised to translate (or not) into French for publication in the Gallimard catalogue revolved around this same theoretical and critical axis⁴.

Finally, and no less importantly, we must remember the politics of the time. It was the middle of the Cold War, and the world was divided into blocks either side of the Iron Curtain. Latin America was a very relevant front in this struggle, in particular after the Cuban revolution in 1959, and especially after its pro-Soviet turn in 1962. Confrontation within the cultural domain escalated during the sixties in the region, in parallel to the growing recognition of Latin American cultural expressions over the world, and the popularization of the

² As Verónica Cortínez (1996) put it, analyzing *Historia personal del ‘boom’*, it was an issue between “la parroquia” (the parish) and “el universo” (the universe), metaphorically.

³ It was first published in English, as “Primitives and Creators”, in *The Times Literary Supplement* (Nov. 14 1968, 1287-88). Vargas Llosa went on with this controversy decades after, in *La utopía arcaica. José María Arguedas y las ficciones del indigenismo* (1996). See Bendahan 2006 and Moraña 2013, among others.

⁴ As Casanova says: “Translation is therefore an essential measure of the scale and effectiveness of consecration, for it is terms of the number of candidates for legitimacy and of the actual extent of autonomous consecration (via translation, commentary, critical notice, prizes) that the properly literary credit of a capital is reckoned” (2004: 167).

Boom writers in Europe and beyond. This is not the place to examine the conflicts that emerged in the literary networks between the supporters of the Cuban revolution, and those that -particularly in the second half of the decade-, criticized how the Cuban revolution became trapped in the context of the Cold War by the Soviet side. Actually, there were also many attempts at that time among literary activists to pursue a third way, paralleling multiple initiatives that occurred in the political and ideological domain of the region (McQuade 1992, 1993, and Jannello 2013).

In this context, the opponents frequently demanded the commitment of the intellectual, without half measures or nuances, in international debates that often provoked the situation to its limits. This is what happened, for example, to Carlos Fuentes and Pablo Neruda, during the famous Pen-Club meeting in New York in June 1966, just because of their visit to the USA, despite their well-known support of the Cuban revolution in those years⁵. The tension intensified for those who began to distance themselves from the revolutionary process or who hardly dared to criticize it, in search of reforms. It was in this context that Emir Rodríguez Monegal (Melo, Uruguay, 1921-New Haven, USA, 1985) assumed the leadership of the magazine *Mundo Nuevo* in Paris, throughout twenty-five issues, a task he carried out with illusion, ingenuity, difficulties and conflicts, between July 1966 and July 1968. An episode that has already been widely studied by specialists such as Mudrovic (1997), Gilman (2003), and Alburquerque (2010), among many others (Franco 2002, Sorensen 2007, Rojas 2010, Fonet 2013...).

Before that, as is well known, Rodríguez Monegal⁶ directed the "Literarias" section of the important Uruguayan weekly *Marcha* between 1945 and 1959. Immediately after, his role was filled by Ángel Rama (Montevideo, 1926-Madrid, 1983), from 1959 to 1968, as analyzed by Pablo Rocca in "La idea de América Latina y su historia literaria", in the collective volume compiled by Mabel Moraña (2003: 313-338) about the indisputable role of *Marcha*. This article shows

⁵ A scandal that involved Emir Rodríguez Monegal, and also other writers who positioned themselves in support of Fuentes and Neruda, such as Vargas Llosa. See "El P.E.N. Club contra la Guerra Fría" (1966-85-90).

⁶ It is still necessary to fill out his character, even though there are already some remarkable biographical approaches (Block de Behar 2003: I-XCI). It is regrettable that he began to write his memoir only after falling terminally ill. He was able to finish only the first volume, on his childhood between Uruguay and Brazil, which appeared posthumously as *Las formas de la memoria. I. Los magos* (1989), and begin the second one, on his formative years in the weekly *Marcha*, with the meaningful title of *El taller de Saturno* [*Saturn's Workshop*], as Suzanne Jill Levine indicated in her obituary and tribute to Rodríguez Monegal for *Jaque* (1986: 38). The fourth of the seven planned volumes had to do with his experiences at *Mundo Nuevo*; and yet another planned one was about his academic life in the USA. Anyway, as Levine pointed out, more important than his years at the University of Yale, was the dynamic role he had, not as a mere academic but as "an *homme de lettres*, a writer at the level of the novelists and poets and essayists to whom he devoted his intelligence and his art of writing" (38).

how, beyond a confrontation between two "cultural leaders" to control center stage of the Latin American transnational literary field, two opposed models existed: that of Rodríguez Monegal, much more inclined to "the core aesthetic", and that of Ángel Rama, more focused on the idea of the commitment of the intellectual, with figures such as Sartre and Camus in mind, on the one hand, but also with a vindication of Latin American specificities, linked to the Cuban political agenda⁷, as a guide to build a "literary system" of its own.

Rodríguez Monegal had a well-known confrontation with Ángel Rama in the orbit of *Casa de las Américas* (Mudrovic 1997, Gilman 2003, Alburquerque 2010, Morejón 2017), when the former went on to direct the magazine *Mundo Nuevo* (1966–1968) in July 1966 and was accused of being in the pay of the CIA⁸. In its first issue, the magazine clearly defended its essentialist spirit:

The purpose of *Mundo Nuevo* is to insert Latin American culture in a context that is both international and current, that allows us to hear the almost, always, inaudible or scattered voices of an entire continent, which establishes a dialogue that overcomes the known limitations of nationalisms, (national or international) political parties, and to a greater or lesser degree literary and artistic chapels. *Mundo Nuevo* will not submit to the rules of an anachronistic game that has sought to reduce all Latin American culture to the opposition of irreconcilable sides and that has prevented the fruitful circulation of ideas and opposing views. *Mundo Nuevo* will establish its own rules of the game, based on respect for the opinion of others and the reasoned foundation of its own; in the concrete investigation and with reliable data of the Latin American reality, a still unprecedented subject; in passionate adherence to everything that is really creative in Latin America⁹. (*Mundo Nuevo* (París) (1): 4).

During those years, Rodríguez Monegal published two literary biographies (*El viajero inmóvil: Introducción a Pablo Neruda*, 1966, and *Genio y figura de Horacio Quiroga*, 1967), in addition to preparing the interviews included in *El arte de narrar*¹⁰ (1968) and, probably,

⁷ Even though he began to change his mind and distance himself from the Cuban derive before his tragic death, in an air crash in 1983.

⁸ Like the English journal *Encounter*, *Mundo Nuevo* was financed by the Ford Foundation, which led to accusations of this being supported by the CIA, and its Congress for the Freedom of Culture. Rama launched the accusation in the magazine *Marcha* (6/5/1966), before Rodríguez Monegal took over the management of *Mundo Nuevo*, in articles such as "El mecenazgo de la CIA", "El amo y el servidor", "Los intelectuales en la época desarrollista" and "Las fachadas culturales".

⁹ All the quotes in this text, originally either in Spanish or in French, have been translated by the author of this article.

¹⁰ Which he dedicates "For the Huitzilobo, with whom this started"; that is, for Carlos Fuentes, who was, probably, the first writer to be interviewed for the volume, and with whom, maybe, the idea of this book began. He was also one of the first writers in Latin America to be aware of the change of the literary paradigm, who had begun

some of the articles that would integrate later on the chapters of his essay *El boom de la literatura latinoamericana* (1972). At the same time, in part because of, his position as director of *Mundo Nuevo* and his residence in Paris, he also served as a reader for the Gallimard publishing house (Assouline 1984, Cerisier and Fouché 2011), recommending or rejecting proposals for the publication of works by Latin American authors, due to the mediation of Carlos Fuentes, since November 1966. However, there were other actors at stake, such as literary agents and also the literary directors of the publishing houses, responsible for the different collections or for the Spanish -or the Spanish American- domain. In Gallimard, the Spanish writer Juan Goytisolo¹¹ had played, in this sense, an important role; but, precisely in those years, Ugné Karvelis, very active in her political commitment to the Cuban revolution, was starting to be in charge and make the final decisions for the Spanish department, while, at the same time, was beginning a relationship with Cortázar.

To work as a reader for Gallimard was not exactly an honorific privilege—there was remuneration¹²—, but it also acknowledged Rodríguez Monegal's value as a critic, and allowed him to intervene in decisions regarding the translation, circulation and dissemination of Latin American authors—above all, from the Southern Cone, that is, Uruguay and Argentina, but not only—in the French market. This proved the impact of one of the most important publishing houses in a city that was still capital of the world republic of letters¹³, even though Barcelona was emerging as an important platform for Spanish American writers (Santana 2000, Gras 2000, Dravasa 2005). In this sense, as pointed out by the editor himself, Claude Gallimard, in a letter to Michel Polac a few years later (March 27, 1969), publication in French not only represented intellectual prestige; it could also serve as a springboard to publication in other languages, in countries with less permeability to English at that time, such as those of the Eastern Bloc, or especially the Scandinavian countries—insinuating the specific weight regarding the potential winners of the Nobel prize¹⁴:

to publish already at the end of the 1950s and who wrote an important essay on this topic, *La nueva novela hispanoamericana* (1969), which shares many points of view with Rodríguez Monegal.

¹¹ Even though he came from Spain, had very good connections among the Latin American writers, was part of the transatlantic literary network, and was considered as “one of us” by Spanish American colleague writers, such as Carlos Fuentes, who included him in his essay *La nueva novela hispanoamericana* (1969: 78-84).

¹² He received 40 F for each report (not when the book was excessively long, as in the case of *José Trigo*, when he received 60 F, as it can be seen in an invoice from 3/29/67).

¹³ In words of Casanova (2004: 166): “The recent recognition of major writers such as (...) Carlos Fuentes (a Mexican), Mario Vargas Llosa (a Peruvian), Gabriel García Márquez (a Colombian), Julio Cortázar (an Argentinian) (...) testifies to the continuing power of consecration enjoyed by the Paris authorities”.

¹⁴ In this sense, Casanova also underlined: “(...) the [Nobel] prizes awarded to Faulkner, Hemingway, Asturias, and García Márquez, all of whom were first discovered and celebrated in France” (2004: 153).

It is certain that the French translations of Latin American authors nowadays serve as a working tool for the decisions of the Scandinavian publishers and of many Eastern European countries, sometimes even in Germany. A parallel and important aspect of this question is the intellectual prestige that publication in France represents for a certain number of writers. This prestige serves as a springboard for publication in other foreign countries (cit. Sapiro, "À l'international" 137).

It should also be noted that, during this period, there was some questioning about the survival of the collection "La Croix du Sud" (1951-1970), which Roger Caillois founded as a platform to make Latin American authors known -after his long stay in Argentina¹⁵ and his contacts with Victoria Ocampo and the intellectuals around the magazine she founded, *Sur*. Writers like Carlos Fuentes expressed discomfort over the possibility of being included in that Gallimard collection, because they considered it exoticizing and reductionist, a sort of *ghetto* (Louis, 2013: 80). Although it continued to function until 1970, the truth is that, by then, the Latin American authors were moving into the catalogue of the collection "Du monde entier", which showed, precisely, the desire for worldwide circulation, without geographical labels or limits¹⁶.

Between November 1966 and December 1967, Rodríguez Monegal sent reader's reports, at a rate of two or three, or even four or five, each month¹⁷. On eighteen occasions—that is, almost half the

¹⁵ For more information, about the origin and the evolution of this collection, see Bastide 1958, Fell 1992, Villegas 1992, Louis 2013 and Guerrero 2004, 2018. All agree in pointing out the exoticizing image of Latin America -as a whole- for the French, and the European, readership, in general. Louis recalls the simmetry between this collection and the magazine *Lettres Françaises* (1944-1945), founded by Caillois during his stay in Buenos Aires. Guerrero (2004: 245) states that Croix du Sud was "un auténtico 'trampolín' para la literatura latinoamericana en Francia. Es más, fue un trampolín que se adelantó y, en más de un sentido, preparó el boom de los años setenta".

¹⁶ In the nineties, the Cuban writer and editor Severo Sarduy, who was then working at Gallimard, after a long and successful career at Seuil, rebooted Caillois' idea, and created "La Nouvelle Croix du Sud" (1991-1995).

¹⁷ Even though this article is dealing with thirty-seven reports, there are not taken into account other items referred in the correspondence, also mostly rated, which were not among the copies in the consulted file (see *Emir Rodríguez Monegal Papers* (C0652), Box 6, File 4). The most represented countries belonged to the Rio de la Plata, Argentina and Uruguay: first, Argentina, with thirteen books by eleven different authors; second, Uruguay (Rodríguez Monegal's homeland), with seven books by three different writers. Third, Cuba and Mexico, with three books by three different writers each: among the Cuban writers, one was in exile (Guillermo Cabrera Infante), one in "insile" (José Lezama Lima), and yet another could be considered part of the system (Alejo Carpentier); among the Mexican writers, there were not consecrated figures, only young creators who were experimenting, in different ways, with language: Luis Spota, Fernando del Paso and Homero Aridjis. In fourth place, Paraguay was represented by two books and two different writers. In the fifth position, Perú and Chile, with two books by just one writer; and, in the end, Nicaragua, El Salvador, Guatemala, Spain and Portugal, with just one proposal each.

time—he rejected publication outright, while in eight others he questioned the possible interest on the part of the French public. His opinions were mathematically sustained, since he graded the books, attending to their “translationability”, going from 1 to 4, being 4 the worst grade. He supported, with greater or lesser enthusiasm, the translation of only eleven works; that is, more or less, one third of the proposals. Of these, only eight¹⁸ were ultimately published, endorsed - to a certain extent- by the recommendation of Rodríguez Monegal:

- 1) In 1968, *Hijo de Hombre* (1960) by Augusto Roa Bastos¹⁹ would appear [*Le feu et la lèpre*, translated by Jean-Francis Reille] in “La Croix du Sud”;
- 2) Also in 1968, *Zona sagrada* (1967) by Carlos Fuentes was published as *Zone sacrée* in “Du monde entier”, translated by Jean-Claude Andro;
- 3) A year after, *Una luz muy lejana* (1966) by Daniel Moyano²⁰ would be published as *Une lumière très lointaine* (1969), translated also by Jean-Francis Reille and in “La Croix du Sud”;

¹⁸ *Strictu sensu*, only six works (by Fuentes, from Mexico -whose *La region más transparente* (1958)/ *Le plus limpide région* (1964) and *La muerte de Artemio Cruz* (1962)/ *La mort d'Artemio Cruz* (1966) had been translated by Robert Marrast and already published by Gallimard-; by Moyano, from Argentina; by Cabrera Infante, from Cuba; by Aridjis, from Mexico; by Lispector, from Brazil; and by Néstor Sánchez, from Argentina), which means just over 15 percent of the supported proposals.

¹⁹ Rodríguez Monegal wrote a report on *El baldío*, which he found uneven, and suggested an anthology of short stories, combining material from another volumen of short stories, *El trueno entre las hojas*. Nevertheless, he considered Roa Bastos “the most important novelist in Paraguay” (24/5/67-25/9/67). A similar case can be found in the report on *Tierras de la memoria* by Felisberto Hernández (14/12/66), a very well-known Uruguayan writer, with significative connections to the French literature, because of his friendship with the French-Uruguayan author Jules Supervielle: “If I do not recommend without reserve the translation of this story, which is too short, it is because I think it would be better to collect in a single volume this one and other stories of Hernández”. He also proposed to mix this with other texts of his, linked by memories, such as *Por los tiempos de Clemente Colling* (1942) and *El caballo perdido* (1943), and other stories, as a strategy to introduce his work, in a broader way, to the French public.

²⁰ Even though Rodríguez Monegal wrote a negative report (23/1/67-21/2/67) on his collection of short stories *Artistas de variedades* (1960), because he judged it still in formation, but recognized his interest and value, highlighted his Kafkian worldview, and added: “I do not recommend the book but I am sure that the name of the author is to remember”. In fact, he sent two more positive reports (3/2/67), on *La lombriz* (1964) (1 ¼) and, precisely, *Una luz muy lejana* (1966) (1), which, unfortunately, were not among the copies consulted for this article. It can be added that another young Argentinian author, Juan José Hernández, “one of the most talented writers of the new generation”, according to the Uruguayan critic, was not so lucky, and despite the poetic qualities of his prose -as Rodríguez Monegal pointed out in his report (9/26/67-10/13/67)-, he didn't get the chance to be published in Gallimard.

4) *Tres Tristes Tigres* [*Trois tristes tigres*] (1967) by Guillermo Cabrera Infante²¹ (translated by Albert Bensoussan, in "Du monde entier", in 1970);

5) *Perséfone* (1967) by Homero Aridjis²² (to be published as *Persephone* in "Du monde entier", in Irma Sayol's version, in 1970);

6) *Todas la sangres* [*Tous sangs mêlés*] (1964) by José María Arguedas²³ (in translation by Jean-Francis Reille, also that year, in "Du monde entier", despite the reluctance of Rodríguez Monegal, who preferred *El Sexto*, a work that the critic considered weak as a literary work -more a testimony or a document-, but moving and the most important of all his production);

²¹ In the report (5/24/67-6/23/67), Rodríguez Monegal indicated: "This novel obtained the Biblioteca Breve Prize 1964 of Seix-Barral, Barcelona, under the title of *Vista del amanecer en el trópico*. The Spanish censorship rejected several versions. The novel could only be published now, after the relative liberalization of censorship. (...) [It is a] rich book overflowing the frames of normal storytelling, a book by a writer who has a very acute sensitivity, a natural gift for storytelling and a mood that is in the vein of Lewis Carroll and James Joyce. I consider it one of the most important novels by the young Latin American literature and enthusiastically recommend it to you". Cabrera Infante was also interviewed in *El arte de narrar* (1968: 49-81) and Rodríguez Monegal selected part of *Tres tristes tigres/Three Trapped Tigers*, translated by Suzanne Jill Levine and Donald Gardner, for the second volume of his useful *The Borzoi Anthology* (1977: 901-927), focusing on "(...) a purely verbal concept of narrative, an appetite for language in its infinite metamorphoses (...)" (901).

²² The report (27/2/67-14/4/67) states: "*Persefone* is a very original and very successful book by one of the most important young poets in Mexico. (...) I consider it one of the most important Latin American books I have read for a long time and I highly recommend the translation. The only great difficulty is to find a translator who is himself a poet because the book is written with great sensitivity for each word and the rhythm of each line. But if you find one, I'm sure *Persefone* will be a success." Rodríguez Monegal will interview the author in *El arte de narrar* (1968: 11-20), and include five of his poems in *The Borzoi Anthology* (1977: 855-7).

²³ This time, Rodríguez Monegal was supporting the author, but not this precise novel, in his report (5/24/67-9/25/67): "This is the author's most ambitious and longest novel. (...) This is a very complete picture of the economic, social and political exploitation of Indians, poor whites and even the rich in Peru. The political intention of the author is very explicit but does not distort his vision of a complex reality that he knows very deeply. The characters are not divided into good and bad, according to the sterile formula of socialist realism (...) But his vision as a novelist is weaker than his instinct as an anthropologist. As a novel, *Todas las sangres* is very long, rather heavy and sometimes very naive. A sentimentality that tries to pass for poetry hides many pages. The dialogues of the whites are incredibly stiff. Uneven, painfully written in some places, the book imposes itself all the same by the quality of the testimony and the sincerity of the author. I find it frankly inferior to *Los ríos profundos*, which you have already translated, and less successful than *El Sexto* (see previous report). That's why I do not advise you [to pursue] its translation".

7) Also in 1970, *A maçã no escuro* [*Le bâtisseur de ruines*] (1956) by Clarice Lispector²⁴ (translated by Violante do Canto, in "Du monde entier");

8) a few years later, *Nosotros dos* [*Nous deux*] (1966) by Néstor Sánchez²⁵ (translated into French by Albert Bensoussan in 1974, despite the doubts of the Uruguayan critic), which would be followed, in 1975, by *Cómico de la Lengua* [*Pitre de la langue*] (1973) by the same author; both in "Du monde entier".

Interestingly, Monegal also reported on Alejo Carpentier's *El reino de este mundo*²⁶ (1949), which had already been published as

²⁴ One should not forget that the critic had spent part of his youth in Brazil, and always supported and admired Brazilian literature. He sent two other reports on Lispector's works: *Laços de família* (1960) (1 ¼) and *A paixão segundo G. H.* (1964) (1), which were not so lucky. And he wrote evaluations on three novels by the Brazilian writer Osman Lins, rated just with a 2, who was translated into French some years later, by Maryvonne Lapouge, and appeared in Denoël: *Retable de sainte Joana Carolina* (1971) and *Avalovara* (1975), both in "Les lettres nouvelles". But finally, in 1980, *La reine des prisons de Grèce* was published in Gallimard. In this sense, if "gatekeepers acquire, develop, and then exploit a double cultural competence, a mastery of two sets of cultural information" (Marling, 2016: 5), Rodríguez Monegal could add a third one, because of his knowledge of Portuguese.

²⁵ In his report on *Nosotros dos* (9/26/67-10/13/67), Rodríguez Monegal pointed out: "It is the first novel of its author and already one discovers its ambition: to tell a story not only in its anecdotic expression (the plot, the characters, etc.) but rather in its linguistic reality, in its inner rhythm (...) The art of Sánchez is due to music and especially to tango music (...). The book is a bit difficult for the hedonic reader; it is at the same time a very successful book in the presentation of a certain Argentinean atmosphere and 'true' characters. Sánchez is considered today as one of the most talented young Argentinean novelists and *Nosotros dos* found great success. I wonder if its translation will have the same interest for a foreign and quite sophisticated public in terms of technical innovations like the French public. That's why I recommend the translation but with some reservations". Instead, Rodríguez Monegal preferred another of his works, *Siberia Blues* (9/26/67-10/13/67): "The author's second novel, *Siberia Blues*, is much more experimental and also much more difficult to follow. (...) The story is very complete. As its title indicates, it's music and especially blues that Sánchez was inspired by for a novel whose structure is never linear. All the times are mixed up, sometimes in the same sentence, and it is only with the most diligent attention that we manage to separate and identify the different chronological threads that the author has deliberately scrambled. In this novel what is important is not the story, quite banal elsewhere, but the recreation of a certain atmosphere of twenty years ago and a group of people deeply linked by a masculine friendship. I find this novel very exciting and at the same time very difficult for the reader. If I recommend its translation without reservations, it is because it seems to me that Sánchez is one of the most talented and imaginative young Argentinian novelists of today, a man to follow very closely." It must be said, that, in this case, the extra support of Julio Cortázar could have been decisive because he wrote directly to Claude Gallimard to recommend Néstor Sánchez's work, as can be read in one of the documents in the Gallimard site ("Les lettres argentines à la NRF"): "If I allow myself to send you these lines, it is driven by a double feeling of duty: towards a writer whom I hold in very high esteem and towards you, my editor, and your publishing house for which I have as much admiration as esteem" (11/30/1972).

²⁶ In his report on *El reino de este mundo* (4/14/67-4/20/67), Rodríguez Monegal emphasized the French education from which his "lucid and geometric" baroque

Le royaume de ce monde in "Du monde entier", in translation by René L.-F. Durand in 1954²⁷. This means that, probably, some times, the titles were proposed directly by the critic, not by the publishing house, and, in this sense, then, his role was more similar to that of a scout than to a classic reader; but, in other cases, he seems to carry out an order. On the other hand, *Juntacadáveres* [*Ramassevioques*] (1964) by Juan Carlos Onetti²⁸ did not get translated, despite his more than praiseworthy words and his obvious strategy of connecting his work with that of William Faulkner, one of the American authors that Gallimard was prouder of having translated:

It is the first (in time) among the novelists from the Rio de la Plata to create a truly urban and modern narrative style, the first to present the reality of these countries with a really deep vision and to be able to identify a mythology. (...) Written with a complete mastery of the language, this novel, which follows its precedents, can nevertheless be published independently. I consider it one of Onetti's masterpieces and highly recommend it to you.

*) Santa María is like the little Jefferson of this Uruguayan Faulkner. (5/24/67-6/23/67)

He did the same, very vividly, and also unsuccessfully, with *El Alhajadito* (1961) by Miguel Ángel Asturias, regarding him already as a classic, just a few weeks before the Guatemalan author won the Nobel Prize. Rodríguez Monegal considered the book to be one of the most accomplished from a writer who had already won acclaim as author of the quintessential contemporary Latin American novel, together with a very poetic language.

style seemed to derive and considered the novel as one of his three masterpieces, along with *Los pasos perdidos* (1953) y *El siglo de las luces* (1962), so he insisted on its translation, taking into account, however, the need to find "a really creative translator" who could do him justice and "give in French all the flavor of the Spanish original": "*El reino de este mundo* (...) deserve the success he has already had in Latin America. Due to the subject and the freshness of the story, for the average French reader it is one of the most accessible Latin American novels. I strongly recommend the translation". In *The Borzoi Anthology* (1977: 517-529), the Uruguayan critic selected "El viaje a la semilla"/"Journey Back to the Source" as the story to represent his style to the American reader.

²⁷ At that point, three other works by Carpentier had already been published at Gallimard, in La Croix du Sud, translated also by René L.-F. Durand: *Los pasos perdidos/Le partage des eaux*, in 1955, *El acoso* (1956)/*Chasse à l'homme*, in 1958, and *El siglo de las luces/Le siècle des lumières*, in 1962, even a few months before it was released in Spanish. Precisely, around this last novel, Rodríguez Monegal and Rama maintained a controversy in 1964, since both interpreted the story, on the French revolution, as a mirror of the present, of the Cuban revolution, but from two opposite points of view (Rocca 2004).

²⁸ It did not appear in French until 1986, in "Du monde entier", through the efforts of Albert Bensoussan. Rodríguez Monegal expressed his admiration to the writer also in *The Borzoi Anthology* (1977: 536-576), where he selected two of his emblematic short stories ("Jacob and the Other" and "A Dream Come True"), which became one of the longest parts of the volume.

He also recommended "warmly" the translation of *Paradiso* (1966) by José Lezama Lima, because of his poetic language, once more, which he considered "more profoundly original" than that of Neruda or Nicolás Guillén, despite being less known. In this sense, the Cuban writer's book represented one of the masterpieces of the "novel of language", and Rodríguez Monegal compared his style to Proust, Miller and Joyce:

For Lezama, language is never something to be treated in a conventional way. He's always inventing words or rehearsing new combinations. His descriptions, his metaphors, his imitations are all provocations for the reader. (...) with such unexpected poetry, nothing vulgar is involved. The most direct and shocking facts and things are metamorphosed by a bliss of language and a poetic invention that cannot be par today in the Spanish language. (...) I believe that Lezama Lima has managed to give his novel a very Cuban accent through the creation of language and the use of a very poetic realism (14/12/66).

However, it appeared in *Seuil*²⁹ in 1971, in the "Cadre Vert" collection, translated by Didier Coste, thanks to the efforts of Severo Sarduy³⁰, who, himself, embodied the ideal of the novel of language, together with Guillermo Cabrera Infante and Manuel Puig, a concept that Rodríguez Monegal developed in the last part of his essay *El boom de la novela hispanoamericana* (1972). In fact, one of the problems in the circulation of these novels that played constantly with language, proving its limits, was to find a translator who could do justice to their both literary and linguistic challenges (Levine 1998). In this sense, Rodríguez Monegal was aware of the problems this could imply, and took it always into account, as can be considered in this case, in which he thought of a translator who was also a poet, able to

²⁹ It is also known that Julio Cortázar, whose works were also in Gallimard, was another of Lezama Lima's supporters. Nevertheless, as Gustavo Guerrero (2020) has pointed out, *Seuil* had previous contacts with the Cuban writer, in 1963, when the novel was still to be finished, as some letters from the publishing house -signed by Jacqueline Trabuc- prove, and, finally, it was Sarduy who closed the operation. Besides, as Guerrero remarks, the translators Claude Durand and his wife Carmen (née Perea Jiménez, Cuban) contributed as well to the interest in Latin American authors.

³⁰ The complicity between Rodríguez Monegal and Severo Sarduy was great, as can be seen in a letter the Cuban writer sent to Keith McDuffie (Nov. 15 1982), that can be found in the *Seuil* archive at the IMEC (SEL 1521-8): "I could not speak effectively about the work and importance of Emir Rodríguez-Monegal, for I am one of his emanations -if we can say so- or one of his critical and literary inventions. I mean with this, that my literary training was constantly animated and guided by the critical works of Emir Rodríguez-Monegal, to whom I owe no imagination (which I owe only to my DNA), but more the theoretical and critical rigor that sometimes allowed me to lead this imagination to the honors of printing, because having been in Paris for a long time in an environment much too fascinated by the picturesque South America, I owe to Monegal and his work in *Mundo Nuevo* a historical and archaeological review of what was most rigorous and valid in South American thought". Rodríguez Monegal would also reproduce a part of *Paradiso*, and some poems, in *The Borzoi Anthology* (1977: 628-640).

respect all the linguistic nuances. In fact, a co-writer who was able to dedicate the time and effort that rewriting the text in another language implied. Something similar applied to *José Trigo* (1966), by Fernando del Paso, as Rodríguez Monegal notes in his report on (2/27/67-3/28/67):

José Trigo is a very complex, very ambitious and up to a point, very successful novel. (...) The political and social criticism of the book is very strong and effective.

José Trigo is a difficult book, first of all, it is superficially difficult because it is written with all the modern techniques of construction used by Dos Passos or Joyce. (...) As in *Finnegans Wake*, we end up getting where we started. The second difficulty of the book is in its baroque language. Del Paso uses practically every word of the Spanish language, plus all the words of the Mexican popular language, plus all the words that, like Joyce, he likes to invent. The result is a composed language that makes reading very difficult. I recommend the novel by its qualities and originality, but I have some doubts about the possibility of translating it into French. In any case, the translation should probably be done by two or three people: one to explain the words; a second to find the equivalent in French, if there is one; and maybe a third person to literally recreate the book.

In this sense, it must be considered that it was also a matter of costs, because both *Paradiso* (Guerrero 2020: 65-67) and *José Trigo* required, as Rodríguez Monegal suggested, even more than one translator.

The success of his mission can be confirmed by the authors who, in some way, he dismissed or even blocked for not fitting in with his idea of the "novel of language", beyond what he considered as the planes of social complaint and realism, or personal phobias and even political agenda—mostly intertwined. In the latter case, the frontal rejection of *Las ceremonias del verano* (1966) and *Los laberintos insolados* (1967) by Marta Traba (Buenos Aires, 1930–Madrid, 1983)—again, the partner of Angel Rama—would enter. In his report to the first novel, Rodríguez Monegal notes:

Las ceremonias del verano (Ceremonies of the summer) received the Casa de las Américas Prize (Cuba, 1966) in the category of novel. This is the first novel by the author. (...) As a novel, the book does not exist at all. (...) The whole thing is rather incoherent and rather clumsily written. We discover an author used to writing essays. We do not find a true novelist. I do not recommend the translation of the book.

While on *Los laberintos insolados*, he points out:

Marta Traba's second novel, much simpler than her first one, *Las ceremonias del verano*, which won the 1966 novel prize awarded by Casa de las Américas³¹, Cuba. (...) I find the book very thin, not convincing at all and rather in the genre of novel-for sophisticated-young-girls: a kind of Sagan without the rhetorical genius of the French novelist. I do not recommend its translation.

At first, perhaps one could think of a possible critical view against women writers, since the reports on *La enlutada* (1966) by Iverna Codina³² or *Cenizas de Izalco* (1966) by Claribel Alegría³³, and Darwin J. Flakoll, were not positive either. In fact, this is one of the usual criticisms regarding the *boom*: to have left out of the circuit the female writers, as years later Rosario Ferré would complain in her relevant essay, "El coloquio de las perras" (1990). It is possible that, in general, there was some truth to it, but, in particular, Rodríguez Monegal, in his *Arte de narrar*, at least interviewed a writer, Beatriz Guido, and a versatile artist, Leonor Fini. However, in this case, putting aside that Marta Traba was the wife of his rival, Angel Rama (Gilman 2009), his arguments, once more, were coherent with the difficult equilibrium he tried to keep between the local and the global, thinking of the French readership. That is, he dismissed texts either too localized in a national reality or too supposedly and artificially

³¹ Mario Benedetti, by the way, was in the jury.

³² About the Argentinian writer Iverna Codina, Rodríguez Monegal highlighted that she had received the Losada award in 1965 for *Detrás del grito* (1965), which didn't mean much, from his point of view: "The relationship of the characters with writing or the law is always presented with literary processes that were developed in Latin America at the end of the 19th century by naturalism and the novel of social denunciation. In the context of current Latin American literature (more creative and original), this volume is obviously surpassed. It's almost an anachronism. I do not think its translation is of any interest" (12/14/66).

³³ In his report (1/9/67), the Uruguayan critic was, once more, very clear: "The love story is coupled with a type of social and political protest that is very common in today's Latin American novel. I find the book very uneven. One sees too well the different style of the two authors: she is more concrete and alive, her prose has riches and precisions which reveal a true poet; he is more abstract, more psychological, more conventional. The whole feminine part of the novel (...) is more successful, but the male part remains at a much lower level. Only the description of the massacre is to be noted. That's why I think the book cannot be recommended".

cosmopolitan³⁴, and, above all, supported works in which language was a challenge, claiming for the artistic autonomy³⁵.

Of course, Rodríguez Monegal was not the only one who questioned the author of *La ciudad letrada*, and his entourage, because of his unconditional support for the Cuban revolution and his confrontation, from the magazine *Casa de las Américas*, against *Mundo Nuevo*. Writers like Guillermo Cabrera Infante, who, in those years, was openly distancing himself from the revolutionary process he had accompanied, were also very critical of Angel Rama. For example, he wrote a satirical text, “La Rama”, mocking the style of *Historias de cronopios y de famas* (1962) by his until then admired colleague Cortázar (Gras 2019) or maybe emulating Jorge Luis Borges in *Manual de zoología fantástica* (1957)³⁶:

With such a soft song that it seems rather a lament, and a certain languor in its walk, the *rama* is a delicate and surprising beast. Its union, for example, with the Colombian *marta* (unrelated to the cybelline), although sterile, is therefore no less outrageous.

More worthy of being among the skeptical and eclectic beasts than in a fanatic fauna, the *rama*, like the *carballo* (q. V), does not stop lending itself to support with screams and from the rear—although with a certain ambiguous reticence, it is true, in the case of the *rama*—the predatory incursions of *yeyés*, *eunucronopios*, and *alejós* (qq. Vv.), howling the melismatic praises in its march in Uruguay, that is, along the “Eastern Bank” [Banda Oriental], from where it is native.

Of forked tongue, poisonous breath and nocturnal habits, the *rama* is possible to tame, although it is necessary to use the

³⁴ That was also the case, for example, of José Manuel Fernández Vázquez; in this report Rodríguez Monegal passed the following judgment: “(...) like the bad movies by Jean-Luc Godard. Unlike him, the author has no sophistication: he is really very naive and, in general, writes very badly. (...) literary clichés from the avant-garde novel. I strongly advise against his translation” (14/4/67-20/4/67). And, to some extent, the case of José Pedro Díaz -after remarking that he was married to Amanda Berenguer, “a poétesse de qualité”-, about whose novel, the critic notes the famous “anxiety of influence”, and specifically, the references to *The Unquiet Grave* by Cyril Connolly, among others, and concludes that the text is: “(...) too influenced by a European literature, itself very influenced. The interest that the book has for a Uruguayan reader dulls a little as soon as one leaves the country” (n/d).

³⁵ In this sense, this idea matches “novels that belong to what Pierre Bourdieu calls the “subfield of restricted production”, which is to say autonomous, avant-garde works that exist on the fringes of mainstream publishing. In France, (...) such novels enjoy a large measure of editorial and critical attention” (2004: 168).

³⁶ Of course, GCI was animalizing not only Ángel Rama and his wife, Marta Traba—who was born in Argentina, but obtained Colombian nationality in exile—but some other important actors from the literary scene, in the orbit of the Cuban institution Casa de Las Américas, such as the Mexican critic Emmanuel Carballo, the Cuban Haydée Santamaría—aka “Yeyé” and director of Casa—the Argentinian Julio Cortázar—under the nickname of “eunucronopio”, a *portmanteau* mixing up “eunuch” and “cronopio”—and the Cuban writer Alejo Carpentier.

whip and the Creole riding crop, instruments that it rather seems to request in its training with insistence not exempt of pleasure when receiving the punishment of the tamer of turn. The Moscow Circus has a specimen of *rama* that they have taught to imitate the human voice with rare perfection. Occasionally, this *rama* can even recite verses by Quevedo after a sumptuous meal.

Nota bene: although ovoviviparous, the *rama* is considered a mammal (“Documentos sobre la Guerra Fría Cultural Latinoamericana”, 113).

A year later, in 1968, the Cuban writer made public his dissidence in an exclusive interview with Tomás Eloy Martínez in *Primera Plana*.

The fatal attraction, as it were, was mutual, as was recorded in Ángel Rama’s *Diario (1974-1983)*, in a couple of quite dismissive references to Emir Rodríguez Monegal. In this sense, he points out in his diary:

He is in Colorado, under the snow, teaching a course in one of those empty and inhospitable universities (...). I revived a type of Uruguayan intellectual from another era, what we called a ‘pastry chef’ [‘pastelero’³⁷], not very rigorous, sociable, too friendly, surviving in the environment by making concessions to gossip and the sparsely educated (126).

He also comments on their meeting at Mont Clair College as follows:

Painful intervention by [Rodríguez] Monegal, who preceded me with a lax and incoherent speech, repeating commonplaces and irrelevant comments in English: amazing decline of a man who was there, in our country, a *scholar* who worked with very little intellectual horizon but with some academic seriousness. I registered among the young attendees and the not-so-young the discomfort that a man with known fame produces before the spectacle of his frayed speech about nothing.

Another similar case are the reports of Rodríguez Monegal on Mario Benedetti— specifically, against the publication of *Quién de nosotros* (1953) and *Gracias por el fuego* (1965), his doubts about *La Tregua* (1960) and his recommendation only for *Montevideanos* (1959) —despite having been a collaborator of Rodríguez Monegal in *Marcha* years before. Fascinated by the Cuban cause ever since his first contact in 1966 on the jury of the Casa de las Américas Prize, Benedetti not only participated in the famous Havana Cultural Congress on January 24, 1968, with his lecture “Sobre las relaciones

³⁷ That is, “compliant”.

entre el hombre de acción y el intelectual", but he also founded and directed the Literary Research Center (CIL) of Casa de las Américas, a position in which he would remain until 1971³⁸. Regarding *Quién de nosotros*, Rodríguez Monegal emphasized in his report that it was considered a best-seller of Uruguayan letters³⁹, but he was critical of its supposed novelty in the use of multiple perspectives, thus relativizing its value as something that deserved only local recognition at the moment of its publication in 1953. Considering it already outdated and superficial, he discouraged its translation⁴⁰.

Something similar occurred with *La tregua*⁴¹, Benedetti's very successful second novel that was even adapted for the theatre. Monegal dismissed its literary value, seeing it only as a shallow document asserting the mediocrity of the Uruguayan middle class. He also added his doubts about its interest to a foreign reader,

³⁸ The Cuban experience inspired his literary essays *Letras del continente mestizo* (1967), *Los poetas comunicantes* (1972), and *El escritor latinoamericano y la revolución posible* (1974).

³⁹ Casanova remembers that "(...) national writers are distinguished not only by the robust sales that their works enjoy in their own country but also by the fact that they are unknown to readers in other countries. The national novelist is one who produces for the literary market of his own country, respecting its commercial customs" (2004: 170).

⁴⁰ In his report (5/8/67-5/12/67), Rodríguez Monegal dismissed the possible translation of *Quién de nosotros*: "It is the first novel by a writer who later became the bestseller of Uruguayan letters. (...) The originality of the story, if we can use this word, is in the use of a multiple perspective (...) I think the book, which was very well received by the Uruguayan critics in its day (1953), is terribly *outdated* today. (...) very superficial. It will be necessary to wait for the second novel of the author to find a little deeper vision. That's why I do not recommend its translation". Rodríguez Monegal mistrusted best-sellers, in general; this was also the reason why he rejected *Los sueños del insomnio* (1966) by Luis Spota, without caring about the multiple translations this author already had at this moment, into French (*La sangre enemiga* (1959)/*Le sang ennemi* (1961), in Robert Laffont), English (*Más cornadas da el hambre* (1950)/*The Wounds of Hunger* (1961), in Penguin, *El tiempo de la ira* (1960)/*The Time of Wrath* (1962), in Doubleday, *The Enemy Blood*, in Frederick Muller (1961) and in Penguin (1967)) and even German. In his report (2/22/67-2/27/67), the Uruguayan critic couldn't help noting that "the novel ends up exhausted by the accumulation of clichés", dealing with issues treated by works already published by Gallimard, like *La región más transparente* (1958)/*La plus limpide region* (1964), and written in a more biting, satirical and poetic way (comparisons are always odious).

⁴¹ On *La tregua* (5/8/67-5/12/67), Rodríguez Monegal showed here once more his lack of conviction, because of its local interest: "This is his second novel and, in my opinion, the most successful of the three. It was published in 1960 in Montevideo with great success. There was even a theatrical adaptation there. (...) From a certain point of view, the book can be considered as a document, truthful though superficial, about Uruguayan mediocrity, or rather the mediocrity of the middle class. (...) To describe dull lives and without interest the author composes a *pastiche* of dull and lukewarm tone that may tire readers. Born in Uruguay and having lived there before, I find the book very fascinating (...). But I doubt that a foreign reader would have the same reaction. I think he would find it somewhat in the line of Chekhov or Sherwood Anderson, but without the profound originality of these two writers. That's why I recommend its translation but with reservations".

recommending its translation, but with reservations⁴². As for *Gracias por el fuego*, in his report (5/8/69-5/12/67), he pointed out that, despite living in Paris, Benedetti continued to write about the Uruguayan middle class in this novel, which recounts the struggle of three generations against the economic underdevelopment throughout Latin America, considering the revolutionary strategy. Rodríguez Monegal was only interested in the character of the father, who was, precisely, the "villain" of the work, and whose personality had not been developed. And he added that, in spite of its success in Uruguay, he considered it "unnatural" and not at all in the same category as novels by authors such as "Fuentes, Vargas Llosa or Donoso", and for this reason he discouraged translation. For Rodríguez Monegal, only *Montevideanos* (1959) seemed to be suitable for a recommendation, without any doubt, to be translated into French by Gallimard, to the point that he had already written a long prologue for its second edition in Spanish (Rodríguez Monegal, 1961: 9-17). In his report, he referred to the simplicity and the classic voice of his stories, in the manner of "Maupassant, Chekhov, Hemingway", while simultaneously admiring the colloquial style.

Likewise, in other cases, the negative reports also involved the consideration of the difference between the local versus the international public (that is, Latin American versus European), to the detriment of one over the other. This is the case, for example, of Rafael López Jordán's *No son deicidas* (1965), an anthology of texts on the Jewish religion whose interest for the French public Rodríguez Monegal considers very limited. This was also the case with *Villa Miseria también es América*⁴³ (1957), by Bernardo Verbitsky, adding here, however, an emphatic rejection toward the naivete of the social criticism it exposes, too clear for an Argentine reader and too dark for the foreign readership, and could not be compared to other works of this kind, such as *Los hijos de Sánchez* (1961)/ *Les enfants de Sanchez* by Óscar Lewis. The same thing happened with Manuel Peyrou's *Se vuelven contra nosotros* (1966), which he considers "*trop local et trop mince pour intéresser vraiment le lecteur français*" ["too local and too thin to really interest the French reader"]. In fact, the Uruguayan critic was especially strict with works that he considered did not sufficiently re-elaborate the materials of reality, and he

⁴² Benedetti, in fact, would not be translated into French until the 1980s; some works would appear, eventually, in Belfond (*La tregua/La trêve*, by Annie Morvan, in 1982; *Gracias por el fuego/L'étincelle*, by Tomas Namer and Claude Riva, in 1983; *Primavera con una esquina rota/Printemps dans un miroir bibré*, by Annie Morvan, in 1987). Besides, *Pedro y el capitán/ Pedro et le capitaine* was translated by Roger Berthet and Fatima Schaeffer and published in 1991 by Roger Berthet. On the other hand, *Quién de nosotros/ Qui de nous peut juger?* (2016) has been translated in Autrement by Serge Mestre.

⁴³ In this case, the critic couldn't be more explicit: "Its social criticism is a bit naive. The political allusions are very clear to an Argentine reader, but very obscure to strangers. I doubt that the book has any interest for the French public. As a social document it is very poor if one compares it with a work like *Los hijos de Sánchez*. As a novel it does not exist. I strongly advise against the translation".

abhorred documentary texts oriented to a self-evident social and political criticism; the more explicit the more criticized. Therefore, it is not exclusive to Verbitsky, since *Los tallos amargos* (1955) and *Operación desamparo*⁴⁴ (1966), by Adolfo Jasca, were in the same orbit—especially in this last case, which, just from the title, was too similar to *Operación masacre* (1957) by Rodolfo Walsh, popular at the time.

Rodríguez Monegal did not care about the prizes that the reviewed books had won at a Latin American level—especially those of *Primera Plana*⁴⁵ or those of *Casa de las Américas*—nor the local recognition of their authors -awarded by Spanish American publishing houses, such as Losada or Emecé, or national institutions-, as the criticisms to Benedetti's works show, for example, or of H. A. Murena, editor of the prestigious magazine *Sur* and responsible for its editorial line until mid-1966. Regarding this last author, who had already been published by Gallimard before⁴⁶, he pointed out that *Los herederos de la promesa* (1965) was the third instalment of a trilogy, written "*avec quelque vigueur*" ["with some vigor"], thus relativizing its possible strength, to finally add: "more sensation of futility is transmitted from the character and his pitiful adventure to the reader of the book itself. I doubt that this novel is well suited to the French reader who has specialists much more talented in this kind of novels".

Again we must remember that one report or even several—even when more than positive, laudatory and enthusiastic—did not necessarily guarantee immediate publication. One of the clearest examples was José Donoso, to whom Rodríguez Monegal had already offered support from the *Mundo Nuevo* platform (1967: 77-85), out of conviction, and also at the insistence of his colleague, Carlos Fuentes,

⁴⁴ On *Operación desamparo* (11/2/66), Rodríguez Monegal was also very clear, despite the implicit paradox in his opinion: "His style is rather journalistic. His denunciation oscillates between false *pathos* and virtuous indignation. Even when he presents the tortures and corruptions that the minors undergo, it is almost impossible to be moved. We know that everything he says is painfully true, but we cannot believe the literary truth of the story".

⁴⁵ The critic didn't hesitate either in the face of renowned or award-winning authors, such as the Paraguayan Gabriel Casaccia, as can be appreciated in his report on *Los exiliados* (5/24/67-6/23/67): "This novel won the first prize in the contest organized by the Argentine weekly *Primera Plana* and the Editorial Sudamericana, Buenos Aires, in 1966. (...) naturalistic style (...) fail to give the novel a real interest. (...) I find this novel very limited in its interest. If the author has the merit of demystifying the condition of an exile and showing its painful limitations, he does not, in my opinion, have the talent to transform this chronicle into a true novel. I advise you not to translate it because, from a strictly literary point of view, it is even a little weaker than *La babosa*, which you have already translated." It must be said that Rodríguez Monegal was part of the jury—together with José Bianco, Mario Vargas Llosa, and Carlos Fuentes—in the *Primera Plana* prize that year. In Gallimard, *La babosa/Le limace* had been translated by Étienne Frois, and published in La Croix du Sud in 1959.

⁴⁶ He had already published *La fatalité des corps*, translated by Claude Robert, in La Croix du Sud, in 1965.

who pressed, elegant and indirectly, through Juan Goytisolo, to the same publishing house (Gras 2015). However, the extraordinarily positive reading reports of *Este domingo* (1966) and of *El lugar sin límites* (1966) of the Uruguayan critic for Gallimard⁴⁷ did not achieve the desired effect, although he highlighted the previous translation into English of a couple of his works in the renowned collection Borzoi Books in the prestigious Knopf publishing house⁴⁸ (Gras 2018):

This novel is undoubtedly one of the most mature of the current Latin American literature and contributes to placing its author at the forefront of the novelists of his language, with Carlos Fuentes, Vargas Llosa and García Márquez. Knopf from New York has just published a translation of *Este domingo*.

On *El lugar sin límites* he writes:

The author is the most important Chilean narrator of his generation. His first novel was already published in the United States by Alfred A. Knopf (1964). (...) The story is told by Donoso with great economy and concentration and with a style of great purity. (...) I find that this novel is one of the most beautiful works of contemporary Latin American literature and I recommend it without hesitation”.

Neither did he achieve any positive results with García Márquez, since his work was also rejected by the publisher despite the reasoned report of Rodríguez Monegal (n. d.), in which, once more, he mentioned Faulkner as a magical word, to attract the interest of Gallimard (“The action of this novel takes place in Macondo, an imaginary village in Colombia, which is the center of all the fiction by García Márquez as Jefferson, Missouri, is the center of the fiction by William Faulkner (...)”). Even though he was not enthusiastic about *La mala hora*, he warned of the approaching publication of *Cien años de soledad*⁴⁹, after the appearance of a

⁴⁷ *Coronación* wouldn't be translated into French until 1981, by Guy Casaril, as *Le couronnement*, in the Parisian publishing house Calmann-Lévy—and only after *Ce lieu sans limites* (1980), in Aline Schulman's version for Le livre de poche, and *Casa de campo*, that very same year, keeping its original title, in Spanish, translated this time by Albert and Mathilde Bensoussan, also for Calmann-Lévy, who had already translated for the Club Française du Livre, one year later, *Le mystérieuse disparition de la jeune marquise de Loria*.

⁴⁸ In *The Borzoi Anthology* (1977: 863-73), Rodríguez Monegal selected an extract from *Este domingo/This Sunday*, entitled “Legitimate Games”, and pointed out in the presentation: “In awarding the 1962 prize for the year's best Latin American novel to José Donoso's *Coronation*, the Faulkner Foundation was acknowledging the emergence not only of a new writer but of a whole generation, for Donoso was the first of the new novelists to attract international attention” (863).

⁴⁹ Curiously, in *The Borzoi Anthology* (1977: 886-901), the critic didn't choose a part of *Cien años de soledad/A Hundred Years of Solitude*, but a short story from the beginning of García Márquez's career, written in 1954, “Un día después del sábado”/“One Day After Saturday”. About the former, Rodríguez Monegal added: “The book catapulted García Marquez into instant fame. He deserved it, although

chapter in the second issue of *Mundo Nuevo*, and proposed, therefore, its translation:

The author is one of the greatest young novelists in Latin America, but *La Mala Hora* is a somewhat disconnected book: brilliant and even exciting, but not quite successful. I prefer his new *El Coronel no tiene quien le escriba*, and especially the big novel that García Márquez has just completed and called *Cien años de soledad*. A chapter has already been published in *Mundo Nuevo* (No. 2). The book will be published in March 1967 by the Editorial Sudamericana, Buenos Aires. I advise you to write them to option this novel.

Actually, *La mala hora* was not translated into French until 1986, after García Márquez had been awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1982. *Cien años de soledad* was translated into French in 1968, by Carmen and Claude Durand, but Gallimard did not publish the novel, ignoring the advice of Rodríguez Monegal. It was Éditions du Seuil that launched the best-seller to the French market—in fact, its first translation to a foreign language⁵⁰.

The intense activity of Rodríguez Monegal as a reader for Gallimard during the year 1967 has allowed us to observe a relevant aspect of the internationalization of the Latin American boom in a key year, when a (relative) minor literary space begins to ascend in the transnational field of world literature. Thus, his reports illustrate the importance of the existing divisions within the framework of the "cultural" Cold War during those years, especially highlighted in the

many who praised the book did so for the wrong reasons" (886). Besides, he ended his presentation of the Colombian writer by warning the reader and the author himself: "A formidable achievement from a stylistic point of view, *The Autumn of the Patriarch* finally becomes tedious and, despite some brilliant episodes, fails to hold the reader's interest. Obviously, Garcia Marquez has reached a point in his career at which he has to rethink very carefully his future course" (886-7). This could be considered one of "the slaps that Emir gave there, but with silk gloves, to the 'sacred cows' of Latin American literature", in Suzanne Jill Levine's words (1986: 38).

⁵⁰ In this sense, it must be taken into account that other actors—and, specifically, agents, and one in particular, Carme Balcells—were also implied. In a letter dated January 26 [1967], García Márquez wrote to his friend and colleague Carlos Fuentes: "I am worried (...) about my destiny in French. In your letter you implied that Mascolo had acquired *La mala hora/In Evil Hour* for Gallimard, and you told me that you had advised him to launch me with *One Hundred Years [of Solitude]*, which I absolutely agree with. I thought, by your letter, that Carmen Balcells had made an arrangement with Gallimard that I did not know about. But in a letter after yours, Carmen told me that *One Hundred Years [of Solitude]* is in the hands of Les Éditions du Seuil, news that I confirmed when Emir told me, later, that he had read the full text: I imagine it was passed on by Severo Sarduy. Do you think, regardless of the esteem in which you hold Sarduy, that Le Seuil is a good door to enter France?". It was a somehow funny question, not only because of the prestige of the publishing house, but because "seuil", in French, means "threshold"; the pun should be intended—but Fuentes had a good point as *One Hundred Years* had a mainstream potential more in tune with Gallimard, as Suzanne Jill Levine points out-

Latin American context, as accentuated by the Cuban phenomenon and the multiple controversies that surrounded it.

As we have analyzed, Rodríguez Monegal's role as an intellectual—a critic and an academic—with the capacity to articulate informal networks and advance his preferences was somewhat limited. He was very clear about his "agenda" for Latin American literature, favoring authors who fit into the "narrative of language"; that is, who were oriented to a large formal experimentation (such as Guillermo Cabrera Infante, Homero Aridjis and Néstor Sánchez). However, the criteria of large European publishers such as Gallimard did not coincide fully, since, in the face of experimentalism, they often preferred to bet on the exoticism that Latin American authors represented, considering the expectations of the European reading public. Two different interests colliding, which prove that the power of gatekeepers is not always the same: a publishing house has always the last word (hasn't it?).

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