

**INCOMPARABLE
EMPIRES**

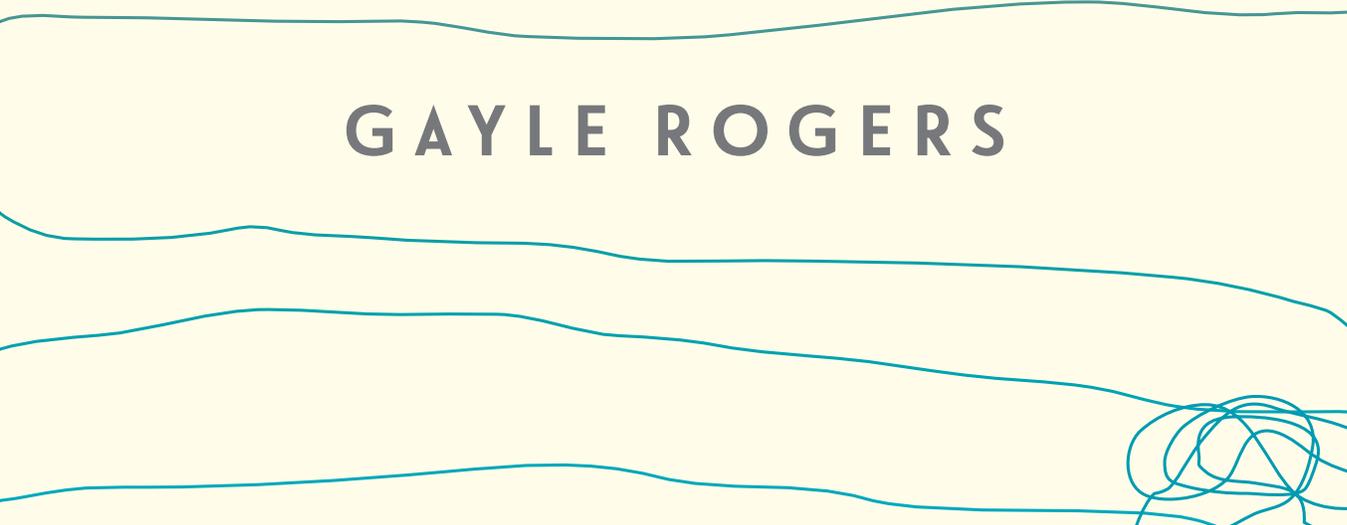
MODERNISM AND THE

TRANSLATION OF

SPANISH AND **AMERICAN**

LITERATURE

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Modernism, Translation, and the Fields of Literary History

Spaniards know that there is no agreement, neither the landscape with the houses, neither the round with the cube, neither the great number with the small number, it was natural that a Spaniard [Picasso] should express this in the painting of the twentieth century, the century where nothing is in agreement, neither the round with the cube, neither the landscape with the houses, neither the large quantity with the small quantity. America and Spain have this thing in common, that is why Spain discovered America and America Spain, in fact it is for this reason that both of them have found their moment in the twentieth century.

—GERTRUDE STEIN, *Picasso* (1938)

ACROSSING OF TWO INFLUENTIAL MODERNISTS IN 1916: the American John Dos Passos sailed from New York City to Spain to begin his sustained project of translating, interpreting, promoting, and even imitating the works of Spanish writers such as Pío Baroja and Antonio Machado. After a return trip several years later, he published in tandem his study of Spanish culture, *Rosinante to the Road Again*, and his collection of largely Spanish-inspired poems, *A Pushcart at the Curb* (both 1922). The Spaniard Juan Ramón Jiménez sailed in the opposite direction to New York City in 1916. He composed during his journey and his stay a hybrid collection of poetry, prose, and translations—*Diario de un poeta recién casado* [*Diary of a Newlywed Poet*, 1917]—that he believed captured his simultaneous “rebirth” in both Anglophone American modernism and the new mode of Spanish lyricism that he was articulating.¹ These two figures also met in Madrid, and Dos Passos praised Jiménez in print. Through this crossing and the texts it yielded, we might plot additional points on the ever-growing map of interconnected global modernisms, but in fact, they should make us rethink the structure and teleologies of our comparative literary histories of the early twentieth century. Dos Passos and Jiménez were intervening

in intense and protracted debates, amplified by the Spanish-American War of 1898, about the relationships among literature, history, and geopolitics. As they did so, they were attempting to reshape the burgeoning and newly powerful fields of Hispanism and American literary studies; to revise the exceptionalist narratives that governed those fields and popular notions of American and Spanish literature alike; to launch sweeping attacks on the reigning assumptions and modes of literary historiography built on versions of Herder, Hegel, Arnold, and even Social Darwinism; to recast the genealogies and maps of literary movements and translation across time; indeed, to theorize how their respective countries' cultural and linguistic exchanges were to be measured against waxing (U.S.) and waning (Spanish) empires on a shifting world stage. And as this book shows, they were hardly alone: they were joined in both their travel routes and their propositions by Ezra Pound, Miguel de Unamuno, Langston Hughes, Emilio Ballagas, Ernest Hemingway, Felipe Alfau, and many lesser-known critics in the overlapping Anglo- and Hispanophone literary spheres.

If it is not intuitively obvious that so much was at stake here, or why these topics mattered so much to modernist writers, it is because of our limited sense of translation and its contexts in this moment. In their practices, the authors treated here constantly blurred the conventional lines between translation and *poesis*, between credentialing oneself as an authority and fashioning a signature authorial style, often in early moments in their careers. Pound and Unamuno were most explicit about the inseparability of composition, scholarship, criticism, and translation, but even in the case of Pound—the modernist writer whose translations have been studied most extensively—we have typically isolated better-known aesthetic achievements (especially in formal and linguistic innovation) as our historiographical landmarks. Translation names the commonality of cross-linguistic transfer that bound together the multifarious practices that this book examines, thereby conceptually organizing them into one highly integrated but internally variegated endeavor.² The multilingualism, foreign-language juxtapositions, and translingual fusions associated with modernist movements in several tongues often had significant roots in such undertakings; most modernists were translators of some type, after all. But more than an effort to break with inflexible Victorian standards or to give the kind of account of interlingual relationships made famous by Walter Benjamin, translation, for many modernists, composed an immense and complex domain of methods, techniques,

and arguments. Through translation, they might reopen what the U.S. and Spanish empires, along with the fields of study that interpreted their cultures, had foreclosed. Far from minor preludes or footnotes to now-canonical works, translational labors were crucial parts of diverse agendas through which they channeled and spoke through voices of foreign pasts, inserted or removed themselves from national movements or “generations,” and negotiated controversies of language politics. In short, translation aimed to make literature reorganize and transform, rather than simply reflect or express, political history.

In such work, modernists in the United States and in Spain were reformative Hispanists and Americanists, whether in experimental poems, professorships, Spanish Civil War ballad books, or textbooks and journals. The global movements that have come to be gathered by the sign “modernism” and its cognates were built substantively on engagements with two evolving fields—Hispanism and American studies—that were creating bodies of knowledge and were finding prevalent purchase in the early twentieth century.³ In an exemplary instance, Pound, after giving up on a potential career as a professional scholar of Spanish literature, relentlessly disparaged the philologists who controlled the field by way of the combined poetics, criticism, and radical translations that he used to elaborate his aesthetic agendas in the 1910s. In 1915, he made the point forcefully that “the study of ‘comparative literature’ received that label about eighty years ago. It has existed for at least two thousand years. The best Latin Poets knew Greek. The troubadours knew several jargons.”⁴ Texts such as Pound’s “Three Cantos” (1917) and Jiménez’s *Diary* thus function at once as literary texts and as semisolarly, often polemical and unorthodox contributions to modern language studies—and to the overlapping discipline of comparative literature. (By the same token, many scholars, translators, and cultural diplomats addressed throughout this book were now-forgotten poets or novelists.) Some figures went so far as to transplant their own authorial identities: Hemingway, a self-styled expert on Spanish culture, fantasized that he was “considered a Spanish author who happened to be born in America” and quixotically rendered himself “Ernest de la Mancha Hemingway,” and Unamuno claimed that he found his authentic voice in Spanish by translating Thomas Carlyle, then recreated Carl Sandburg’s works in deeply personal poems.⁵ Their own publications, as they circulated in translation both within and beyond their purviews, supplemented and revised such claims; Jiménez even devotes

a prose poem in his *Diary* to discrediting the English translations of his poems by Britain's most renowned Hispanist, James Fitzmaurice-Kelly.

Incomparable Empires therefore understands translation as a constitutive, rather than a constituent, element of literary histories. And to study translation *within* literary formations, I argue, is simultaneously to study those formations—even on the level of their names—*through* translation.⁶ By this I mean to affirm that modernism was a “great age of translations,” in Pound’s terms, but rather than assuming the intelligibility or coherence of periodizing terms such as “modernism” or of proposed national literary traditions or imperial identities, we must see them as the writers assembled here did: as precisely at stake across languages, as unsettled and fluctuating modern creations.⁷ As a tool and a rubric, translation inhabited such a dualistic, mediating role, complete with both limits and failures. It frames specifically the historical relationship between literature and imperialism that motivates this book’s inquiries. In a set of remarkable, broad-scale developments just after 1898, when the United States and Spain had spent boundless energy vilifying each other, numerous figures in both countries invested themselves in the idea that their recent adversary was home to a literary history that must be studied, disseminated, and even absorbed, all while a sense of competition and anxious comparison was still palpable. In this process, the renovated fields of American studies and Hispanism propagated mutually enriching exceptionalisms that bolstered one another at home and abroad.⁸ Exceptionalism proved ideologically flexible enough to shift quickly, almost silently, from affirming nationalist ideals through denigration to affirming them through cooperation. Here, these fields were following the precedent set several decades prior in one originary site for comparative literary studies: after the Franco-Prussian War, French- and German-language scholars looked across the Rhine with a conjoined and not at all antithetical nationalism and cosmopolitanism.⁹ In both the United States and Spain, the professional study of national literature created knowable units of literary history, usually as an extension of the state and the empire—sometimes explicitly, as in the work of the Royal Spanish Academy, and sometimes implicitly, when American studies gained institutional footholds alongside the growth of the U.S. empire and its increased global interventionism. In a period of swelling monolingual, racially exclusive nativism in both countries, these disciplines helped reduce multilingual, multiethnic, multimedia, and plurinational texts into stable, singular, ethnocentric, and exceptional literatures neatly attached

to empires. They fashioned core identities around which the diverse, uncountable products and contacts of empire could be either assimilated or excluded. From studies of Anglo-Saxon literature to modern Spanish philology, major scholars and writers cemented the genealogies, chronologies, and patrimonies of national and imperial literary traditions. In the United States, they did so in a manner that Van Wyck Brooks found restrictive when he noted in 1918 that “our professors continue to pour out a stream of historical works repeating the same points of view to such an astonishing degree that they have placed a sort of Talmudic seal upon the American tradition,” leaving writers without a “usable past.”¹⁰ So attenuated and uninspiring were such formulations in Spain that the Nicaraguan writer Rubén Darío would bluntly condescend, as he led *modernismo*’s “inverted conquest” of the former colonizer, that “Spain—amputated, aching, defeated—is in no state for letters.”¹¹

These well-known histories and narratives have been studied almost exclusively in national contexts, yet they were crafted through international symbiosis, with cooperation from multiple intermediaries and foreign partners. The term “Hispanism” in English bears out this point: it had long referred variously to Orientalist fantasies or an appreciation of Spanish culture, but roughly by the 1920s, it coherently signified a professional field of study devoted to Spain.¹² New centers of knowledge, such as the Hispanic Society in New York City (founded 1904) and the Centro de Estudios Históricos in Madrid (founded 1910), supported this work, and the writers examined here frequented them. Federico García Lorca, José Moreno Villa, Gertrude Stein, Vicente Blasco Ibáñez, William Carlos Williams, and many others also traversed, for a variety of reasons, the institutional and imaginative pathways opened up between the United States and Spain in this moment.¹³ This work quickly spread to other arenas of culture as the study of Spain’s language and literature saw a meteoric rise in popularity and translation in the United States in the 1910s. This unprecedented and arguably unequalled rise in attention to non-Anglophone foreign literatures composed a “collective fever” dubbed by one historian a “Spanish craze.”¹⁴ It reached from high-school classrooms—where Spanish enrollments increased by 700 percent during World War I—to museums, from formalist poetics to bestsellers, even to architectural trends, all with few degrees of separation. The newly founded Association of American Teachers of Spanish made Spanish instruction into a patriotic obligation, adopting as its slogan in 1918, “The war will be won

by the substitution of Spanish for German.”¹⁵ All of this helped rapidly convert the United States into the preeminent—and most sympathetic, Hispanophilic—source of the study and translation of Spanish literature in the world. Simultaneously, principal voices in Spanish academic and literary cultures similarly helped bring U.S. literature, which previously commanded little respect in Spain, to domestic audiences, through magazines and newspapers, new college courses, and mass-market translations. Even while fears of U.S. cultural hegemony were peaking, Whitman became a household name, a jazz craze took hold, and Hughes became a translated voice of a fermenting political and social revolution. By 1932, the compelling works of contemporary leftist U.S. novelists demanded, as one Spanish critic stated in terms that resonate with Stein’s above, that his compatriots “discover America for the second time,” only from a markedly different vantage.¹⁶

Amid these processes, American literature was imagined as carrying the products of a rich civilization to new corners of the world on the wings of a growing overseas empire. Spanish literature, meanwhile, was asserted to have declined into near-obscurity just as its once-mighty empire—whose literature putatively peaked in its Golden Age of conquest—was reduced to a few tiny holdings. These compatible, self-fulfilling prophecies were promulgated, of course, in order to consolidate and justify an expansionist, English-only, and aggressively masculinist Anglo-Saxon nationalism in the United States. In Spain, they were employed after 1898 in an effort to harden a Castilian-language, nativist, Catholic identity around which the crumbling empire’s subjects might rally to purify and regenerate an endangered tradition by shrinking the field of literary production but amplifying the intrinsic worth of a select few writers.¹⁷ And indeed, if we follow this dual process and the coalescing exceptionalist narratives to midcentury, we see that such theses might seem to have been confirmed by the course of history. Buffered by everything from puppet governments to cultural diplomacy, from Hollywood films to recorded music, U.S. literature became a foremost global force. Meanwhile, Spanish literature completed its slow, centuries-long descent into international invisibility under an autarkic Francoist regime known mostly for having assassinated Spain’s most promising modern author (Lorca); meanwhile, the celebrated Latin American Boom emerged from its former colonies.¹⁸ Likewise, it appears that the victorious United States devoured and reinterpreted the culture of its vanquished imperial opponent, whose previous mantle of world

power it still holds in the present, while Spain could only entrench a xenophobic, rearguard identity. Such retrospective readings have made 1898 seem like a chiasmic marker—to return to my key term—of *translatio studii et imperii* conveniently situated at the cusp of a new century. In both countries, across many spheres of thought and cultural production, divine sanction and politicized fantasies seemed to have delineated what U.S. and Spanish literatures had been and could be in the twentieth century, creating a feedback loop between political history and literary formations.¹⁹ This process annealed the longstanding, common assumption that great imperial and literary eras necessarily flourished together; thus, in Spain's case, imperial greatness was reconstrued as the concentration of an impalpable “spirit” accrued in the metropolis from past imperial expanse, now commensurate with a circumscribed set of national writers who did not seek global fame.

This assumption was the product of modern literary historiography's having arisen and become institutionalized alongside modern nation-states and the cresting European and British empires. A tradition of translation undergirded and established certain political histories as the source for tracking and periodizing literature. Translation functioned both as a crucial concept in the history of imperialism at large and as a versatile apparatus that facilitated narratives and connections while covering over contradictions. For the new classes of scholars of American studies, Hispanism, and comparative literature in the early twentieth century, and even for large publishing houses and small independent presses, translation generally aimed to stabilize and monumentalize the text, to enrich the dominant native language's resources while affirming the distance and difference of the source text, and to professionalize the accurate, invisible translator. In these same fields, comparisons elided other available nodes of comparison (such as minor-language or politically oppositional texts) and centered on a single narrative, while commentaries on foreign texts subjugated both politics and the critic's own relationship to the text. In all of these practices, imperialism, which was a ubiquitous topic of deliberation in both the United States and Spain at the time, explained literary formations rather than distorting them or even being shaped *by* them. These narrow alignments and hierarchies of geopolitics and literature, of implied pasts and presents, also abounded in public intellectualism and in exported texts, where translation chiefly furthered the post-1898 arrangements of U.S.-Spanish collaboration. Translation thus was carefully divided from

other activities and bound up with selected projects that served the needs of empires in transition (whether expanding or contracting), and had little potential to question the alliances and processes that it was supporting.

While both drawing energy from and railing against predominant narratives and protocols, the writers analyzed in *Incomparable Empires* worked to destabilize and redesign these hardening conceptions of U.S. and Spanish literatures with premises and tactics that sometimes defy logic. To return to the crossing in 1916 with which I began, on the same day he left the United States, Dos Passos published his caustic article “Against American Literature,” which called for the dismantling of a U.S. literary tradition forged in the exhilaration imbued by centuries of expansionism. He looked to Spain because he believed that its defeat in 1898 and its crumbling empire had created the conditions for a *flourishing* of new literature. In his translations, the young, emerging author sought to repoliticize and then mimic Spanish literature as he simultaneously staked a claim to public expertise against his fellow Hispanophilic socialists and anti-imperialists William Dean Howells and Waldo Frank. Jiménez, for his part, saw 1898 as having ushered in a distinct era in global letters by bringing all of the combatant countries and their dominant languages closer together, fostering an uneven but interconnected renaissance of Spanish, Spanish American, and U.S. letters. His own translational models would embody these connections, and he would then rearrange them across decades of lectures and criticism during his time as a professor in exile in the United States and Puerto Rico. Such uncommon, perhaps counterintuitive suggestions—that imperial and literary greatness are inversely proportional or that wars over colonial territories are a generative, rather than divisive, force—militated against the cultural and political work for which translational practices had been marshaled and confined.

Finding different heuristic and hermeneutic affordances in translation, the writers considered here also embraced derivation, unoriginality, distortion, or mistranslation, and they worked in ways that sometimes had more in common with medieval translation than with the prevailing norms of naturalness and fluidity indebted to Dryden and Arnold. They even manipulated “translation” as a term, from Pound’s “traductions” to Ilan Stavans’s “translادation,” which I address in the conclusion. Translation, they asserted, could also unmake and redraw the artificial and dry portraits of a global cultural past—and could forecast new literary futures. They carved out critical and creative spaces that

disconnected and reconfigured, compressed and radically realigned the given spatial politics and chronotopes of literary histories. In capitalizing on the newfound interest in U.S./Spanish connections, some writers drew damning, antiexceptionalist parallels between the imperial cultures of Golden Age Spain and the contemporary United States or between the Inquisition and American censorial codes. Others proposed literary maps that linked sixteenth-century Seville to the plantation U.S. South by way of twentieth-century Havana or put a Klansman's hood on Franco's head; others still rewrote, with concerted anachronisms, a buried history of interanimation and interpenetration between Anglo- and Hispanophone literatures and their associated empires since the 1500s. Translation created comparisons and narratives in which "American literature" and "Spanish literature" appeared *less* coherent, unconnected—reconstellated as *literatura yanqui* ("Yankee literature") or as prenatal troubadour traditions in unfamiliar and recontextualized ambits. It had sociological and commercial capacities, too: in Spain, one might find poets like Whitman and Hughes and Hispanists like George Ticknor translated beside one another, perhaps for the first time, and grouped as exemplars of "North American literature"—a category barely intelligible to most North Americans. Rather than agreeing that New York City and Madrid ought to share in a cultural exchange that would increase the prestige and value of their respective native literatures, Dos Passos and Jiménez insisted that these two cities should *not* be connected as sites of exciting new literary production. They held—and many others in this book agreed—that both cities were mostly cultural wastelands, stale metropolitan capitals of homogenizing, decadent societies created by unremarkable empires; Berlin, Paris, and London, from which global literary repute issued, hardly fared better. They countered that the United States and Spain instead were generating together the new realist novel for a dawning international socialist revolution or were reviving a line of mysticism and antiorthodoxy that skipped over several centuries.

By reanimating such coordinates, I intend to modify the practices of comparison that connect international literatures in a manner that presumably enriches all; such an approach is a legacy of the period treated in this book, and we should see it skeptically.²⁰ Instead, I highlight methodologically the effects of the interlingual tensions and conflicts, rather than fluidity and translatability, between (in this case) English and Spanish. Thus, I do not use translation to expand or redescribe existing, already hegemonic

fields such as modernist studies or American studies, nor do I fill in more spaces on the global maps they have produced. Rather, as Brent Hayes Edwards has shown in other contexts, translation—by opening a broad and incongruous register of allusion, parataxis, and argumentation—alternately bridged and created gaps, built up and disorganized fields.²¹ Translation, like comparison, allows us to question their very vocabularies. Jiménez’s speculations on the tension between “modernism” and “*modernismo*,” which I investigate in chapter 3, are one example, and as I show in chapter 5, a loose collection of writers and critics in Spain and the Hispanophone Americas translated, for anthologies that aspired to professional authority, the works of Hughes, Claude McKay, and other New Negro writers with a distinct anxiety about this new *literatura negra* (black literature) and its name. The Spanish word *negro* had returned, thanks to the spread of the U.S. cultural empire, as an Anglophone term (Negro) in a global battle for political and civic rights, and conservative Spaniards and leftist Cubans together theorized controversially that the roots of black diasporic writing lay in baroque Spanish poetry. The concern in such cases was the epistemology and incommensurability, more than the debates over ontology, of terms like “black literature”/*literatura negra* that oscillated irreconcilably between English and Spanish at critical junctures. This irreconcilability feeds both the promise and the disquiet found in several writers’ predictions that the twentieth century would be defined by the future union of a global English and a global Spanish.

This approach to translation emerges from the historical configurations of the empires and their relations in question here. Within modernist studies, the temporalities and spaces through which global modernisms are periodized, and through which modernism, imperialism, and colonialism are conjoined, have been revolutionized by postcolonial and transnational literary studies.²² The recent emphasis on contact zones and territories, borderlands and border crossings, and subjectivities and migrations has productively complicated the familiar narratives of modernism too, and linguistic interactions and translational topics have played an important, though sometimes subdued, role in this work. But overlooked in questions of metropole/periphery relations, in versions of creolité or hybridity, or in subaltern approaches is the need for a comparative model that can apprehend the sense of “imperialism” as *competition* that Fredric Jameson recovers from the early twentieth century. “The word ‘imperialism’ designates, not the relationship of metropolis to colony,” Jameson writes, “but

rather the rivalry of the various imperial and metropolitan nation states among themselves.”²³ Jameson himself has rarely pursued that sense, but it is vital here, as it was in the Great War and as it was for Lenin. For the centuries in which they were imperial competitors, Spain and the United States—both marginal players at the Berlin Conference that Jameson cites—had consolidated their national identities around the denigration of the other. The War of 1898 only accelerated this process, most famously in American yellow journalism and in Spanish popular media. The fact that the highly symbolic imperial crossing in 1898 was called a “splendid little war” in one country and a “Disaster” in the other makes the cultural cooperation that followed between the two countries all the more surprising and perhaps suspicious.²⁴ Spain was both dead and alive to Americans; the United States was both crass and inspiring to Spaniards.

To capture this—to compare these empires and their literatures without replicating the terms and assumptions that they propounded—we must explore “inter-imperiality” (to invoke Laura Doyle’s useful, dialectical formulation) through translation, as opposed to looking primarily to form as an effect of historical conditions.²⁵ The disparate collectivity of writers that I gather here charted U.S. and Spanish literatures on an unsettled world stage by casting them simultaneously through interimperial dynamics and cross-linguistic traffic. As a malleable resource, translation thus was operating beyond the familiar paradigm in which it usually either shores up or resists imperial power, as critics including Edward Said, Mary Louise Pratt, Tejaswini Niranjana, Gauri Viswanathan, and Eric Cheyfitz have adumbrated it.²⁶ It was working instead to restructure or break open familiar imperial histories. Though the writers at hand shared in a networked array of practices and engagements, no single politics, aesthetics, sensibility, or genre unites them, and their work was too complex to be reduced simply to opposition to ascendant or ingrained narratives. The far left and the far right are both present, and Dos Passos’s readings of modern Spanish literature, for instance, were in uncanny agreement with conservative Spanish nationalists. Pound and Unamuno both vacillated or contradicted themselves over time, and Hughes was implicated, as a translator, in a stunning mode of anti-African racism. Moving more or less chronologically but tacking back and forth across languages and contexts, I focus in the first four chapters on pronounced arcs in the careers of four major figures—precisely because the convoluted paths of their careers demonstrate the depth and breadth of their arguments. I pair two

American Hispanists, Pound and Dos Passos, with the former opening this book's approach to translation and the latter centering the arguments about post-1898 empire. Next, I pair two Americanists from Spain, Jiménez and Unamuno, whose works respectively theorize the problems of modernism in translation and of translation as a structure for demarcating literary history through contingent notions of innovation or authenticity. In the final two chapters, I further explore and test some of the synthetic genealogies these writers proposed and the methods by which they were devised. I take a wide-angle view of the making and the historicization of a literary-cultural formation (*literatura negra*) in chapter 5 and then, in chapter 6, concentrate on a single novel (*For Whom the Bell Tolls*, 1940), in which Hemingway stretches the bounds of translation to produce an estranged, invented tongue that registers the historical collisions of English and Spanish. (Hemingway's protagonist Robert Jordan, we might recall, was an American Spanish instructor steeped in knowledge of baroque Spanish literature.) In these final two chapters, academic fields and the immediate post-1898 world move to the background while the racial and political realities of the growing global force of American English in the late 1930s and early 1940s come to the foreground. From here, I trace new genealogies of late modernism and postmodernism through an optic of translation that clarifies the contributions of outlying or less obvious texts and writers. I conclude by pushing beyond the Spanish Civil War or World War II as a natural endpoint—just as World War I remains mostly a minor context for this book—and by looking to Felipe Alfau, Malcolm Lowry, and the contemporary author/translator Ilan Stavans. Here, I track the development of Spanglish not as a marker of bilingual immigrant subjectivity but as a literary dialect made possible by the entwined but fragmented histories of Spanish and Anglophone literatures. The alternative genealogies that I recover and offer urge us to reconsider the histories not only of our fields but also of our own critical habits.

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It is not the case that the figures under scrutiny here somehow got things right—that they were more just comparatists or translators of foreign literatures and ought to be lauded, especially for something as banal as transgressing a national border or speaking against a statist or imperial vision. Undoubtedly, they were enmeshed in the contradictions of empire: they

appreciated and drew on the global materials to which empire gave them access, and they glorified Spain's accretion of internal diversity, which was a direct result of the country's violent imperial past. They also praised eras of increased translation in ways that naturalized the very political histories that made those translations possible, and they developed sympathetic theories of the effects of territorial expansion and geopolitical power on literary production. Most of the authors I study are male, and several were invested in paradigms of masculinity or vitality that were coupled with regressive politics. They often operated in an almost exclusively male world of cultural historiography; most had little interest in opening up genealogies to women writers and only allowed black poets to enter as derivative. We find, then, that Dos Passos substantively blamed women for the poor state of writing in the United States, Jiménez sometimes took credit for translations that his wife Zenobia Camprubí first carried out, Hemingway's Maria is a helpless damsel in distress who could hardly be said to represent Spanish women, and Archer Milton Huntington's Hispanic Society of America was founded on a belief in the subjugated roles of women. Concomitant with such conceptions of gender was a typical condescension or excision of Spanish America, which I discuss in the middle part of the book, and a recurring portrayal of Spain as feminized and weak. Germany, by contrast, was demonized as a hyperindustrial war machine by Dos Passos, the headquarters of retrograde philology by Pound, and the producer of racist vitriol by Hughes, all in service of very different Hispanophilic literary ends. And what was deemed a benighted state program of *Kultur* in modern Germany was a useful counterexample to the theory that empire and culture thrive together.

It would take several more books to do justice to these topics—and some such books already exist²⁷—but I mention them to signpost the arguments that this book aims to avoid. One possible version of this book would tell the entangled histories of Anglophone U.S. modernism and Spanish Silver Age letters roughly between 1898 and the Spanish Civil War (1936–39).²⁸ While fruitful, such a story would buy into the self-proclaimed narratives of native renaissance that I am attempting to historicize and disorient. The same holds for a version in which I would remap given works into a single field of cooperation—perhaps a transatlantic one—with various strands of connectivity cohering as a central plotline; but that kind of connectivity, as I indicated above, reproduces a familiar story.²⁹ Still another line of argument would hold that when Spain was newly defeated

and converted into a historical monument, it became an exotic, semicolonial wellspring of inspiration across U.S. culture, and critics such as María DeGuzmán have demonstrated that some modernists participated in propagating such images.³⁰ In that version, however, a basic American identity is presupposed, and then Spain strengthens it by enabling the consolidation of Americanness. Instead, we need to rethink how the retroactively applied triumphalist tale of the American Century relies on a number of clichéd motifs of U.S. continuity and ascendancy, much in the same way that the deterministic story of Spanish decline recycles tropes of Iberian decadence from the Black Legend of the country's barbarism in its New World conquest. We must revisit skeptically the history of these mutually enriching exceptionalisms and the connections they created.

In this introduction, I aim to clarify the unintended, even occluded effects of American studies and Hispanism's post-1898 collaborations—to historicize the fields to which this book contributes. A somewhat granular replotting of 1898 and its ramifications across the following decades demonstrates why the infrastructure built by Hispanists and Americanists who crisscrossed the Atlantic became an unlikely resource for modernists in several countries. To see this, we need to unsettle the native formations and follow the foreign configurations of Spanish and U.S. literatures—to sketch the intellectual and methodological battles in which the writers gathered in this book were engaged, the experts and antagonists they found and attacked, and the successes and failures they encountered. I end with the means by which Hispanism and American studies, with their adaptable groundings in conceptions of essence, identity, democracy, or progress, actually concealed their links to one another through new Cold War and dictatorial mandates of professionalization and study. Thus we find that Hispanism and American studies seem to be discrete enterprises in the present whereas a century ago the two were often held in an array of uneven balances.³¹

Stein posits a related kind of mutual enrichment operating in the twentieth century and sees a certain amount of irony in the way that Americans like herself had “discovered” Spain by collecting Picasso's works. But her claim that both countries then “found their moment” together, and that they shared a propensity toward cubist forms, makes too hasty a logical leap.³² She flattens the asymmetries of power, patronage, prestige, and more into a celebration (a paradoxical valuation of agreement upon aesthetic disagreement) that overlooks the great hostility and disproportionate exchanges between the two countries. Perhaps what the United States and Spain

shared most saliently in this moment was a conviction of incomparability—a belief that their unique natures put them beyond comparison.³³ The reality is that sustaining such myths required constant, frequently anxious and self-subverting comparisons, and those comparisons laid the groundwork for other revisionary practices. Long before a field like American studies found itself overhauled in recent decades, the questions it deemed closed and the objects it aimed to amalgamate were forced open by a host of writers and critics working in a deep, sometimes strange tradition.

The United States as the New Spain

Comparison is embedded in exceptionalism, but not the kind of comparison that most contemporary critics find useful or worthwhile. Historically, Americans and Spaniards actually compared their empires to each other and to many others, for a variety of ends. Academic and popular authors from around the world compared them, too, with increased frequency beginning in the second half of the nineteenth century. (John Dos Passos's own father contributed to that trend; see chapter 2.) Yet, in following a selective range of comparative paths from among many posited in the past, few contemporary scholars of American literary studies have thought comparatively about the United States *as* an empire, one that emerged in competition with other empires and, in doing so, selectively appropriated and rejected their cultures.³⁴ A comparative approach to empires and their rivalries is common among world historians but rare among literary scholars in general, who tend to compare the national or linguistic tradition, period, genre, form, or movement, however modified.³⁵ A reluctance to compare the U.S. empire at all and to understand its literatures through interimperial dynamics pervades the fields to which I contribute in the chapters that follow—modernist studies, comparative literary studies, postcolonial and transnational literary criticism, Spanish literary historiography, and African American cultural studies—despite their otherwise abundant and rich intersections. Scholars of modernism, for instance, have looked primarily to European imperial histories and the literatures of postcolonies, neglecting the imperial United States; in their studies, they also have tended to focus on form rather than comparison. Within Spain, comparative studies remain almost wholly aesthetic in focus, removed from political contexts such as empire, and the United States is hardly mentioned.³⁶