
Across the Ibero-Atlantic: Written Culture and the Circulation of Ideas in the Portuguese and Spanish Worlds

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We are all Atlanticists now – or so it would seem from the explosion of interest in the Atlantic and the Atlantic world as subjects of study among historians of North and South America, the Caribbean, Africa and West Europe.³

The Atlantic and its routes. In recent years, historians seem to have been seduced by studies of routes and circulation in the Atlantic world, as shown by the above quote from David Armitage. In his history of Atlantic genealogy, he defines the ocean as a historical category ranging from the idea of the North Atlantic as “the inland ocean of western

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³ David Armitage, “Three Concepts of Atlantic History,” in *The British Atlantic World, 1500-1800*, eds. David Armitage and Michael J. Braddick, 2nd ed. (Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 13.

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civilization” to a multicolored Atlantic, and especially the “black Atlantic of the African diaspora.” He puts forward three possible definitions of Atlantic history: *circum-Atlantic*, *trans-Atlantic*, and *cis-Atlantic* history. He defines the circum-Atlantic as a particular zone of exchange and interchange, circulation and transmission. To a great extent, it is entwined with the history of modern empires and can therefore be placed chronologically between the fifteenth and the mid-nineteenth centuries. Armitage regards trans-Atlantic history as the history of the Atlantic told through comparisons in order to “define more precisely the historical features of segments of the Atlantic world.”⁴ This history has mostly focused on comparative processes, in the formation of national states in the Americas, for example. Cis-Atlantic history studies particular places in relation to the wider Atlantic world and endeavors to define their particularities. He ends the article by stressing that his three concepts of Atlantic history are complementary rather than exclusive.⁵

Armitage helps us envisage the Atlantic as a historical category. Far from being established naturally or a-temporally, Atlantic history involves precise, socially and politically configured areas, since, as David Eltis points out, the key aspect of transatlantic transfers is that they contributed heavily to fostering “a set of societies fundamentally different from what they would have been without participation in the new transatlantic network.”⁶ In this issue of *Lingua Franca* we hope to contribute to this debate and focus on specific aspects of the circulation of books, periodicals, pamphlets, and papers in the Atlantic world. In a way, we follow Bernard Bailyn’s suggestion when he states that

⁴ Armitage, “Three Concepts,” 23.

⁵ In 2018, David Armitage wrote a brief revision of his earlier text. After stating that the early years of the twenty-first century have witnessed a kind of boom in Atlantic history which was later expanded or even subsumed within global or oceanic history, Armitage went on to propose new categories like Infra-Atlantic, Sub-Atlantic, and Extra-Atlantic history. Nevertheless, he was careful to affirm that “[t]hese three new concepts supplement but do not supplant my earlier trichotomy. Taken together, they can offer novel ways to re-energise the field of Atlantic history and to increase its integration with other areas of historical analysis.” David Armitage, “The Atlantic Ocean,” in *Oceanic Histories*, eds. David Armitage, Alison Bashford and Sujit Sivasundaram (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 98.

⁶ David Eltis, “Atlantic History in Global Perspective,” *Itinerario* 23, no. 2 (1999), 141.

“Atlantic history is the story of a world in motion.”⁷ In another way, we follow A.J.R. Russell-Wood’s proposition when he says that the Atlantic was seen by the Portuguese Empire more as an opportunity than an obstacle.⁸ Thus, in describing structural elements of the Atlantic world, it is paramount to understand “the phasing of the development of this world, its motion and dynamics – to grasp its history as process.”⁹

This issue of *Lingua Franca* focuses broadly on the publication and circulation of books, printed matter, and manuscripts in the Portuguese- and Spanish-speaking Atlantic sphere. Adopting a long-term perspective, we explore multiple exchanges between sites of production, distribution, and reception, involving markets and communities where the two Iberian languages were and are spoken, including the Iberian Peninsula, Latin America, and Lusophone Africa.

We propose three essential methodological approaches. First, we equate this world or dynamic space with the Ibero-Atlantic world, which is based on relationships between the Iberian Peninsula, Latin America and Portuguese-speaking Africa, in two-way Europe/America, Europe/Africa, Africa/America and America/America relations. Our main focus will be on the circulation of the printed word and manuscripts and the publication of books in the Portuguese- and Spanish-speaking Atlantic world. The second approach has to do with the period in question. The term “Ibero-Atlantic” has been used as a category of analysis by some historians when referring to the period of early modernity and the expansion of the Iberian states to America. We will address a longer time frame – from the sixteenth to the twenty-first centuries. Last but not least, we will not focus exclusively on books and printed texts. As pointed out by Fernando Bouza¹⁰

⁷ Bernard Bailyn, *Atlantic History: Concept and Contours* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005), 61.

⁸ A. J. R. Russell-Wood, “O Atlântico Português, 1415-1808,” in *Histórias do Atlântico Português*, eds. Ângela Domingues and Denise Moura, 2nd ed. (São Paulo: Unesp, 2021), 112.

⁹ Bailyn, *Atlantic History*, 61.

¹⁰ Fernando Bouza, *Communication, Knowledge, and Memory in Early Modern Spain* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004).

and Roger Chartier,¹¹ the invention of the printing press did not result in the disappearance of manuscripts: we therefore also examine the relationships between print and manuscript in the circulation of written culture.

The studies set out here address a number of specific issues in the context of diverse socio-historical relations. Our goal is to outline the creation, intermediation, consumption, and circulation of manuscript and printed documents in regions of Portuguese and Spanish cultural, economic and political expression. We wish to underscore the connected nature of this process and the links established in written culture between fields and markets on both sides of the Atlantic.

Each space of creation and appropriation of published documents is a concrete, configurational product of contingent insertions into networks of diverse complexion and density. They trigger a flow of printed and handwritten material and ideas that establishes connection systems between different countries. Seeking to explain the circulation of documents in places such as Brazil, Portugal, Argentina, Colombia, Mexico, Spain, and parts of Africa means addressing them as elements belonging to a larger group. This opens the door to knowledge of the key concepts of openness, interpenetration, and appropriation. In other words, the forms of circulation of written culture come from different sources and generate complex circuits of influence and resistance, crossings and specificity, detours and incorporation.

If we are to analyze these processes within the Ibero-Atlantic world, we need to devote particular attention to concrete historical spaces and times involving the circulation of people and written culture. These are made up of relationship systems based on factors such as language, geopolitical bonds of proximity, and the construction of markets for the circulation of ideas within structures such as empires or late capitalism. Through the diverse studies in this issue of *Lingua Franca*, we are looking for ways to interpret the complex processes that forge a possible written culture, focusing

¹¹ Roger Chartier, *Frenchness in the History of the Book: From the History of Publishing to the History of Reading* (Worcester, MA: American Antiquarian Society, 1988).

particularly on manuscripts and printed material that circulated in Portuguese and Spanish in the Atlantic world.

The construction of the sphere of written culture must be analyzed as the product of changing circumstances and structures. The analysis must take as its starting point a series of attributes rooted in a few paradigmatic cases. These paradigmatic cases normally correspond to systems of production – almost always associated with certain countries, presented as models – which historiography has consecrated as central examples, granting them emblematic status. The standard scope of analysis is usually the nation state, with all the advantages and problems that it entails.¹² The endorsement of the central status awarded to one group of states reflects their dominant position in the international arena of written circulation. The position of these model cases is defined in relation to other systems which function as peripheral or peripheralized formations (some approaches use other terms like semi-peripheral), more or less near to or distant from those countries designated as central or as model systems. In this analytical model, Portuguese- and Spanish-speaking sites of production, circulation and reception fit the category of non-central, peripheral, or perhaps semi-peripheral countries. The term ‘central countries’ indicates the eminently hierarchical logic that casts ‘marginal’ typographical systems in essentially receptive roles in relation to ‘central’ ones. They are treated as the passive product of relationships formed within print culture by regimes of power and domination, creating an asymmetrical imbalance at the heart of the global realm of written culture.

The asymmetry of this assessment is paralleled by a similar asymmetry of academic and scientific institutional structures, in the sense that studies published and put into circulation tend to privilege and over-represent the realities of written culture in select territories, literary traditions and markets, reinforcing their central role and holding them

¹² On this topic, see Jean-Yves Mollier, “Histoires nationales et histoire internationale du livre et de l’édition,” *Mémoires du livre/Studies in Book Culture* 7, no. 2 (2016): 1-25; Martyn Lyons, “National Histories of the Book in a Transnational Age,” *Mémoires du livre/Studies in Book Culture* 7, no. 2 (2016), 1-17.

up as indispensable points of reference.¹³ Within the sphere of academic power based on the institutional and linguistic hegemony of English (and, in the specific case of publishing history, French as well), it is hardly surprising that this state of affairs throws a cloak of invisibility over other spaces in which books, manuscripts and printed matter are circulated and produced, such as the Portuguese- and Spanish-speaking spheres.

Moreover, one scholarly tradition tends to observe and interpret aspects of the circulation of written culture in a limited sense, based on an exclusively national framework.¹⁴ In this methodological tradition, the space of the Nation, defined as a legally recognized, unified and sovereign state or territory, acts as a privileged and often unique vantage point for observing the dynamic processes in question. It functions as the axis around which research problems are framed in the historiographical narrative.

¹³ One example of the overrepresentation of the European, and particularly the English-language, axis is: Michael F. Suarez and H. R. Woudhuysen, eds., *The Oxford Companion to the Book* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010). This work, published in three volumes, aspires to a global view of the topics and territories covered, but it significantly fails to achieve this. Instead, it offers a panorama produced essentially by English-speaking scholars, to the detriment of other areas, which are dealt with in a fragmentary, artificial, or almost absent manner. The history of the book in Portugal, for example, is diluted within the broad category of the Iberian Peninsula, which in the end is almost exclusively restricted to the study of Spain. The same chapter also ignores the history of the book in Portuguese-speaking Africa. Indeed, the entire African continent is merged into a single chapter, which fails to consider, for instance, the history of the book in the Maghreb. Another example of these analytical imbalances is the fact that a single chapter with a mere 14 pages is devoted to South and Central America. In comparison, 72 pages are devoted to book history in Great Britain.

¹⁴ For instance, the multiple national histories of book and publishing which appeared after the seminal publication of the *Histoire de l'édition française* (1982-1986), coordinated by Henri-Jean Martin and Roger Chartier, illustrate the success of this approach. This monumental work was from the start the study to emulate, and it rapidly established itself as a reference and a model for a series of later projects. For the anglophone world, see the multivolume publications of the past 20 years: *The Cambridge History of the Book in Britain* (1999-2019, 7 vols. under the general direction of John Barnard, D. F. McKenzie, David McKitterick and I. R. Willison), *A History of the Book in America* (2000-2010, 5 vols. under the general direction of David D. Hall), *A History of the Book in Australia* (2001-2006, 2 vols., one forthcoming, under the direction of Martyn Lyons, John Arnold, Craig Munro, Robyn Sheahan-Bright, Wallace Kirsop and Elizabeth Webby), *History of the Book in Canada/Histoire du livre et de l'imprimé au Canada* (2004-2007, 3 vols. under the direction of Patricia Lockhart Fleming, Yvan Lamonde, Gillies Gallichan, Fiona A. Black, Carole Gerson and Jacques Michon), *The Oxford History of the Irish Book* (2006-2011, 3 vols., two forthcoming, under the general direction of Robert Welch and Brian Walker), and *The Edinburgh History of the Book in Scotland* (2007-2011, 3 vols., one forthcoming, under the direction of Stephen Brown, Warren McDougall, Bill Bell, David Finkelstein, Alistair McCleery, Alastair Mann and Sally Mapstone).

One possible and well-trodden path in the study of written culture has sought to go beyond national frontiers as an analytical barrier, to arrive at an understanding of the transnational or global arena,¹⁵ via key concepts like circulation, transfer, and appropriation. Methodologically speaking, this new approach was promoted without necessarily calling the national model into question, but it searched for an alternative logic which would allow us to grasp and comprehend the world of written culture as a space in flux and endowed with structures which could not be reduced to a single space or confined within specific borders. The international circulation of texts, its technologies and agents contribute to the formation of extensive networks which we define, in this issue of *Lingua Franca*, as the Ibero-Atlantic space.

In a recently published book, Fernando Bouza, Pedro Cardim, and Antonio Feros define the Iberian world as a “universe in all its diversity and complexity, [...] a space marked by many affinities and similarities, but also by innumerable differences, tensions, exclusions, and conflicts.” The authors were invited by the volume editors to focus on the period between the sixteenth and twenty-first centuries, the period of the development of Iberian colonization of America and other parts of the globe. According to the volume editors, the phrase “Iberian World”

is furthermore justified by its capacity to invoke the global dimension assumed by the Iberian polities beginning in the sixteenth century. That global dimension became especially prominent as the Portuguese and the Spaniards set about conquering and colonizing territories in the Americas, Asia, and Africa.¹⁶

This experience of Iberian imperial domination had a profound influence on the peoples of Europe “as much as for those who were subjected by conquest and colonization.”¹⁷ In this issue of *Lingua Franca*, we aim to consider the Ibero-Atlantic space as a direct consequence of the Iberian colonizing experience, underlining a “plurality of the peoples

¹⁵ Jean-Yves Mollier, “Histoires nationales,” 1-25.

¹⁶ Fernando Bouza, Pedro Cardim and Antonio Feros, “Introduction,” in *The Iberian World: 1450-1820*, eds. Fernando Bouza, Pedro Cardim and Antonio Feros (London and New York: Routledge, 2020), I.

¹⁷ Bouza, Cardim and Feros, “Introduction,” I.

of the Iberian Peninsula, a region characterized by considerable social, cultural, ethnic, jurisdictional, and political diversity.”¹⁸ We also seek to shed light on the diversity of appropriations, rejections, and resistances which derived from the colonizing processes, in order to sidestep a Eurocentric narrative about the Iberian World and its peoples. One additional purpose is to highlight that, in cultural and intellectual terms, rapprochements and resistances established within the Iberian World did not cease with the end of political domination over conquered and colonized regions.

Even after the processes which led to the political independence of the regions once subsumed within the Portuguese and Spanish Empires, shared cultural and publishing systems of European origin remain apparent. Starting from the nineteenth century, these systems were positioned as models that exported human resources, the morphology of practices and literary output. They thus interfered in manifold ways with the axes of power and centrality in the formation and development of various national publishing systems.¹⁹ But processes inscribed in a different matrix, connected to the dynamics of influence and permeability, resistance, and counter-domination, also came into play. Phenomena of circulation, appropriation and tension among spaces and markets of the book seen as peripheral therefore developed, involving relations between exclusively Portuguese- and Spanish-language publishing worlds.

To reflect upon the book and the gestures which progressively formed its production profile in the Portuguese and Spanish-speaking areas, particularly those in the Atlantic space of exchange and circulation of printed matter is, therefore, to also look into the long history of publishers and booksellers in the Iberian Peninsula, Latin America, and Portuguese-speaking Africa. Studying publishing and publishers in this diverse set of places requires paying special attention to the spaces of the circulation of people, texts, and ideas brought about by systems of connection based upon factors such as the

¹⁸ Bouza, Cardim and Feros, I.

¹⁹ About the intersections between model and national, non-central, publishing systems, see Jacques Michon and Jean-Yves Mollier eds., *Les mutations du livre et de l'édition dans le monde du XVIIIe siècle à l'an 2000* (Saint-Nicolas and Paris: Presses de l'Université Laval and L'Harmattan, 2001).

language, geopolitical relationships of proximity, and the establishment of the circulation of manuscripts, printed matter, and books within the frameworks of the Iberian empires as well as of late capitalism.

The international circulation of books, manuscripts, and printed matter and their forms, design, and technology, the agents involved and trans-territorial networks resulting from this circulation are essential factors in our knowledge about the flow of information in the social and cultural structures of modern and contemporary societies. Our goal is to demonstrate the importance of Portuguese- and Spanish-speaking national, transnational, and trans-territorial spaces in the construction of modern and contemporary social and cultural structures. Through a diverse set of studies, this issue of *Lingua Franca* seeks to provide leads for an interpretation of the complex processes which forged a cultural dynamic and its circulation in Spanish and Portuguese. It is comprised of eight essays by scholars from Portugal, Brazil, Argentina, Colombia, and Spain.

The articles in the first part, entitled “Books and the Ibero-Atlantic World: Transcontinental Travels,” center on the trans-territorial aspects of written culture in the book realm. Diogo Ramada Curto explores the ways in which the transit of models connected to the colonial project, based on a practical and technical form of Enlightenment and with a reformist and modernizing ambition, interconnects, in complex circuits, a European power and its colonies in the Ibero-Atlantic space. The case in question is that of the relation between Portugal and Angola at the turn of the eighteenth to the nineteenth centuries, involving a triangular process which also included Brazil. These transfers entailed adjustments, appropriations, and failures, determined by the geosocial configurations of different territories, cultures, and local groups, depriving the circulating bodies of knowledge of their autonomy. The author additionally points out that the Ibero-Atlantic space of the circulation of manuscripts and printed objects (charts, reports, books) is marked by the political dynamics of domination and violence.

In another exploration of the circuits of written artifacts as expressions of relations of dominance, Nuno Medeiros demonstrates how, during the nineteenth century and the first decades of the twentieth century, the transatlantic book trade in the Luso-Brazilian space was clearly asymmetrical, as Brazil constituted a natural extension of the market of Portuguese publishers and booksellers and a territory which imported books. The development of Brazil's print and publishing industry throughout the first half of the twentieth century profoundly altered traditional book flows in the Portuguese-speaking Ibero-Atlantic space. Through an analysis of the case of three Luso-Brazilian editorial projects led by Portuguese publisher António de Sousa Pinto in the 1940s, this article seeks to understand how publishers' actions brought together the two major spaces of book production in the Portuguese language during those years.

Eliana Dutra develops a reflection on books as key products in the process of cultural exchange between Europe and America. Her text challenges established ideas about the cultural isolation of the Ibero-American world during colonial times. The author seeks to demonstrate that books played an important part in the building of modernity and globalized capitalism. She does so by paying attention to production sites, diffusion circuits, those who received printed matter, editorial formulas, distribution networks, material formats, storage places, symbolic values, contents, and textual repertoires. All these factors intertwined to shape part of the Portuguese and Hispanic history within the new economic and social order of the Atlantic space and the history of cultural, ethnic, political, and scientific contacts and exchanges between the two shores of the Atlantic.

In the closing article of the first part, Giselle Venancio explores a publishing venture that aimed at building a collection of the works considered to best represent Ibero-American literature, Unesco's *Œuvres représentatives*.

The second part, "Manuscripts and Printed Material in the Ibero-Atlantic World," highlights the importance of the reciprocal relationships between print and manuscript on a transatlantic scale. Seeking to outline new approaches to the relations between manuscripts and printed matter between the sixteenth and the eighteenth centuries,

Renán Silva proposes a case study built around a document describing the events that happened in the New Kingdom of Grenada marking the feast of the Immaculate Conception.

Antonio Castillo Gómez analyzes a series of ephemeral papers, manuscripts and printed artifacts that circulated in the streets of Spain and Hispanic America in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Unlike other widely studied texts, ephemeral papers, both manuscript and printed, shared the same modes of publication. They were attached to walls or distributed in the streets, making them readily available both to well-off people, who were more likely to be literate, and to the population at large, with low levels of literacy. Castillo Gómez analyzes papers handed out in the streets with the aim of reconstituting readers' trajectories and reading experiences.

The transit of periodicals is one of the structuring elements of the circulation of ideas and the configuration of written culture in the Ibero-Atlantic space. Geraldine Rogers studies the flows between Europe and Spanish-speaking America through the case of the fortnightly publication *La Nueva España*, the official magazine of the aid committee to the Spanish government under the Popular Front. Published in Buenos Aires starting in 1936, this magazine took part in the international movements which sought to draw attention to the antifascist struggle. It also constituted a vehicle for the intercontinental transmission of texts and images, many of them testimonials gathered *in situ* or excerpted and adapted from letters, public speeches, and pieces published in Madrid newspapers and magazines.

Part three, "Reflections on a Global Language System: Translation as the Subject of Theory," closes the issue. It contains the only predominantly theoretical article, written by Gustavo Sorá, which advances a critical reading of the complexities inherent in the idea of globalization as an effective and discursive context for the linguistic circulation of written culture. Sorá interrogates translation both as a metaphor and a set of practices, filled with tensions, contradictions, and possibilities. The author looks at how the issue of translation is addressed by anthropological theory and proposes new paths for an analytical, conceptual and epistemological dialogue with disciplinary fields such as book

history, the sociology of translation and the anthropology of written culture, but also with perspectives interested in scales of observation and empirical localization, such as those discussed in this issue of *Lingua Franca*.