

The Making of a Spanish Dos Passos

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Abstract This article explores the position of Dos Passos as a writer in the Spanish polysystem, in which the story of the Spanish translator of *Manhattan Transfer* has been central in keeping Dos Passos's legacy alive in this country. After an overview of Dos Passos's bonds with the country from the American writer's first trip to Spain in 1916, this analysis of the presence of Dos Passos's works in Spain begins on the last days of Miguel Primo de Rivera's dictatorship, when the Spanish translation of *Manhattan Transfer* was first published in Madrid in 1929; continues through the Spanish Civil War and Franco's dictatorship (1939–1975), and takes us to present-day twenty-first century Spain.

Keywords Censorship, John Dos Passos, Ernest Hemingway, *Manhattan Transfer*, Polysystem Theory, Spanish Civil War, Transatlantic Literary Studies, Translation.

How fine to die in Denia
 Young in the ardent strength of sun
 Calm in the burning blue of the sea
 (John Dos Passos, *A Pushcart at the Curb* 1922)

Introduction

- 1 American writer John Roderigo Dos Passos (1896-1970) built strong bonds with Spain since his first visit to the country in 1916. Not only did he learn the language and immerse himself in Spanish history, art, architecture, and literature, but he also made lifetime friends. Spain plays an important part in *A Pushcart at the Curb* (1922), a collection of youth poems, in the travel essays *Rosinante to the Road Again* (1922) and in those included in "Introduction to Civil War (1916-1937)," collected in *Journeys Between Wars* (1938), in the final chapter of his novel *Adventures of a Young Man* (1939), and in his memoir *The Best Times* (1966). The country was also the focus of some of his finest artwork, his letters, and his diaries. In turn, Spanish readers have considered Dos Passos one of the most prominent American writers of the twentieth century, and his works continue to be published regularly in Spain, most notably *Manhattan Transfer* (1925). Unlike in the United States, where his popularity seemed to decline upon his disillusionment with the left at the end of the 1930s and was never truly regained, his fame in Spain has ever remained in a central position as one of the greatest writers of the twentieth century. In this article I will explore some key socio-cultural factors that have contributed to our understanding of John Dos Passos from a Spanish perspective, in which the Spanish translation of *Manhattan Transfer* has played a determining role in the "making of" (cf. Pitavy 83)¹ a Spanish Dos Passos.
- 2 From a theoretical perspective, this paper may be framed within the polysystem theory in a broad sense, in that it looks at literature as part of a multiple system that functions as a structured whole with interdependent members. Drawing on the concept of system as defined by Russian Formalism as a starting point, in the 1970s Itamar Even-Zohar claimed that literature should not be studied as an isolated activity but as something that takes into account all the various socio-cultural factors that have a transformational influence on it at different times. The term *system* in this context was first defined by Tynyanov (1929) to denote "a multilayered structure of elements which relate to and interact with each other" (Shuttleworth 197). Even-Zohar, however, understood the concept of *system* as something more dynamic than his Russian predecessors did, and thus he proposed the term *polysystem* to escape more static interpretations of the concept by previous theorists (Even-Zohar 9-13).
- 3 Even-Zohar conceived the *polysystem* as a "heterogeneous, hierarchical system of systems that interact to bring about an ongoing, dynamic process of evolution within the *polysystem* as a whole" (Shuttleworth 197). In this way, the literary

system of any given country (including translated literature) is seen within a larger socio-cultural *polysystem*, which is also formed by other systems such as the political, religious, or artistic ones. From this broader perspective, literature is not seen as a static set of texts, but in conjunction with a number of factors that determine both their production and reception. In this light, the individual study of literary works in isolation is not an end in itself (Even-Zohar 11).

- 4 Among the many factors that may be considered beyond the mere interpretation of translated texts, power, ideology, and manipulation deserve special attention for the purposes of this article, due to their role in the history of the Spanish Dos Passos. Indeed, the decision to translate one particular work and not another, or what translation theorist Gideon Toury referred to as “translation policy” (Toury in Venuti, *Translation Studies Reader* 202) may be determined not only by literary worth, but also by the expected effect in the target system. Rewritings in the form of criticism, translation, film, press, and, more recently, digital media contents, play a major role in the reputation of every literary work and thus in its survival through time (cf. Lefevere). This is particularly true in the case of John Dos Passos in Spain, as I will argue in the following pages.

Spain in John Dos Passos

- 5 John Dos Passos was among those young American writers who found their inspiration in the Europe of the 1920s, and who searched for new ways of expression feeding from European *avant-garde* movements. In turn, they left a strong European imprint in American cultural imagery. The names of Ernest Hemingway, F. Scott Fitzgerald, T.S. Eliot, Ezra Pound, or Gertrude Stein have been considered as the most notable figures of that generation; quite unfairly, the name of Dos Passos is seldom included as one of them, despite the fact that, in 1938, Jean-Paul Sartre referred to him as the “greatest living writer” (Sanders 302). Whilst Paris was the common denominator for this so-called *jazz-age* generation, Spain played a major role in the lives and works of Stein (cf. Murad), and later in those of Ernest Hemingway and John Dos Passos.
- 6 The names of Ernest Hemingway and John Dos Passos were inseparable during the 1920s up until the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939); they were best friends and in those early years, shared their love for adventure, travel, and writing, as well as their political ideals. Although their friendship cooled down upon serious disagreement on the developments of the Spanish Civil War, and more particularly over the death by execution of *Manhattan Transfer*'s Spanish translator José Robles, ‘Hem’ always remained an important part of Dos Passos's life. While the circumstances surrounding their falling out are not the focus of this paper, the story has attracted scholars from both sides of the Atlantic, with the triangle Dos Passos-Robles-Hemingway at the centre of some interesting works, such as *The Breaking Point* (2005), by Stephen Koch, *To Bury the Dead* (2009) (in Spanish

Enterrar a los muertos, 2005), by Ignacio Martínez de Pisón, and more recently J. McGrath Morris's *The Ambulance Drivers* (2017). But as Dos Passos recalled three years after Hemingway's death, "Some of the best times I ever had in my life were with Ernest Hemingway in Key West." ("Old Hem Was a Sport" 60).

- 7 Whilst Hemingway² was attracted by the powerful inspiration that bullfighting and the ritual of death and battle provided, Dos Passos's Spanish writings reflect an understanding of the country's history, literature, art, and politics, which was grounded on both erudition and empathy for the Spanish people. The reader of Dos Passos's writings about Spain will discover an American writer whose voice does not sound foreign, whose heart seems to beat in Spanish. As Dos Passos wrote in 1916, he felt as if "I'd lived here [in Madrid] all my life" (Ludington, *Fourteenth Chronicle* 53).
- 8 When Dos Passos first visited Madrid in 1916, he had just graduated from Harvard. Deeply impressed by Spain, as he wrote to his good friend Rumsey Marvin (cf. Ludington, *Fourteenth Chronicle* 63), Dos Passos would become so fond of the country that he took every opportunity to visit as often as he could in the following years, mostly up until the Spanish Civil War but also later in his life, the last time being as late as November 1967 (see C. Trulock 40). During that first stay in Madrid, Dos Passos immersed himself in Spanish literature and art, popular culture and flamenco; his father's introductory letters led him to the cultural elite of Madrid, where he went to cafés and *tertulias* and was introduced to Valle Inclán and Juan Ramón Jiménez, two of Spain's most reputed authors of the time (see *Best Times* 30).
- 9 In January 1917, Dos Passos travelled to the east coast of Spain (Gandía, Játiva, Valencia, Sagunto) and on his return he had initially planned to stay in Madrid at least until spring. However, his father's sudden death made him return to America in February 1917. From those months in Spain Dos Passos took back with him a sincere admiration for Spanish culture and for its people, and a good knowledge of the country. His impressions were recollected in "Young Spain", published in *Seven Arts*, August 1917. After a brief return to America, Dos Passos came back to Europe (France and Italy) in the fall of 1917 to serve as an ambulance driver in World War I until 1919. In August that same year he went back to Spain, where he visited the Basque country, Cantabria, Madrid, Extremadura, Andalusia, Segovia, Alicante, and Barcelona. His stay was longer this time—from August 1919 to April 1920—and it resulted in more material for the completion of the writings he had initiated during his former visit: *A Pushcart at the Curb* (1922) and *Rosinante to the Road Again* (1922). Among the writers he had the opportunity to meet this second time were Ramón J. Sender, Maurice Coindreau,³ and Antonio Machado whom he visited in Segovia. He developed his admiration for the writers of *Generación del 98*, particularly Pío Baroja. He also worked on the novel that was to become his first success:

Three Soldiers (1921). Some of Dos Passos's most beautiful watercolours are from this period. In the spring of 1920, he spent a few days in Mallorca in the company of his good friend Kate Drain, John Howard Lawson's⁴ wife, and his sister Adelaide, who was an artist herself (cf. Nanney, *Dos Passos Revisited* 152). In the summer of 1924, after some time in Paris, he travelled to Pamplona in the company of Ernest Hemingway and some other friends. As Dos Passos recalled later in his life, in Spain he was captivated by "scenery and painting and architecture and the *canto hondo* and the grave rhythms of flamenco dancing. And the people, the people, the infinitely tragical, comical, pathetic and laughable varieties of people" (*Best Times* 81).

- 10 Among the many Spanish friends that Dos Passos had made in Madrid, his dearest was José Robles Pazos (*Pepe* as he used to be called familiarly) whom he had met on a train trip to Toledo in the winter of 1916. They were both keen travelers and shared similar cultural interests; Dos Passos was trying to improve his Spanish and Robles, his English. They frequented the same academic circles, at the Residencia de Estudiantes and the Centro de Estudios Históricos. Dos Passos was staying at a small boarding house, Pensión Boston, located in Espoz y Mina Street, near Puerta del Sol.⁵ He attended courses on Spanish language and literature taught by Tomás Navarro Tomás (Martínez de Pisón 9-10). In *The Best Times*, Dos Passos described Robles as an ironic man who was always willing to laugh at anything; an extraordinary talker whose spirits were closer to Baroja's characters than to his mates' at the Institución Libre de Enseñanza. Dos Passos and Robles had the chance to go on more trips to the Sierra madrileña, or to the bullfights (32-33).
- 11 According to Spanish writer Martínez de Pisón, in 1918, Robles graduated from college and started working as an instructor of Spanish literature at the Instituto-Escuela, part of the Institución Libre de Enseñanza. In the two years that followed, he also collaborated with the Centro de Estudios Históricos. By the summer of 1920, he was accepted as an assistant lecturer at Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore, Maryland. One year earlier, he had married Mágina Villegas, a well-educated woman who shared many interests with Robles and who, in fact, worked as a translator for much of her life. They were both friends with the French writer and translator Maurice Coindreau, who was then a student at the University of Madrid and who would translate *Manhattan Transfer* into French some years later. Coindreau met both Valle Inclán and Dos Passos through Robles, who introduced them one day at the library of the Ateneo⁶, in Madrid (cf. Martínez de Pisón 9-39). In 1922, Robles was promoted to the position of associate professor, and he settled in Baltimore until the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War. During those years in America, Robles and Dos Passos frequently wrote to each other, and both Mágina and Pepe would visit Dos Passos in New York whenever they had the

opportunity to do so, particularly on their way to/back from Spain, where they used to spend their summer holidays. Despite their move to Baltimore, the Robles had kept in touch with their Madrid friends and continued to be regulars at the *tertulias* every summer, particularly Valle Inclán's⁷ at the café Granja El Henar, an old dairy shop that was turned into a modern café in 1925, and which was located in Alcalá street, next to the Círculo de Bellas Artes (Azcarate). Between 1927 and 1928, Robles wrote for *La Gaceta Literaria* which was at the time the main journal for young Spanish writers. His first two essays under the section "Libros yanquis" were devoted to *Manhattan Transfer* and Hemingway's *The Sun Also Rises*. Around the same time, Mária started working on the translation of *Rosinante to the Road Again* and Pepe on the translation of *Manhattan Transfer* (cf. Martínez de Pisón 9-39).

- 12 The 1930s saw the peak of popularity in Dos Passos's career. He had started working on the U.S.A. trilogy around 1927, the first volume of which, *The 42nd Parallel*, was published in 1930; two years later, he published the second one, *1919*, both to very positive reviews. He was also attracted by the idea of travelling to Spain again after the proclamation of the *Segunda República*,⁸ but unfortunately, he was convalescent for nearly two months. According to his biographers, during those days his friends were often visiting and/or writing him, "Scott Fitzgerald who was undergoing psychiatric care . . . José Robles visited frequently" while "the Murphys [Gerald and Sarah] sent two tickets for their trip abroad" (316). In June Dos Passos and his wife Katy could finally set out and the writer eventually managed to sign a contract with Harcourt, Brace to write a book on the Second Republic which would provide some funding for the trip (cf. 317). After some weeks visiting friends in Antibes, Katy and Dos travelled to Spain and stayed there for the rest of the summer. During this trip, they rented a car —which they nicknamed "*the cockroach*"— and toured Northern Spain, though most of their time was spent in Madrid. Even if forced to rest again because of his recurrent illness, Dos Passos "obtained interviews with Manuel Azaña, the then Prime Minister, and with the famous philosopher Miguel de Unamuno" (319). He frequented the library of Madrid's Ateneo, and had the opportunity to visit old friends, among them José Giner, Claude Bowers —then U.S. ambassador to Spain— and Ernest Hemingway, with whom he shared lunches at Botin's. In Dos Passos's words, "these lunches were the last time Hem and I were able to talk about things Spanish without losing our tempers" (*Best Times* 220).
- 13 Although he did not manage to write a monograph on the *Segunda República* as he had planned, partly due to illness, his impressions about the political situation in Spain were nevertheless collected in the piece "The Republic of Honest Men," and included in a lengthier volume, *In All Countries* (1934), which contained other markedly political travel writings on Russia, Mexico, Chicago,

Detroit, and Washington. Worried about the political developments in Europe with fascism looming, his view of the situation in Spain was not particularly positive.

- 14 In the summer of 1936, Dos Passos was worried about the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War, and his activism in defense of human rights led him to join the American Committee to Aid Spanish Democracy. This movement aimed at raising funds, as well as providing medical help and refugee aid to Spain. Among its members were communists, Christian organizations, and ordinary citizens. In an effort to convince American society and American politicians that action was necessary, and that the Republican government was the only legitimate one, Dos Passos, Hemingway, Lillian Hellman, and Archibald McLeish, among others, set up “Contemporary Historians,” a company to produce a documentary film about the Spanish Civil War, and thus raise funds for the loyalist cause. For the project, they hired Dutch filmmaker Joris Ivens, a communist. Hemingway and Dos Passos agreed to meet in Madrid for the filming and to work on the script. Hemingway travelled as a war correspondent for the North American Newspaper Alliance (NANA), whereas Dos Passos committed himself to writing three articles for *Fortune*, a magazine edited by his friend—and member of Contemporary Historians—Archibald McLeish. Dos Passos was convinced that “unless the American government intervened, the country was, in effect, handing Spain over to fascism as well as to Communism” (Spencer Carr 357-362).
- 15 During their time in Madrid in April 1937, John Dos Passos and Ernest Hemingway, like other foreign correspondents, stayed at the Hotel Florida, located in Plaza del Callao. It was just a short walk from the Telefónica building in Gran Vía, where the government’s censorship office had established its headquarters. In a news feature covering their stay in Madrid, titled “Dos camaradas de América,” and published by the Spanish newspaper *Ahora*, the two American writers were portrayed as loyal friends of the Spanish Republic, who were in the country for the shooting of a documentary: “Llegaron cuando muchos desertaron poniendo pretextos inútiles,” (they came over [to Spain] while others fled under worthless excuses) writes the Spanish reporter, *camarada* Delgado (8). The caption under Dos Passos’s photo reads that he was in Spain to “*torear obuses*” (11), a bullfighting metaphor meaning he was to face the shells as a *matador* and overcome the enemy.
- 16 Dos Passos started his journey to Spain in 1937 determined to support the loyalist cause. Once in the country, the news that his old Spanish friend and translator of *Manhattan Transfer*, José Robles Pazos, had been executed sometime in the fall of 1936 by the Soviets in Spain meant the final turning point in a chain of events that had been gradually undermining the American writer’s trust in the Communist Party. As is well known, Robles happened to

be in Spain on vacation when the war broke out and chose to stay to support the loyalist cause as an officer working for the Republican administration in Valencia, instead of returning to the safety of his position at Johns Hopkins University. One evening several people in civilian clothes knocked on his door and asked him to accompany them for some “routine” questioning. After unlawful detention, he disappeared. Dos Passos’s desperate efforts to find out about his friend’s fate were painful, only to discover eventually that he had been executed without a trial, possibly by the Soviet intelligentsia. The tension generated between Hemingway and Dos Passos at the news of Robles’s execution made Dos Passos abandon the project that had originally brought them together to Spain that spring of 1937—the filming of *The Spanish Earth*.

- 17 A sympathizer of the left and a firm supporter of social causes, in *Rosinante to the Road Again* (1922), Dos Passos had written about his historical vision of Spanish politics and expressed his hope in a new way of social ruling that had to come from the Spanish working classes. Years later, in “The Republic of Honest Men” (1933), he had analyzed the political crisis that Spain underwent during the Second Republic with mixed feelings of hope and pessimism. In his Spanish Civil War writings of 1937, references to the evils of bureaucracy and power in the section titled “Coast Road South” reflect Dos Passos’s political disillusionment, which had been developing since his trip to Russia in 1928. “Official luncheons are hunt breakfasts,” he wrote in Valencia after learning of Robles’s execution by the Russians (*Journeys between Wars* 357). Dos Passos’s accounts were permeated by his sympathy towards the suffering of ordinary people struggling to carry on with their lives as usual, and he felt there is a “nightmarish” atmosphere in Madrid (366). In the last section of “Madrid Under Siege,” titled “The Nights Are Long,” Dos Passos’s thoughts are with the people: “And in all the black houses children we’d seen playing in the streets were asleep, and the grownups were lying there thinking of old friends and family and ruins and people they’d loved and hating the enemy and hunger and how to get a little more food tomorrow” (373). This and other similar reflections may be found throughout Dos Passos’s accounts of the Spanish Civil War, no doubt influenced by his own suffering at the loss of his best Spanish friend, Pepe Robles.

John Dos Passos in Spain

- 18 A number of Spanish scholars have explored Dos Passos’s fictional works of Spanish inspiration, his essays, letters, and diaries. Among them, scholars Concha Zardoya, Catalina Montes,⁹ and Pilar Marín Madrazo¹⁰ were pioneers. More recently, Spanish writer Ignacio Martínez de Pisón, filmmaker Sonia Tercero, and Professor Eulalia Piñero-Gil have all shed light on our understanding of Dos Passos from a Spanish perspective. However, Dos Passos’s works inspired

by Spain, such as *Rosinante to the Road Again* (1922) [*Rocinante vuelve al camino* 1930], *A Pushcart at the Curb* (1922) [*Invierno en Castilla y otros poemas* 2018], *Journeys Between Wars* (*Viajes de entreguerras* 2005) *Adventures of a Young Man* (1939) [*Las aventuras de un joven* 1962] or *The Best Times: An Informal Memoir* (1966) [*Años inolvidables* 2006]¹⁹ are rarely known by the Spanish readership.

- 19 In Spain, Dos Passos is popularly known and referred to as “the author of *Manhattan Transfer*.” Indeed, it is this novel that has traditionally attracted the Spanish reading public (as seen by the number of editions that appear regularly), rather than, for example, his widely appraised work by American critics, the U.S.A. trilogy (1938) [*El Paralelo 42*, *La primera catástrofe*: 1919, and *El gran dinero* 1959]. If you take a Sunday stroll around Madrid’s fleamarket *el Rastro* and ask at any of the second-hand book stalls if they have anything by Dos Passos—the reply will invariably be if you are looking for a copy of *Manhattan Transfer*. But what are the reasons for the centrality of *Manhattan Transfer* in Spain as compared to other Dos Passos’s works?
- 20 In my view, three major socio-cultural and/or political factors which operated in the Spanish polysystem at different historical times have played a significant role in the Spanish construction of John Dos Passos. The first determining factor is the context in which the first Spanish rewriting of Dos Passos—in the form of translation—took place: the publication by Cenit in 1929 of the first edition of *Manhattan Transfer*. The fact that it was a communist publisher and not any of the other general or purely literary publishers gave *Manhattan Transfer* and John Dos Passos a very specific status as a leftist writer. The second one is the banning of the novel by Franco’s censors for about twenty years, followed by its unexpected reappearance in a luxury collection of classics by Planeta publishers, whose powerful marketing and sales strategy combined with an ability to elude censorship turned John Dos Passos into a “reputable” author in the 1960s. The fact that Cenit’s edition of the novel had been censored and unavailable in bookshops for so many years made it an object of cult for the more liberal intellectuals in the 1960s and 70s. The third factor is the book, film, press and digital rewritings of the Robles-Hemingway-Dos Passos triangle in the context of the Spanish Civil War literary boom over the last few decades, also fed by an ongoing interest in Spanish society to vindicate the country’s historical memory in recent years.
- 21 *Manhattan Transfer*, “the most translated novel in Spain” (see Lanero par.1) was first published in Spain in 1929 by Cenit, seven years before the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War. It must have been a success, since there was a second edition only one year later, in 1930. The first-hand testimony of Ernest Hemingway, who happened to be in Spain shortly after its publication, in 1931, suggests Dos Passos’s growing popularity in the country. He wrote:

You are the great writer of Spain . . . They all think I am bullshitting because I claim to be a friend of yours. Nobody has read *Manhattan* [Transfer] less than 4 times. In spite of descriptive introduction you are supposed to be an old man about Unamuno's age – otherwise how did you have time to know the Bajo [sic] fondos so well and have so much experience. (qtd. in Ludington, *Fourteenth Chronicle* 342)

- 22 From the immediate reactions contemporary to the novel's appearance in the late twenties and early thirties, to more recent analysis of the work decades later, the Spanish critics' view of *Manhattan Transfer* has been an extremely positive one, characterized by a fascination of the city of New York and of Dos Passos's innovative techniques both in the use of language and in the structuring of the novel. There is enough evidence to say that Dos Passos was indeed a very popular writer in Spain between 1929 and 1936.
- 23 The first translation of *Manhattan Transfer* into Spanish falls into the initial period of communist Cenit publishers (1928-1936), which was one of the so-called *editoriales de avanzada*. These were a number of new publishing houses that focused on socio-revolutionary books, both fiction and non-fiction that emerged in the period 1927-1933 as a result of the new workers' movements and against the horrors of the Great War. In their initial period, Cenit published mostly literary works, especially novels. These were written by what they called *novelistas nuevos*, writers whose works had a strong political and/or social component, plus in many cases an anti-war attitude. Some of the authors published by Cenit came from America, like Dos Passos or Sinclair Lewis—whose novel *Babbitt* was also first published by Cenit in a translation by Robles—but many came from the Soviet Union and Germany (Santonja 138). The list included Henri Barbusse, Hermann Hesse, Upton Sinclair, Mijail Cholokhov, Fedor Gladkov, Karl Marx, Friedrich Engels, and Maksim Gorki, among others. Spanish authors included Ramón J. Sender and César Vallejo. From today's perspective we can say that Cenit and the other *editoriales de avanzada* played a key role in the shaping of the Spanish polysystem. They broadened the Spanish cultural system not only by opening it to the more “advanced” or radical views of the time, but more importantly, by also making them accessible to the general reading public. During its existence (1928-1936), Cenit introduced a long list of foreign titles into the Spanish literary system through translation with ideological motives: providing affordable paperbacks to the working class that would open their minds to leftist causes and revolutionary ideals.
- 24 During and after the war in Spain, many libraries—particularly those known as *Bibliotecas Circulantes Populares* set up by the Second Republic—were destroyed. Dos Passos's *Manhattan Transfer* was one of the “revolutionary” books included in their catalogues, and thus many copies of the novel were burnt. Officially banned in 1948 by Franco's censors on “moral grounds”

(Bautista, “Spanish Translations of Manhattan Transfer and Censorship” 154), the Spanish reception of Dos Passos in post-war years was marked by censorship. However, the fact that the novel was banned for a number of years did not have a negative effect on its reception by the Spanish reading public. In 1960, Planeta published the novel in Spain, making it available for the first time after the 1930 Cenit edition. The physical embodiment of Planeta’s edition in its luxury binding suited the taste of those years, in which books in the bookshelves of homes were a symbol of economic and cultural status, and these were expected to look fine as a decorative item. Thus, *Manhattan Transfer* left behind its proletarian look and became a hard-covered, bible-paper edition with gold letters. Some of the language was softened, and a few dialogues including blasphemies and/or overtly sexual scenes were slightly changed. In the 1960s, the novel’s edition lost its “underground” appearance and acquired the status of a respectable, classic bestseller, present in the bookshelves of many Spanish middle-class homes.

- 25 Although Francisco Franco’s regime lasted from the end of the Spanish Civil War in 1939 to his death in 1975, from the late 1950s onwards and in the 1960s there was clearly a gradual relaxation in book censorship, regarding both imported copies of foreign books and previously banned translated works of foreign authors, such as *Manhattan Transfer*, which was finally allowed to be re-printed in 1957. The censorship restrictions had affected other Dos Passos works, too. Despite the fact that there were no major political changes, there was a gradual economic liberalization, as well as a communication campaign that aimed at making the western allies see or believe that Spain was making progress over time. Between 1945 and 1951, there was no American ambassador to Spain. However, the American administration considered it essential to approach Spain for its unique strategic location in the Mediterranean; Franco, in turn, needed to appear more democratic (after the failure to receive American aid under the Marshall Plan in the late 1940s) and become a member of the United Nations (1955) (cf. Twomey 68-70).
- 26 It was in this political context that John Dos Passos was recovered for the Spanish public by publisher José Manuel Lara, in quite a different format. This time, *Manhattan Transfer* was not the work of a radical, young promising Dos Passos of 1929, presented by Cenit communist publishers. Instead, Planeta moved Dos Passos towards the center of the Spanish politically correct cultural system of the 1960s, marketed as a classic writer in a luxury format and presenting a respectable, mature writer with an accomplished literary career. The Spanish John Dos Passos of the 1960s and 1970s was devoid of any overt political connotations as mandated by time circumstances, and the editions of his works were aimed at the growing middle-class readership.

- 27 Planeta's editions and reprints of *Manhattan Transfer* continued to be sold until the 1980s, and other popular publishers made *Manhattan Transfer* available from 1982 onwards, among them Bruguera (1982), Plaza and Janés (1986) and Círculo de Lectores (1989), more often in the form of paperbacks. The most notable feature of the presence of *Manhattan Transfer* in the Spanish cultural system in the last three decades is that in some of the editions its translation was initially credited to a non-existent José Robles Piquer, first by Bruguera (1984) and later on by Círculo (1989; 1995; 2002), Debate (1999), Mediasat (2003), and Debolsillo (2004; 2006; 2009; 2014). In turn, the translations published by Plaza and Janés (1991), Ediciones Diario El País (2003) and Edhasa (2005; 2006; 2007; 2008; 2011) were all credited to José Robles Pazos. There was even a 1992 edition by Planeta in which the translation of *Manhattan Transfer* was credited to Enrique Robles. Plagiarism and unforgivable mistakes are some of the reasons given by other scholars in the past¹² to explain such discrepancies; whatever the reason, fact is that these translations are different in ways that indicate not only multiple actors, but also that intellectual property rights of the translator(s) have not been respected.
- 28 In recent years, John Dos Passos's involvement in the Spanish Civil War has not escaped the literary *boom* surrounding the conflict, a theme which continues to maintain a central position in the Spanish polysystem. The name of Dos Passos has not only been recurrently present in accounts of the Spanish Civil War but, more significantly, it has kept *Manhattan Transfer* in a prominent position within our cultural system through the echoes of the story of its translator, José Robles Pazos. It is worth mentioning that when we consider the presence of John Dos Passos in today's Spanish media, more specifically his presence in newspapers and on the Internet, his name is invariably connected to leftist politics, while his political shift is frequently ignored. For example, historian and political scientist Antonio Elorza—a sympathizer of the left—referred to a casual encounter in 1919¹³ between a Russian activist under the pseudonym of 'Borodin' and Dos Passos at the *Ateneo de Madrid*, a cultural center frequented by the more progressive cultural and social elite of the time. Apparently, Borodin asked Dos Passos if he knew of anybody who might be interested in founding a Spanish communist party, and Dos Passos directed him to Fernando de los Ríos, who in turn directed Borodin to someone else (par. 1). Elorza goes on to note that years later, during the Second Republic, Dos Passos's article titled "Doves in the Bull Ring" ("Palomas en el ruedo") appeared in Ramón J. Sender's communist paper *La Lucha*. In it, Dos Passos reflected on the social tensions during a socialist meeting at the Santander bull ring, again in the company of Fernando de los Ríos, during his visit to Spain in 1933. In both cases brought up by Elorza, Dos Passos is portrayed as a friend of the Spanish left, and no reference is made to his later conservative turn. Examples

abound in newspaper libraries that similarly ignore Dos Passos's political transition later in his life.

- 29 Interpretations of John Dos Passos's search for José Robles during the Spanish Civil War are numerous in the Spanish press, frequently echoing the work of historians or writers who have dealt with the matter. The impact of two of these has been more frequently present in the Spanish media: Ignacio Martínez de Pisón's 2005 book *Enterrar a los muertos* (in English, *To Bury the Dead*, 2009) and, more recently, Sonia Tercero's documentary film *Robles, Duelo al Sol* (2015). Although it has been said that Martínez de Pisón's *Enterrar a los muertos* may have been inspired by Stephen Koch's *The Breaking Point: Hemingway, Dos Passos and the Murder of José Robles*, fact is that the former was published in February 2005, a couple of months earlier than Stephen Koch's book in the United States; both books deal with the same events but in quite a different tone and from different perspectives—Koch's book reads like historical fiction and focuses on the idea of Hemingway's political falseness. However, both have successfully contributed to the revisiting of John Dos Passos.
- 30 Martínez de Pisón's book has generally been positively reviewed, although one particular aspect, his portrayal of poet Rafael Alberti, raised some criticism by writer and journalist Benjamín Prado; the controversy is about the passage in which Martínez de Pisón mentions the accusation against Alberti, in 1977, by writer and surrealist artist Eugenio Fernández Granell for not having denounced the numerous killings by the Stalinists, among them professor Robles's, "a poet and a cartoonist, at the hands of the Russian generals"¹⁴ (qtd. in Martínez de Pisón 33). According to Martínez de Pisón, by keeping silent about such things, Alberti had managed to become a communist *star* (cf. 33). A regular at the Madrid *tertulias* with the Robles and other writers and intellectuals of the time, such as León Felipe or Valle-Inclán, Alberti was the son of wealthy sherry traders and as such—Azcárate recalls—before the war used to live in an elegant apartment in Madrid's Lagasca street and dressed impeccably like a dandy or "señorito." In the summer of 1936—the war had just broken out—the Robles were very surprised when Alberti came to visit them, at the Madrid flat where they used to stay over the summer periods, transformed into a militiaman (*miliciano*), fully equipped with "cap, overalls, and espadrilles" (*gorra, mono y alpargatas*) (Azcárate). This happened at a time when the way you dressed could mean the difference between life and death (see Trapiello). Months later, when Pepe Robles went missing, despite their mutual friendship and Alberti's communist connections, together with the fact that he was living in Valencia at the time of Robles's disappearance, no help came from him, nor from their editor at Cenit, Wenceslao Roces,¹⁵ someone who had been a close friend of Pepe's. Years later, Roces went into exile in

Mexico,¹⁶ as Margara did. They both frequented the same social circles of Spanish exiles, but she refused to ever speak to him again (Azcarate). It seems Margara, or Margarita Villegas *de Robles*,¹⁷ as she would sign her translations in exile, could never forgive them.

- 31 In 2014, Sonia Tercero's work on the documentary *Robles, Duelo al Sol* brought a renewed interest in Dos Passos in Spain and mainly in *Manhattan Transfer*. The film is built on Tercero's research and the contributions of major writers, historians, and academics, as well as friends and relatives of the protagonists, John Dos Passos and Jose Robles. Among the most relevant contributors are Martinez de Pison, historian Paul Preston, Lucy Dos Passos and her son, John Coggin, Luis de Azcarate, and Carmen Robles, daughter of Ramon Robles. The John Dos Passos Society held its Second Biennial Conference in Madrid in 2016, gathering scholars from nine different countries to focus on Dos Passos's relationship to Spain and his works of Spanish inspiration. The event made it possible for the grandsons of Dos Passos and Robles, John Coggin and Mario Ortiz-Robles, to meet for the first time. Press coverage included participation of the Society's members in various radio programs, plus references in major newspapers.
- 32 The year 2018 marked two further milestones in the history of Dos Passos's presence in the Spanish polysystem. One of them was the publication of Dos Passos's youth poems collected in *A Pushcart at the Curb*. Translated by Eulalia Pinero-Gil with the title *Invierno en Castilla y otros poemas*, it is a valuable contribution to the corpus of Dos Passos's works in translation. The other one was the publication of the first annotated Spanish edition of *Manhattan Transfer* by Catedra, in a revised version of Jose Robles's original translation. These are again clear expressions of the continuing interest that Dos Passos raises in Spain.

Conclusion

- 33 Translated literature plays a determining role in the shaping of cultural polysystems. There are external factors beyond the purely literary ones that make certain authors and/or some of their works become part of the literary canon of any given cultural system. The reasons that first lead publishers within a given polysystem to accept or reject a text coming from outside the system will surely include ideological and economic considerations as well as poetical ones. But the reasons that maintain such work in the system over time are not only connected to ideology, economy, and/or poetics, but also to the nature of its rewritings.
- 34 The socio-cultural and political context in which *Manhattan Transfer* was first published, combined with Dos Passos's popularity in Spanish intellectual circles in the 1920s and 1930s, had a positive influence on the novel's initial success. The fact that it was published by Cenit—a communist publisher—during the agonizing

reign of Alfonso XIII and Miguel Primo de Rivera's dictatorship gave Dos Passos the status of a leftist writer that has endured over time; his political shift has not affected his reputation as a writer in Spain. The first edition of *Manhattan Transfer*, in 1929, with a reprint in 1930, was a paperback with an urban illustration on the front cover; the translation approach by Robles was characterized by his efforts to convey the vivacity of Dos Passos's characters, including the frank, vulgar language of the *bajos fondos*, as Hemingway had put it in his 1931 letter to Dos Passos. Furthermore, the friends Dos Passos had made during his first stay in Madrid, many of them connected to the Residencia de Estudiantes, gave him a highly reputed status in the Spanish intellectual circles that made him a well-known, respected author.

- 35 From the 1990s onwards, with almost yearly reprints of *Manhattan Transfer* available, a new element has appeared in the revisiting of the novel by the media—the association between the Spanish Civil War, Dos Passos, and José Robles. Indeed, in recent years *Manhattan Transfer* and John Dos Passos have been revisited by Spanish critics interested in the cultural, literary, and historical background of Civil War Spain. After Martínez de Pisón (2005) reconstructed the story of José Robles Pazos—often referred to as *the* translator of *Manhattan Transfer*—the name of Dos Passos has been re-linked to Spain for present-day readers. Currently, the Dos Passos-Robles connection is the most distinctive feature of the Spanish reception of *Manhattan Transfer*, and one that distinguishes it as compared to its reception in other countries. Translators of the trilogy U.S.A. Marcelo Cohen (*Paralelo 42*), Jesús Zulaika (*El gran dinero*) or Mariano Antolín Rato (1919) remain almost anonymous (just like most translators), whereas Robles and *Manhattan Transfer* have become part of Spanish cultural identity. Almost one hundred years after the publication of the first translation of a work by Dos Passos in Spain, the American writer remains a thought-provoking character in the Spanish cultural imagery.

Notes

¹In his essay “The Making of a French Faulkner: A Reflection on Translation,” Pitavy declared he aimed at providing “a case study in examining the process of translation, *displacement*, of a given literary text from production to reception” (83).

²Spain inspired some of Hemingway’s best short stories, such as “A Clean, Well-Lighted Place” or “The Butterfly and the Tank,” his novels *Fiesta* (1926) and *For Whom the Bell Tolls* (1940), probably the most popular English language novel set in Civil War Spain, and his only theater play, *The Fifth Column* (1938).

³According to Ignacio Martínez de Pisón (39) it was Pepe Robles who introduced Dos Passos to Maurice Coindreau at the Ateneo cultural centre in Madrid. Coindreau would later translate some of Dos Passos’s works into French.

⁴John Howard Lawson, a playwright and social activist, met Dos Passos on board the *Chicago* on their way to Europe during World War I. He later became one of Dos Passos’s closest friends in the 1920s. They shared interests, political ideas, and projects, and they worked together in the New Playwrights Theater. Their friendship broke upon differences of opinion on the Spanish Civil War in 1937.

⁵Poems II and IV of “Winter in Castille,” included in *A Pushcart at the Curb* (1922), were inspired by this street.

⁶Founded in 1835, The Ateneo was a cultural center frequented by liberal writers, intellectuals, and politicians. See also endnote 3 above.

⁷José Robles sometimes helped Valle-Inclán financially, since they were good friends and paisanos gallegos. (Conversation with Azcárate: July 2015)

⁸The Segunda República or Second Spanish Republic (1931-1938), a republican regime in Spain preceded by the Restoration and followed by Franco’s dictatorship was proclaimed when King Alfonso XIII left the country after anti-monarchist candidates won the elections in the spring of 1931.

⁹Catalina Montes, with her book *La visión de España en la obra de John Dos Passos* (1980), is the author that—so far—has given the most detailed account of Dos Passos’s works on Spain, providing valuable bibliographical and chronological detail for anyone interested in the topic.

¹⁰Like Catalina Montes’s study, Pilar Marín Madrazo’s *La Gran Guerra en la obra de Hemingway y Dos Passos* was published in 1980. Although it only mentions the Spanish connections of Dos Passos tangentially, it is illustrative of a period of more intense research on his life and works at the Universidad de Salamanca, probably under the leadership of North American literature professor Juan José Coy.

¹¹The dates provided for the Spanish translations of these works correspond to the first editions; only *Las aventuras de un joven* is out of print.

¹²Rabadán, Broncano and Martínez de Pisón have all referred to the change of the translator’s name.

¹³After his first stay in Spain in 1916-17; Dos Passos returned to the country and stayed there from August 1919 to April 1920, when he completed *Three Soldiers* (cf. Pizer, *Towards a Modernist Style* 14).

¹⁴Translated by the author of this article from the Spanish original quote which says: “poeta y dibujante, a manos de los generales rusos.”

Notes

¹⁵ For Spanish writer Andrés Trapiello, Wenceslao Roces was a gray man serving criminal Soviet interests: “a dark man at the service of the Soviet NKVD, one of those officials that seem to plot all sorts of white-glove crimes from the shadows” (Original quote in Spanish: un hombre oscuro al servicio del NKVD soviético, uno de esos funcionarios que parecen combinar impávidos en la sombra toda clase de crímenes de guante blanco”) (Trapiello par. 10).

¹⁶ Both Wenceslao Roces and Rafael Jiménez Siles, Cenit editors and friends of the Robles up until Pepe’s execution, went to exile in México. While Roces taught at various Mexican universities, Jiménez Siles owned a bookshop, La Pérgola, and took an active part in the cultural life of Spanish intellectuals in exile (Azcárate).

¹⁷ Mágina continued to work as a translator in Mexico, mostly for the Fondo de Cultura Económica, but also for Séneca, a publishing house led by poet José Bergamín, among others. After leaving Spain for Paris, and then briefly staying in the U.S. to recover Pepe’s life insurance, she moved to Mexico to join her sister, Amparo Villegas, whose career as an actress had begun in Spain before the war and continued successfully in her Mexican exile. Mágina’s Spanish friends in exile included writer León Felipe and historian Juan Marichal. Her correspondence with Dos Passos continued after her husband’s death for many years (Ortiz).

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Biography

Rosa Mara Bautista-Cordero (PhD in English and North American Literature) has taught undergraduate and graduate courses at various Spanish universities and at NYU (Madrid campus). She is currently an Assistant Professor at the English Department of Universidad Autnoma de Madrid. An avid researcher of American writer John Dos Passos, she authored an annotated edition and revised translation of *Manhattan Transfer*, which was published by Ctedra in 2018, and is working on the translation of *Tour of Duty* to be published in 2022. Her published translations include Bruce Chatwin, V.S. Naipaul, Erica Jong, Hugh Thomas, Amos Oz, Tom Wolfe, Peter Balakian, and Allen Ginsberg, among others. Her research on Dos Passos includes several articles, book chapters and an edited volume with Prof. Aaron Shaheen, from the University of Tennessee, titled *John Dos Passos's Transatlantic Chronicling: Critical Essays on the Interwar Years* (UTP 2022), to which she has also contributed a chapter on Dos Passos as chronicler of the International Brigades during the Spanish Civil War – "Glenn Spotswood as Cannon Fodder: Myth vs. Reality at the International Brigades." She is vice-president of the John Dos Passos Society.