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Argentine literature in English: publishing translations subsidized by PROSUR (2010–2020)

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ABSTRACT

This article focuses on national institutes' translation policies and draws on works that have recast the notion of soft power for the study of cultural production. Our goal is to analyze how Argentine literature circulates abroad, specifically through translations into hypercentral English, with subsidies from the Programa Sur de Traducciones (South Translation Program, or PROSUR). We trace the history of PROSUR – run by the Argentine Ministry of Foreign Affairs, International Trade, and Worship – and analyze statistical data from institutional databases. Likewise, we study the catalogues, collections, websites, and paratexts of the books sold by a group of publishing houses that have received PROSUR subsidies. Our article suggests that, regardless of the various traits of the titles and the specific profiles of each publishing house, we may identify common trends in relation to how the presses exercise soft power, produce meaning, and introduce Argentine literature in three main ways that we define as political resistance, Latin American literature, and women's writing. Thus, this article is a contribution to the notion of soft power by shifting the focus away from the intent around cultural policy and toward frequently overlooked considerations around the practices of the recipients of cultural policies.

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KEYWORDS

Soft power; subsidized translation; publishing house; international circulation of literature; internationalization of writers; Argentine literature

1. Introduction

In 2020, *The Adventures of China Iron* by Argentine writer Gabriela Cabezón Cámara was shortlisted for the International Booker Prize, awarded to the best English translation every year. The Argentine novel was published in English by British publisher Charco Press and proved a milestone in the recognition of Argentine literature in the international arena. This article analyzes the recent internationalization of Argentine literature through the subsidized translations promoted by Programa Sur de Traducciones (South Translation Program, or PROSUR from now on). We expand the notion of soft power by shifting the focus away from the intent around cultural policy and toward frequently overlooked considerations around the practices of the recipients of cultural policies – in this case, publishing houses.

Scholarly literature has addressed the conditions of the international circulation of literature by studying translators, publishing houses, title selection, and cultural policies.

Focusing on Argentine and Latin American literature, we have found quantitative analyses on the recent history of translations into French published in France (Poupaud, 2008), and case studies focused on well-known and internationally recognized Latin American authors, such as Roberto Bolaño (Loy, 2020; Pollack, 2009) and Jorge Luis Borges (Locane, 2019; Wijnterp, 2015). In recent years, the translation policies of national institutes have garnered more attention, including a focus on Argentina's PROSUR (Szpilbarg, 2019). These institutions are fundamental global agents enabling the discovery of foreign literatures. Recent studies have focused on state translation policies that promote national literature abroad, such as studies focused on Canada (Martin, 1994), the Arab World (Jacquemon, 2009), China (Li, 2016), the Netherlands and Israel (Heilbron & Sapiro, 2018), Argentina (Szpilbarg, 2019), Georgia (Kvirikashvili, 2020), and Korea (Salazar Salgado & Ferreira Doretto, 2022).

The abovementioned works consider the international circulation of literature within world literature (Locane, 2019; Müller & Gras Miravet, 2015) and internationalization (Szpilbarg et al., 2022), or focus on translation policies (Venturini, 2017). However, there is still a gap regarding how publishing (Souchier, 2007) produces meaning around translation, mainly by defining series (Bascañán Correa, 2022; Costa & Garone Gravier, 2020; Garone Gravier, 2022; Rivalan Guégo & Nicoli, 2017) and designing paratexts (Genette, 1997; Hurlley, 2020).

This paper draws on existing literature that has applied the notion of soft power to the study of cultural goods (Carbó-Catalan & Roig Sanz, 2022). This approach allows us to understand the concept of soft power as a tool that makes it possible to 'historise cultural relations, intellectual cooperation, and cultural diplomacy in order to better understand power dynamics' (p. 1). Our understanding of soft power also resonates with Joseph Nye's definition of the exercise of persuasion, which underscores the ability to influence audiences in other countries (2021, p. 201).

Thus, this paper hypothesizes that PROSUR can be understood as an instrument of soft power given that the publishing houses receiving funds for translation produce new meanings when selecting, translating, and publishing books. PROSUR involves economic aims, such as opening new markets for Argentine authors (Papaleo, 2009). Based on the premise that the international circulation of literature and translation entails hierarchies and an unequal distribution of worth and recognition (Sapiro, 2020), we will focus on how English-language publishing houses introduce literature written by authors in semi-peripheral languages, as stated by Heilbron (1999; 2020).

2. Methodology

This article will first analyze PROSUR, and, second, the practices of the publishing houses receiving PROSUR subsidies. The latter involves how their catalogues include books written by Argentine authors and how they introduce them to their readers. Thus, this article shifts the focus from the viewpoint of PROSUR, an unprecedented program for the internationalization of Argentine authors and a unique source of information on intra- and extratranslation, to the examination of its effects – that is, we consider which books by Argentine authors are translated and how. This perspective will allow us to define potential trends in the ways Argentine authors have circulated in the English-speaking world.

Drawing from institutional documents and official statements, this article will briefly trace the history of PROSUR and analyze its databases, which are available online.¹ This program has not only entailed unprecedented state-funded support for translations but also poses an exceptional source of information.² While PROSUR databases are organized per year and do not provide consistent information for every year, most tables include title; author(s); the language set for translation; foreign publishing house requesting the subsidy; publishing-house country; planned print run; dollars requested; and dollars granted. This key information will allow us to limit the problem of the effects of the policy and identify those publishing houses that have received subsidies.

The second part of this article will examine the ways in which the publishing houses receiving PROSUR subsidies have introduced subsidized translations of Argentine authors into their catalogues and presented them to their readers. From a comparative viewpoint, the analysis will consider the following variables: the paratexts – specifically the back covers, front covers, flaps, introductions, and epilogues especially formulated for published translations; the ways books are included in publishing-house catalogues – for instance, adding to or creating a series; and the ways the books and the authors are introduced on publishing-house websites.³

The timeframe of the analysis is underpinned by two significant events for the international circulation and growing recognition of Argentine literature. The analysis spans from 2010, when Argentina was Guest of Honor of the Frankfurt Book Fair and PROSUR was launched, to 2020, the program's tenth anniversary. It is worth mentioning that 2020 was also the year that *The Adventures of China Iron* by Gabriela Cabezón Cámara (Charco Press) was shortlisted for the prestigious International Booker Prize.

3. The PROSUR program

PROSUR was created by Argentina's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, International Trade and Worship (Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores y Culto) in 2010 'to foster a desire to discover works of Argentine literature and thinking abroad'. PROSUR promotes books that are 'representative of the country's national identity' in order 'to disseminate our imagery, ideas and values abroad' ('Programa Sur Introduction', n.d.). Foreign publishing houses submit their proposals to translate titles written in Spanish by Argentine authors. There are no restrictions as to genre. PROSUR's selection committee decides which submissions will receive the grants, no higher than US \$3,200 each. Foreign publishing houses agree to publish the translation within a year of the call for submissions.

As mentioned, the program was originally founded on the occasion of the 2010 Frankfurt Book Fair, when Argentina was invited as the Guest of Honor. While PROSUR does not explicitly prioritize specific themes to determine which applications will receive grants, we may identify some predominant trends. In this sense, members of the organization committee argued that Argentina's participation as guest of honor at the Frankfurt Book Fair in 2010 provided an opportunity to reflect upon the parallel between the 1976 military dictatorship in Argentina and Nazism in Germany.⁴ Therefore, we may observe a tendency to highlight human rights and memory.

Based on the PROSUR database, we have identified that, from 2010 to 2020, publishing houses were granted 1,446 translation rights for translations into 50 languages. These

subsidies were granted to 530 publishing houses (Adamo & Rodríguez Lacrouts, 2023). In our period, we see 145 yearly translation rights granted on average, in contrast to the average 88 translation rights sold annually from 2002 to 2008 (Adamo et al., 2009, p. 59). In the specific case of translation to the English language, the subsidies granted for translations comprise 10 percent of the total, reflecting the well-known fact that a small percentage of titles in the translation world market get translated into English (Heilbron, 1999, 2020).

We may note a significant increase in translations into English since 2010: from 7 translation rights sold on average per year from 2002 to 2008 (Adamo et al., 2009, p. 59) to 15 since the creation of the PROSUR up until 2020. Additionally, we have identified subsidies to translate works into English between 2010 and 2020 among 85 publishing houses from Australia, Canada, Germany, the United Kingdom, India, Ireland, Israel, Spain, Switzerland, Trinidad and Tobago, and the United States.⁵ Of these publishing houses, this paper examines English-language presses receiving three or more subsidies, allowing us to explore catalogues with various translations of books by Argentine authors of the last decade. We may take this as a sign of knowledge of and interest in Argentine literature and institutions.

The abovementioned criteria has resulted in a selection of eight publishers from the United States and the United Kingdom that received subsidies in the first decade of the program (2010–2020),⁶ which we will closely analyze in the following section.

4. Subsidized English translations of Argentine literature

This section analyzes how eight publishing houses have introduced Argentine authors into their catalogues and to English-speaking readers. We will observe the presses And Other Stories, Archipelago Books, Bitter Lemon Press, Charco Press, New Directions, Restless Books, Seven Stories Press, and The Clapton Press, which are generally devoted to publishing literature in translation. Let us briefly describe the publishers.

In 1936, the U.S. press New Directions was founded by James Laughlin, whose family owned the profitable Jones and Laughlin Steel Company. Though small in structure, in contrast to the rest of the publishers, New Directions has both a lengthy history in publishing and a rich and prestigious backlist.

Seven Stories Press was created by Dan Simon in the United States in 1995. Simon has deemed the press's practice a way to advocate for free speech and human rights.

Archipelago Books, a non-profit founded by Jill Schoolman in 2003, also in the United States, presents itself as devoted to translating titles by 'visionary international writers whom American readers might not otherwise encounter' ('About', n.d.). The press has translated more than 40 languages.

Bitter Lemon Press, a British publishing house founded by François von Hurter in 2003, specializes in translated books of crime fiction and mystery, psychological thrillers, and nonfiction, for which the imprint Wilmington Square Books was founded in 2014.

And Other Stories is a non-profit press that published its first books in 2011. Founded in the United Kingdom by translator Stefan Tobler, the press 'publishes mainly contemporary writing, including many translations' ('About us', n.d.). Its practice of selecting titles from foreign languages involves in-person and online reading groups to discuss books that are read in their original languages.

Restless Books, founded in the United States in 2013, is an independent, nonprofit publisher devoted to ‘international literature for adults and young readers that feeds our restlessness: our hunger for new perspectives, passion for other cultures and languages’. Its ‘aim [is] to celebrate immigrant writing and bring literature to underserved communities’ (‘Restless Books Mission’, n.d.).

In the United Kingdom, Charco Press was established in 2017 by Samuel McDowell and Carolina Orloff, with the latter publisher being of Argentine origin. This publishing house specializes in the translation of contemporary Latin American fiction. In 2021, Charco Press launched ‘Untranslated’, a series of books written by English-speaking authors linked to Latin America, and OriginalES Editions, a series of books penned and published in Spanish.

Finally, the Clapton Press was established in the United Kingdom by Simon Deefholts and Kathryn Phillips-Miles in 2018. The catalogue mainly includes titles translated from Spanish and literature from Spain. In the last few years, the scope was broadened, and the publisher has also included works written by Cuban, Mexican, Chilean, Uruguayan, and Argentine authors.

Despite the abovementioned differences, most of these publishing houses have small structures, are young, and are specifically dedicated to publishing literature in translation. However, this does not mean that they occupy inferior positions in terms of the field of publishing, an aspect that remains to be explored. The catalogues of said publishing houses provide great insights with which to explore how books are chosen for translation. For the list of books translated into English by these eight publishers with PROSUR subsidies between 2010 and 2022,⁷ see [Table 1](#).

4.1. Political and social violence

The first finding from our catalogue analysis is that PROSUR-subsidized titles are introduced as books that delve into forms of political resistance in two main senses. Firstly, we have writing on social struggles and political commitment. That is, we have criticism against the political system and fights against oppressive violence and for independence, equality, and justice. Secondly, we have an emphasis on the current protests against gender inequality and violence against women.

In 2013, Seven Stories Press translated Rodolfo Walsh’s *Operation Massacre*, with an afterward written by Ricardo Piglia defining the book as ‘a synthesis of what one would call the political tradition in today’s Argentine literature’ (2013, p. 221). This edition also included another paratext, ‘Open Letter from a Writer to the Military Junta’, which Walsh had released one day before he was murdered by a Navy School of Mechanics’ task force in 1977. The letter has been included in the Spanish editions of *Operation Massacre* since 1984, that is, since the return of the democratic government in Argentina (Hernaiz, 2012). Seven Stories Press has included this book in the press series ‘Learning from the past for a better tomorrow’, along with books that analyze colonialism, imperialism, war, race, and other social and specifically Latin American issues. In this series, we have works like the now classic book *Listen Yankee. Why Cuba Matters* by Tom Hayden.

Likewise, Seven Stories Press has framed the topics in *Operation Massacre* within a broader universe, introducing the book along with the 2011 translation of *Anti-Capitalism* by Ezequiel Adamovsky, a writer presented as an ‘activist and scholar’ (‘Anti-

Table 1. Titles translated into English by publishing houses that received 3 or more subsidies granted by the PROSUR between 2010 and 2020 (2010–2022, United States and United Kingdom).

Title	Author	Translator	Year of Publication	Publishing House
<i>Needle in a Haystack</i>	MALLO, Ernesto	SOUTAR, Jethro	2010	Bitter Lemon Press
<i>Open Door</i>	HAVILIO, Iosi	FOWLER, Beth	2011	And Other Stories
<i>Anti-Capitalism</i>	ADAMOVSKY, Ezequiel	TRIGONA, Marie	2011	Seven Stories Press
<i>The Islands</i>	GAMERRO, Carlos	BARNETT, Ian	2012	And Other Stories
<i>Paradises</i>	HAVILIO, Iosi	FOWLER, Beth	2013	And Other Stories
<i>Professor Borges</i>	BORGES, Jorge Luis	SILVER, Katherine	2013	New Directions
<i>Poems to Read on a Streetcar</i>	GIRONDO, Oliverio	CLEARY, Heather	2014	New Directions
<i>Betty Boo</i>	PIÑEIRO, Claudia	FRANCE, Miranda	2016	Bitter Lemon Press
<i>Operation Massacre</i>	WALSH, Rodolfo	GITLIN, Daniella	2016	Seven Stories Press
<i>The Little Buddhist Monk</i>	AIRA, César	CAISTOR, Nick	2017	And Other Stories
<i>Die, My Love</i>	HARWICZ, Ariana	MOSES, Sarah; and ORLOFF, Carolina	2017	Charco Press
<i>The Diaries of Emilio Renzi: Formative Years</i>	PIGLIA, Ricardo	ROLL, Robert	2017	Restless Books
<i>The German Room</i>	MALIANDI, Carla	RIDDLE, Frances	2018	Charco Press
<i>People in the Room</i>	LANGE, NORAH	WHITTLE, Charlotte	2018	And Other Stories
<i>Nest in the Bones: Stories</i>	DI BENEDETTO, Antonio	BRONER, Martina	2019	Archipelago Books
<i>The Scent of Buenos Aires</i>	UHART, Hebe	SHAUGHNESSY, Maureen	2019	Archipelago Books
<i>The Fragility of Bodies</i>	OLGUIN, Sergio	FRANCE, Miranda	2019	Bitter Lemon Press
<i>The Adventures of China Iron</i>	CABEZÓN CÁMARA, Gabriela	MACKINTOSH, Fiona; and MACINTYRE, Iona	2019	Charco Press
<i>Feeble-minded</i>	HARWICZ, Ariana	MCDERMOTT, Annie; and ORLOFF, Carolina	2019	Charco Press
<i>Fireflies</i>	SAGASTI, Luis	PETCH, Fionn	2019	Charco Press
<i>Birthday</i>	AIRA, César	ANDREWS, Chris	2019	New Directions
<i>Dead Girls</i>	ALMADA, Selva	MCDERMOTT, Annie	2020	Charco Press
<i>Fate</i>	CONSIGLIO, Jorge	ORLOFF, Carolina; and PETCH, Fionn	2020	Charco Press
<i>The Diaries of Emilio Renzi: A Day in the Life</i>	PIGLIA, RICARDO	ROLL, Robert	2020	Restless Books
<i>The Way Out</i>	PIGLIA, Ricardo	ROLL, Robert	2020	Restless Books
<i>The Yocci Well</i>	GORRITI, Juana Manuela	PHILLIPS-MILES, Kathryn	2020	The Clapton Press
<i>Milongas</i>	COZARINSKY, Edgardo	MILES, Valerie	2021	Archipelago Books
<i>Animals</i>	UHART, Hebe	ROLL, Robert	2021	Archipelago Books
<i>The Foreign Girls</i>	OLGUÍN, Sergio	FRANCE, Miranda	2021	Bitter Lemon Press
<i>A Perfect Cemetery</i>	FALCO, Federico	CROFT, Jennifer	2021	Charco Press
<i>Elena Knows</i>	PIÑEIRO, Claudia	RIDDLE, Frances	2021	Charco Press
<i>There are no Happy Loves</i>	OLGUÍN, Sergio	FRANCE, Miranda	2022	Bitter Lemon Press
<i>Tender</i>	HARWICZ, Ariana	MCDERMOTT, Annie; and ORLOFF, Carolina	2022	Charco Press
<i>Dislocations</i>	MOLLOY, Silvia	CROFT, Jennifer	2022	Charco Press

(Continued)

Table 1. Continued.

Title	Author	Translator	Year of Publication	Publishing House
<i>A Musical Offering</i>	SAGASTI, Luis	PETCH, Fionn	2022	Charco Press
<i>The Murders of Moisés Ville</i>	SINAY, Javier	ROLL, Robert	2022	Restless Books

Note: Data collected from the PROSUR database: <https://programa-sur.cancilleria.gob.ar/en/obras.php> and the websites of the publishing houses.

Capitalism’, n.d.) in the collection ‘Latin America Fights Back’. The main line guiding this series can be condensed in a quote taken from Subcomandante Marcos’s⁸ *Our Word is Our Weapon*: ‘In our dreams we have seen another world, an honest world, a world decidedly more fair than the one in which we now live’ (‘Latin America Fights Back’, n.d.). Adamovsky’s book focuses on the ‘struggle against rising corporate power, as that struggle unfolds in the halls of academia, in the pages of radical newspapers, and in the jungles and the streets’ (‘Anti-Capitalism’, n.d.). The publishing house presents both texts, which are not contemporaneous and don’t address the same political phenomenon. Yet, these key narratives on political situations are valuable to intellectuals given their struggles for liberation, regardless of nationality. Walsh is presented among the intellectuals that resisted the 1976 military coup in Argentina and as an author ‘whose courage to find the truth eventually condemned him to death’ (‘Operation Massacre’, n.d.). Similarly, Adamovsky is introduced among other authors in the collection ‘Learning from the Past for a Better Tomorrow’ (‘Learning from the Past’, n.d.), grouping together critical intellectuals who, like Noam Chomsky, have analyzed contemporary capitalist societies.

In a similar vein, Restless Books published Javier Sinay’s *The Murders of Moisés Ville: The Rise and Fall of the Jerusalem of South America* in 2022. This book researches Argentina’s first Jewish agricultural communities and tells the story of the struggles of a group of ‘immigrants [who] fled one form of persecution only to encounter a different set of hardships’ (‘The Murders of Moisés Ville’, n.d.). The blurbs on the back cover emphasize this aspect of the book. In Paul Theroux’s words: ‘I greatly admire Javier Sinay’s enlightening and humane account of his sleuthing – the disinterment of a violent episode of a buried history – now no longer forgotten’. Similarly, a quote from Jeff Fleischer’s *Foreword Reviews* underscores that the book keeps ‘the victim’s memories alive’, given that it ‘sheds light on an undercovered portion of Jewish history’.

We shall also consider a second way in which our publishing houses frame the translations in question as books that delve into themes of political resistance – namely, in relation to the current protests against gender inequality and violence against women. In this respect, we would like to highlight *The Foreign Girls* by Sergio Olguín. Published in 2021 by Bitter Lemon Press, this book is introduced as a ‘gripping thriller that also shines a light on the phenomenon of femicide in Latin America’ (‘The Foreign Girls’, n.d.). Charco Press also published *Elena Knows* by Claudia Piñero in 2021. The publisher’s website presents this book with an excerpt from a *New York Times* review highlighting the role of women in the novel: ‘Short and stylish. A piercing commentary on mother-daughter relationships, the indignity of bureaucracy, the burdens of caregiving and the impositions of religious dogma on women’ (‘Elena Knows’, n.d.). Meanwhile, Piñero’s biography on the publishing house’s website emphasizes her political commitment: ‘Piñero has become a

very active figure in the fight for the legalization of abortion in Argentina and for the legal recognition of writers as workers' (Charco Press Catalogue, 2023).

Meanwhile, *Dead Girls* by Selva Almada, translated by Annie McDermott for Charco Press in 2020, is introduced with a quote on femicide from *The Guardian*: 'Femicide is generally defined as the murder of women simply because they are women. In 2018, 139 women died in the UK as a result of male violence' ('Dead Girls', n.d.). The summary emphasizes how this issue is at the core of the book: 'Almada narrates the case of three small-town teenage girls murdered in the 1980s; three unpunished deaths that occurred before the word 'femicide' was even coined' ('Dead Girls', n.d.). The book flap presents Almada not just as an author but also as a politically engaged intellectual: 'one of the most powerful voices of contemporary Argentinian and Latin American literature, and one of the most influential feminist intellectuals of the region'. The English translation of *Dead Girls* includes an author's note explaining the context of the book and Almada's personal views on femicide and the violence that women suffer.

In this sense, it is worth acknowledging that several of the abovementioned books, regardless of their being framed as political in relation to social struggles, political involvement, and gender issues, are presented as advancing the frontiers of fiction. Almada's *Dead Girls* is defined as a 'journalistic novel, comparable to Truman Capote's *In Cold Blood* or John Hersey's *Hiroshima*, in response to the urgent need for attention to a serious problem of our times' ('Dead Girls', n.d.). Restless Books included an excerpt from Rodrigo Márquez Tizano's *VICE* review portraying Sinay as 'one of the most recent and interesting links between narrative journalism, American non-fiction, and the rich tradition of Argentinian detective literature' ('The Murders of Moisés Ville', n.d.). The cover of Walsh's *Operation Massacre* displays a blurb from Latin American essayist and activist Eduardo Galeano that highlights the book's blending of genres: 'Rodolfo Walsh's work perfectly synthesized the most hard-hitting journalism with literature of the highest caliber'.

4.2. Latin American literature

The second trend that we identified involves the ways subsidized translations are labelled as Latin American literature. On the one hand, most of the front covers do not include imagery linking the book to Argentina or Latin America. Rather, we may observe minimalist designs. One might compare the covers in [Figure 3](#) to the colorful images associated with Latin America by Argentine artist Xul Solar in [Figure 1](#). It is worth comparing the covers to the imagery of Argentine culture shown in [Figure 2](#). We might note the two long braids on the book cover of Cabezón Cámara's *The Adventures of China Iron*. This is a typical hairstyle of the china, a term 'pronounced "cheena": designation for female, from the Quechua. Iron: The English word for Fierro, reference to the gaucho Martín Fierro, from José Hernández's epic poem' as the publishing house explains ('The Adventures of China Iron', n.d.).

Still, various graphic elements frame the books within the Latin American literary tradition. These books are labelled as Latin American literature; they also weave a network of references to Latin American authors, and their plot descriptions link the books to the political and social events of the country and region.

The author biography on the flap of *Dead Girls* defines Almada as 'one of the most powerful voices of contemporary Argentinian and Latin American literature'. The

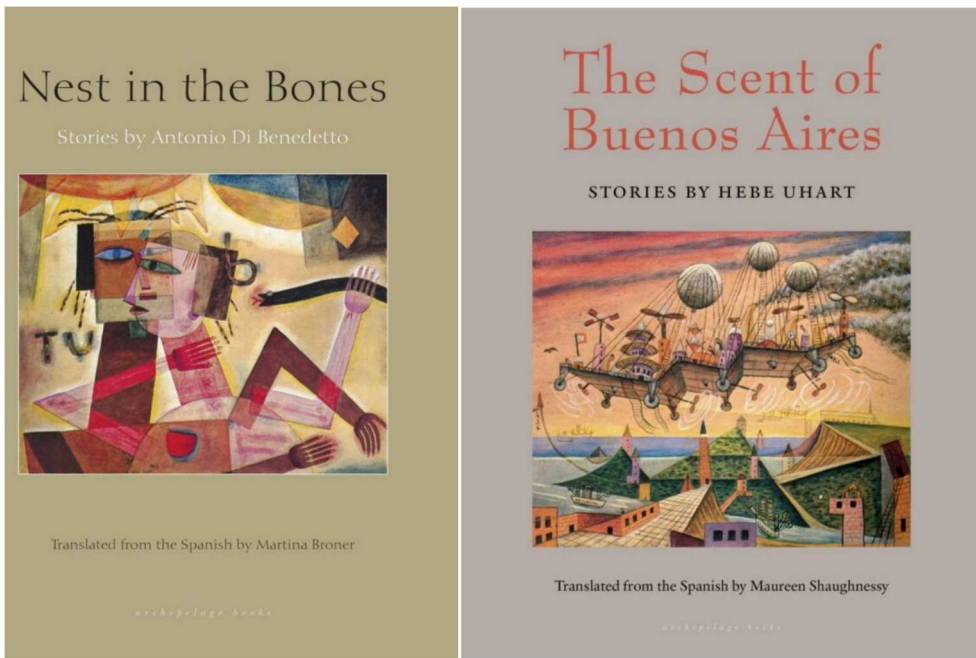


Figure 1. (a, b) Front covers of *Nest in the Bones* by Antonio Di Benedetto (Archipelago Books, 2017), and *The Scent of Buenos Aires* by Hebe Uhart (Archipelago Books, 2019).

afterword in Havilio's *Open Door (And Other Stories, 2011)* by Oscar Guardiola-Rivera – who published *What If Latin America Ruled the World? How the South Will Take the North into the 21st Century* (Bloomsbury 2010) the year before – also refers to Iosi Havilio as a writer who 'stands out among a generation of Latin American writers who represent something new in literature' (Guardiola-Rivera, 2011, as cited in Havilio, 2011, p. 211). Meanwhile, the Clapton Press includes the books written by Argentine authors in its collection 'Tales from Latin America'. This series does not exclusively include books written by Latin American authors but also encompasses stories about Latin America, categorizing them as Tales from Cuba; Tales from the Southern Cone: Argentina, Chile & Uruguay; and Tales from Mexico.

Likewise, publishing houses draw from a network of authors from Argentina and Latin America to introduce their translations. Sometimes, these authors are among the publishing houses' catalogues, such as César Aira, who wrote the blurb on the front cover of Pizarnik's *Extracting the Stone of Madness* (New Directions, 2016),⁹ and who also wrote the introduction to Lange's *People in the Room*. Aira is also referenced on the back cover of Havilio's *Petite Fleur (And Other Stories, 2017)*.¹⁰ Another author who is frequently mentioned is Roberto Bolaño. For example, the back cover of *Nest in the Bones: Stories* (Archipelago Books, 2017) by Di Benedetto includes a blurb in which Bolaño calls Di Benedetto 'one of the greatest Argentinean writers and one of the greatest writers of Latin America'. New Directions in particular has included 'Bolaño's Author List' on its website.¹¹

Finally, Latin America and Argentina are highlighted as the settings of the books' plots, with historical events becoming allegories in these stories. The front cover of

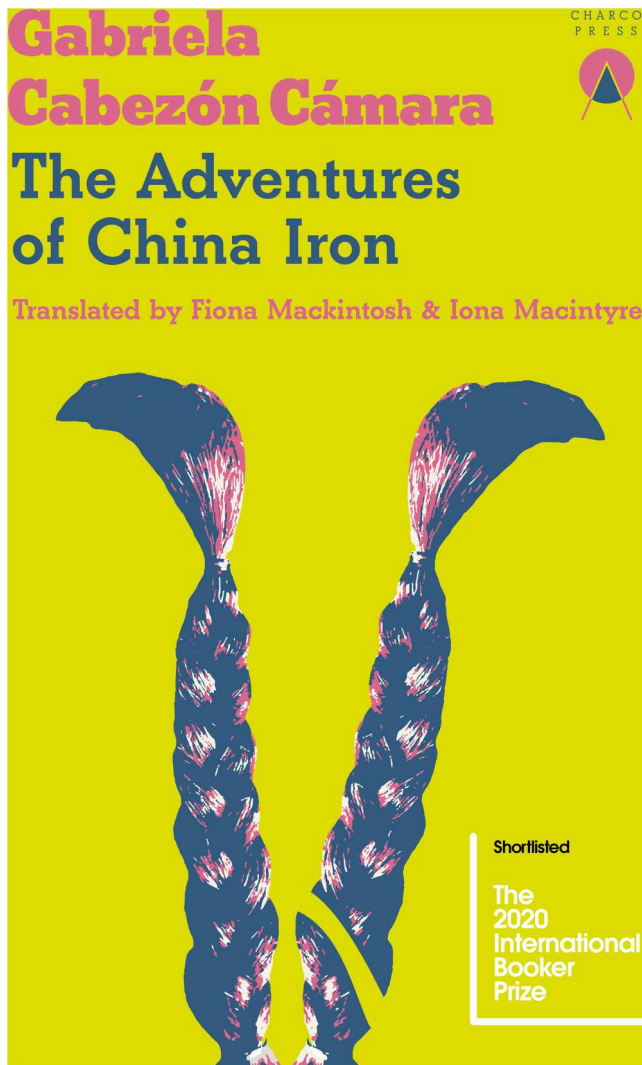


Figure 2. Front cover of *The Adventures of China Iron* by Gabriela Cabezón Cámara (Charco Press, 2019).

Olguín's *The Fragility of Bodies* (Bitter Lemon Press, 2019) announces that 'journalist Veronica Rosenthal thinks she knows Buenos Aires, but her latest investigation is about to reveal a city where life is cheap and the games boys play are to death'. A recurring historical and political period is 1970s Argentina. The back cover of Gamerro's *The Island* (And Other Stories, 2012) notes that the book is set in Buenos Aires in 1992, when 'Hacker Felipe Félix is [...] charged with finding the witnesses to a very public crime. [...] trying to forget the freezing trench in which he passed the Falklands War, Félix [...] realises to his shock that the war never really ended'. The introduction by Jimmy Burns reinforces this idea: 'Carlos Gamerro's *The Islands* is a novel about the distorted logic and the bizarre endurance of Argentina's militarised society' (Burns, 2012 in Gamerro, 2012, viii). Even the historical events of the nineteenth century frame the



Figure 3. (a–e) Front covers of *Open Door* by Iosi Havilio (And Other Stories, 2011), *The Islands* by Carlos Gamarro (And Other Stories, 2012), *Poems to Read on a Streetcar* by Oliverio Girondo (New Directions, 2014), *Die, My Love* by Ariana Harwicz (Charco Press, 2017), and *Animals* by Hebe Uhart (Archipelago Books, 2021).

books. The Clapton Press introduces its translated books by highlighting their history, as with Juana Manuela Gorriti’s *The Yocci Well* (2020): ‘A love story, ghost story and gothic horror rolled into one, the action in *The Yocci Well* takes place in two parallel periods spanning twenty years, contrasting Argentina’s War of Independence with the savagery of the civil wars that followed’ (*The Yocci Well*, n.d.).

The region’s historical events are also mentioned in several author biographies. The front flap of Di Benedetto’s *Nest in the Bones: Stories* reads ‘*Nest in the Bones* spans three decades of his oeuvre, from his youth in Argentina to his exile in Spain after enduring imprisonment and torture under the military dictatorship’; and Maliandi’s biography notes that she ‘was born in Venezuela in 1976 and is the daughter of Argentinian philosophers Ricardo Maliandi and Graciela Fernández who were forced to escape Argentina’s military regime’ (Charco Press Catalogue 2018/2019, 2019).

4.3. Women's writing

Since 2015, the translation of Argentine women authors in the publishing houses under focus has significantly increased.¹² In 2017, Leila Guerreiro was published by New Directions in translation by Frances Riddle; in 2018 and 2021, Norah Lange was translated by Charlotte Whittle and published by And Other Stories; Hebe Uhart's *Animals*, translated by Robert Croll, was published by Archipelago Books in 2019, and *The Scent of Buenos Aires*, in translation by Maureen Shsugnessy, was published in 2021. Juana Manuela Gorriti's *Our Native Land, An Oasis in Life*, and *The Yocci Well*, translated by Kathryn Phillips-Miles with an introduction and notes by Simon Deefholts, were published by The Clapton Press in 2020 and 2021.

We may observe a surge in the translations of books written by women writers – mostly translated by women as well – in Charco Press. Its catalogue includes three titles by Ariana Harwicz – *Die, My Love* (2017), translated by Sarah Moses and Carolina Orloff, as well as *Tender* (2019) and *Feebleminded* (2022), both translated by Annie MacDermott; one by Carla Maliandi – *The German Room* (2018), translated by Frances Riddle; three by Selva Almada – *Not a River* (2019), *Dead Girls* (2020) and *Brickmakers* (2021), all translated by Annie McDermott; two by Gabriela Cabezón Cámara – *Slum Virgin* (2019) and *The Adventures of China Iron* (2020), respectively translated by Frances Riddle and cotranslators Fiona Mackintosh and Iona Macintyre; three by Claudia Piñeiro – *Elena Knows, A Little Luck* and *Time of the Flies*, translated by Frances Riddle; and finally, *Dislocations*, written by Sylvia Molloy and translated by Jennifer Croft (2022). Prior to 2015, only Bitter Lemon Press had translated books written by Claudia Piñeiro, in 2009, 2011, and 2013.

These titles were written by women of different generations, and their subject matters differ vastly. While, at Charco Press, contemporary women writers are more prevalent, especially those born in the 1960s, such as Leila Guerreiro, Claudia Piñeiro, Ariana Harwicz, Carla Maliandi, Selva Almada, and Gabriela Cabezón Cámara, some authors hail from earlier times. This is the case of Juana M. Gorriti, born in 1818 and considered Argentina's first woman novelist; Norah Lange, who was born in 1905 and developed her work across the nineteenth century; and Hebe Uhart, née 1936. These works' subject matters are quite diverse. While Gorriti, Lange, and Uhart deal with historical events, with Uhart especially writing chronicles and contemplative, everyday stories, twenty-first century authors like Piñeiro, Selva Almada, and Cabezón Cámara deal with societal demands and issues from the gender perspective. We have stories of corruption, domestic violence, gender violence, diverse gender identities, abortion, and more. While we might consider a thematic overlap among some of these books and those that deal with femicide and the aforementioned trend of political resistance, women's writing is ample and heterogenous. It is a dimension in and of itself, because whether these authors hold the bold position of the first women writers of the 1920s or are contemporary authors visibilizing the narratives of gender violence, they establish an intergenerational dialogue in which the authors of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries can be read alongside each other today.

These publishing houses introduce the titles written by women of different generations and styles in two main ways: with commentary by other women writers, and by emphasizing the books' central themes as issues that have been historically linked to feminine issues such as intimacy and everyday events. Thus, Charco Press quotes praise by

Gabriela Cabezón Cámara (an author included in its catalogue) on Sylvia Molloy on the back cover of *Dislocations* (Molloy, 2022): ‘Master of masters, the multilingual queer queen of Latin America, a mighty author – Sylvia, our guiding light’. Likewise, Archipelago Books cites author Mariana Enriquez to describe Hebe Uhart’s *The Scent of Buenos Aires* (2019) and *Animals* (2021): ‘Hebe approached her subjects from an astonished and oblique angle that, at first, might appear naive. Not so. Her short stories feature protagonists rarely seen in Argentine literature’ (‘The Scent of Buenos Aires’, n.d.).

The universe of referential writers introducing the translated women writers also consists mostly of other women writers. For instance, Charco Press compares Ariana Harwicz to Sylvia Plath and Clarice Lispector on the back cover of *Die, My Love* (Charco Press, 2017). In a similar vein, the publishing house details that Harwicz ‘is considered to be at the forefront of the so-called new Argentinian fiction, together with other female writers such as Selva Almada, Samanta Schweblin, Mariana Enriquez and Gabriela Cabezón Cámara’ (‘Ariana Harwicz Bio’, n.d.). This same publishing house includes the view of a very well-known Argentine literary critic, Beatriz Sarlo, who connects the works by Selva Almada to those by Alice Munro and Carson McCullers (Charco Press Catalogue, 2020). A blurb by Piñeiro on the front cover of *Betty Boo* (Bitter Lemon Press, 2016) taken from *Kirkus Reviews* affirms that Almada is ‘The Argentine Patricia Highsmith’.

Website commentary, blurbs of reviews, and summaries on back covers frequently detail that the main characters of the books are women, that the style reflects a dimension usually connected to femininity, such as intimacy, and that the topics of the books are related to women’s issues, such as motherhood. The back cover of Harwicz’s *Die, My Love* describes the novel as including all of the above-mentioned elements: ‘A woman is battling her demons [...] Motherhood, womanhood, the banality of love, the terrors of desire, the brutality of “another person carrying your heart forever” [...] Bruising and confrontational, yet anchored in an unapologetic beauty and lyricism’. Even when the aim is to avoid reproducing conventional views of women, certain commonplace ideas become inescapable. The back cover of *Die, My Love* includes a blurb by Hari Kunzru: ‘We are used to female narrators who occupy one of several familiar niches: blandly “likeable”, “flawed”, or pathological [...] Harwicz takes us somewhere more profound’.

Similarly, César Aira’s introduction to Lange’s *People in the Room* (And Other Stories, 2018) begins by noting ‘the circumstances of Argentine women writers in the first half of the twentieth century’, and how ‘women writers were limited to the conventionally feminine subject matters of home, children, marriage, and family’ (Aira, 2018 in Lange, 2018, p. 7). While Aira suggests that Lange does not fall back upon convention or even break with tradition in a conventional way, the introduction does develop its argument by referencing these subjects: ‘In the work of Silvina Ocampo and Norah Lange, in my view the most remarkable of these writers, traditionally feminine subject matter is excavated so deeply that something entirely different emerges’ (Aira, 2018, in Lange, 2018, p. 7).

Themes and styles traditionally linked to women are present in the way Enriquez describes Uhart’s writing as the recovery of ‘the voices that no one pays attention to, yet not at all in a pompous way’ (‘The Scent of Buenos Aires’, n.d.). The front cover of Lange’s *People in the Room* includes a blurb by Schweblin that reads: ‘Intimate and vital ... this is an exquisite novel, full of light, shadows, and profound revelations’. To describe a very different book – Almada’s *Dead Girls*, a hybrid of journalism and fiction – the idea of intimacy reappears on the back cover: ‘Evoking with intimate

first-hand knowledge the heat and dust of provincial Argentina, with all its secrets and conflicting loyalties, Almada tells the story of three small-town teenage girls murdered in the early 1980s'. The back cover of Piñeiro's *Betty Boo* contrasts the book's plot – a 'chilling story of murderous revenge' – with its approach – 'a warm and funny portrait of friendship and love in middle age'.

Similarly to how the books are linked to issues of political resistance, gender inequality and violence against women are also central to many of the paratexts around these books. The back cover of *Dead Girls* announces that the 'internationally acclaimed author Selva Almada tackles the issue of gender violence'. The back cover of Cabezón Cámara's *The Adventures of China Iron* (Charco Press, 2019) details how the novel delves into issues related to women and gender by rewriting a key book of Argentina's literary tradition, *Martín Fierro*: 'China is a young woman eking out an existence in a remote gaucho encampment. After her no-good husband is conscripted into the army, China bolts for freedom [...] in the company of her new-found friend Liz'.

5. Discussion

This article has argued that translation is a social practice that is key to analyzing how soft power is exercised in the field of publishing, particularly in the case of subsidized translations. As stressed by Sorá (2003), the intrinsic characteristics of a cultural policy, or even the contents or subject matters of a given text, are not enough to explain why certain books are translated and/or read and circulated abroad, which makes it necessary to study the social, political, and cultural conditions that foster the international circulation of literature.

PROSUR has challenged the dominant logics of the international circulation of literature given the increasing number of subsidies granted for translations into the hypercentral language that is English during our period of study (Heilbron, 2020): going from accounting for 12 percent of the total subsidies in 2010 to 16 percent in 2019. These figures contrast with the ones prior to PROSUR, with English translations accounting for only 8 percent of the total from 2002 to 2008 (Adamo et al., 2009, p. 59). These observations are noteworthy given current President Milei and his administration's decision to slash PROSUR's budget from \$US 319,721 to US \$30,000. For the first time since it was set up, only ten titles will receive subsidies in 2024, and only two genres have been defined as eligible: poetry and the essay.

The lack of consistent and detailed data on the translation of books written by Argentine authors prior to 2010 precludes meaningful comparison.¹³ Therefore, this article has shifted the focus from PROSUR to the practices of publishing houses, i.e. the overlooked actors receiving the cultural policies. Their practices involve a productive and not just a passive dimension, as might be associated with the position of a policy recipient. The publishing houses that have received subsidies have produced meaning on the books that they have translated. In this sense, we have identified three trends in relation to how Argentine literature in English translation is introduced, transforming PROSUR's guidelines, which, at first, sought to promote topics like human rights and memory.

The publishing houses have different profiles, and their translated titles are dissimilar in several ways, including their literary currents, author generation, and other differences. Therefore, they might be grouped and targeted towards readers in very distinct

ways. We have found that the publishing houses under study have introduced their subsidized translations in relation to three trends. In some cases, these trends overlap: some titles may be identified with more than one trend. However, we have shown how these trends appear through the way that collections are defined, either through the paratexts printed in the books, or through the texts shared on publishing-house websites.

First, the subsidized translations are introduced as books that are, in some way, political. This trend may be expressed either by characterizing the profile of the author as a politically engaged writer, underscoring that the content of the book is linked to a political issue, suggesting that the title entails a political message, or by incorporating the translation into a series of political books. Second, while the translations we have studied are authored by Argentine writers, the national dimension is not considered when targeting these books toward readers. These translations are introduced as Latin American literature. This entails incorporating the translations into collections by authors born in Latin America as well as resorting to the imagery of exoticism related to the region.

Third, publishing houses have coincided in remarking that the subsidized translations have been authored by women. That this is an intentional stance is bolstered by the repeated references to other women writers and to issues and literary themes that have been socially and historically assigned to the feminine sphere. We would like to emphasize the increasingly crucial place of literature written by women. The recent focus on gender issues cannot be divorced from the international demands of the feminist movement that have also encouraged academia to review its canon. Thus, this way of classifying translations overlaps with the first trend we have mentioned, one in which books challenge gender inequality.

Lastly, our analysis of PROSUR as a program that subsidizes translations and of the translations of Argentine books to a hypercentral language serves as a prism with which to study the conditions, dynamics, and challenges that ideas face when crossing national borders.

Notes

1. See <https://programa-sur.cancilleria.gob.ar/en/obras.php>
2. This has sparked various analyses on the circulation of titles written by Argentine authors in translation. See Cattarulla (2012); Noce (2019) and Szpilbarg (2019).
3. It is worth noting that some trends become visible in some variables and not others, for instance specific paratexts such as the blurbs and not the images of the book covers showcase information and illuminate the trend pertaining to women's writing that will be developed.
4. In 2009, the Foreign Minister Magdalena Faillace underscored this theme when announcing Argentina's participation as Guest of Honor at the 2010 Frankfurt Book Fair. See Szpilbarg (2019, pp. 252–253); and Papaleo (2009).
5. Given that the focus of this article is the translation of literary works, we decided to leave out university presses like Texas Tech University Press, which mostly translates essays and whose circulation and dynamics cannot be understood without delving into the logic of the education system, a matter beyond the scope of this article.
6. These eight publishing houses comprise 78 percent of the 85 mentioned presses (the United States comprises 50 percent of the total, and the United Kingdom, 28 percent).
7. Given that the recipients of PROSUR subsidies are required to publish their translations within one year, we have decided to include the translations published in 2021 and 2022, which correspond to the 2020 open call.

8. Born in 1957, Subcomandante Marcos was fundamental to Latin American anticapitalist social movements. Subcomandante Marcos was the main ideologue behind the Zapatista National Liberation Army (EZLN), an armed group that rallied around Indigenist demands in the state of Chiapas, Mexico. EZLN emerged in 1994, operating as a military organization up until 2006, after which it became a political organization. This anticapitalist movement inspired in the ideas of *zapatismo*, socialism, and marxism began operations on January 1, 1994, when a group of armed Indigenous people attempted to occupy seven municipalities on the very day that the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA, signed by the United States, Canada, and Mexico) came into force.
9. 'Alejandra Pizarnik was not only a great poet, she was the greatest, and the last'.
10. 'In one single, hypnotic paragraph, *Petite Fleur* harnesses the unpredictability of Aira and the mysticism of Tolstoy in a discordant riff on suburban life'.
11. 'We've put together a collection of authors who Bolaño admired and wanted to engage with, who are published by New Directions' ('Bolaño's Author List', n.d.). The website provides a list and Bolaño's brief commentary on various authors in the catalogue, including Aira, Bioy Casares, Borges, and Cortázar. On the page devoted to each author, on the right-hand column, one may also find a note stating that the author is on 'Bolaño's list'.
12. It is worth noting that this trend mirrors the growing demand for subsidies for translations to various languages that the PROSUR received and that it granted. In 2012, 67 percent of the subsidies corresponded to books written by men; in 2022, 60 percent of those requests were for women writers (Szpilbarg, 2019, p. 281).
13. For reports on the translations of works written by Argentine authors, see Adamo et al. (2009); Añón (2014); and Adamo and Rodríguez Lacrouts (2023). These reports acknowledge the lack of consistent data on the subject, requiring quantitative and qualitative data to be sourced from local publishers, foreign institutions, websites, and other actors (Adamo et al., 2009, p. 18). Other studies have underscored the scarcity of detailed data on the Argentine field of publishing (Vanoli & Saferstein, 2001, p. 89).

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No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

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