

September 2019

Ignacio M. Sánchez Prado, editor. Pierre Bourdieu in Hispanic Literature and Culture. Palgrave MacMillan, 2018.

Katie J. Vater

University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, vaterk@uwm.edu

Follow this and additional works at: <https://newprairiepress.org/sttcl>



Part of the [Latin American Literature Commons](#), [Modern Literature Commons](#), [Sociology of Culture Commons](#), and the [Spanish Literature Commons](#)



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-Noncommercial-No Derivative Works 4.0 License](#).

Recommended Citation

Vater, Katie J. (2019) "Ignacio M. Sánchez Prado, editor. Pierre Bourdieu in Hispanic Literature and Culture. Palgrave MacMillan, 2018.," *Studies in 20th & 21st Century Literature*: Vol. 43: Iss. 2, Article 38. <https://doi.org/10.4148/2334-4415.2111>

This Book Review is brought to you for free and open access by New Prairie Press. It has been accepted for inclusion in *Studies in 20th & 21st Century Literature* by an authorized administrator of New Prairie Press. For more information, please contact cads@k-state.edu.

Ignacio M. Sánchez Prado, editor. *Pierre Bourdieu in Hispanic Literature and Culture*. Palgrave MacMillan, 2018.

Abstract

Review of Sánchez Prado, Ignacio M., editor. *Pierre Bourdieu in Hispanic Literature and Culture*. Palgrave MacMillan, 2018.

Keywords

Bourdieu, sociology of literature, Hispanic Studies

Ignacio M. Sánchez Prado, editor. *Pierre Bourdieu in Hispanic Literature and Culture*. Palgrave MacMillan, 2018. 327 pp.

One of the overarching goals of Ignacio M. Sánchez Prado's ambitious volume on Pierre Bourdieu's work in the context of Spanish and Latin American studies is to demonstrate the continued relevance of the French sociologist's theories to the humanities today. Bourdieu has been maligned in some circles for the reductionism common to his large and diverse body of work, particularly for his tendency to condense the social and cultural world into a singular mechanistic and schematic model. However, Sánchez Prado and the contributors to this volume demonstrate that, with proper contextualization, Bourdieu's theories, especially but not exclusively those that deal with the "cultural field," remain valuable tools to understand the relationship of literature and culture to social space. In his introduction, Sánchez Prado argues that Bourdieu's revival, especially in the English-language academy, is due to the way his writings of the 1990s anticipated shifts in the material workings of culture brought about by neoliberalism, especially given "the culturalization of the economic and the economization of the cultural that has taken place under the aegis of neoliberalism" (4). Sánchez Prado's own excellent contribution to the volume sees this through by examining the contemporary Mexican literary field and its neoliberalization of cultural infrastructure, though the majority of the other essays do not take this approach.

Pierre Bourdieu in Hispanic Literature and Culture is divided into three sections. The first two focus on applications of the French thinker's theories, both in Latin America and in transnational Latin American literary and cultural studies, while the final section is centered on Bourdieu's relevance to Iberian Studies. The first section explores the open engagement of Bourdieu's theories "in relation to their specific appropriations in Latin America" while the second section offers "new approaches to Latin American literature" through Bourdieu's concept of the field (9). The distinction between these first two sections at times feels nebulous, as only Juan Poblete's essay on the relationship between Néstor García Canclini and Bourdieu directly addresses Latin American scholars' explicit engagement with the sociologist. However, a Bourdieusian glue holds together a compelling collection of topics from different countries and time periods that, under other circumstances, would be unlikely to appear in the same volume. One of this collection's strengths is the shunning of theory for theory's sake. Each chapter remains true to Bourdieu's own approach and addresses a concrete case to which some facet of his theory can be applied. While many of the contributors to this volume call attention to lesser known works by well-known authors, it is disappointing that there is not greater space given to women's voices and cultural products, both as contributors to the volume and as objects of study in the chapters.

Given the wide chronological and thematic range of the texts and authors studied in this volume, it is important that common threads emerge to help the chapters cohere. This is broadly achieved in the contributors' shared desire to understand how the social world informs the literary one. The revelation of writers' operational actions, always contrasting with the stereotypical idea of artistic "disinterestedness," links multiple chapters in this volume. For example, Manuel Gutiérrez Silva's chapter on Mexican art writing sheds light on Bourdieu's "field of struggles" (Bourdieu, *The Cultural Field*) in practice by demonstrating the ways that art writing allowed poets to assure their own relevance in a cultural field that was shifting towards the visual arts. This same theme of writers' calculated and operational processes also comes through in Andrew Reynolds's depiction of calculated *Modernista* position-takings that allowed for writers' self-definition in and out of the literary field.

Several chapters use Bourdieusian theory to examine the power to name and consecrate that is rooted in the acquisition of symbolic capital. Kent Dickson's chapter centers on José María Arguedas's role in legitimizing indigenous *arte popular*, 'popular art,' both in Peru and internationally. The role of symbolic consecration and legitimation is also key in Sergio Gutiérrez Negrón's chapter on queer literature in contemporary Puerto Rico. He notes that without the symbolic consecration of queer literature in two landmark early twenty-first-century anthologies, one scholarly and the other literary, writers like Luis Negrón would have never established themselves in a traditionally heteronormative and actively homophobic Puerto Rican literary field. Finally, José Luis Venegas's fascinating chapter on literary histories in Spain demonstrates that in order to garner symbolic capital for themselves, Spanish literary historians in the mid-twentieth century replicated geographically-informed European models when they marginalized Andalusian literature in the same way that European literary historians had marginalized Spain as southern and therefore "other."

As stimulating as the combination of these essays is, the standout piece in this volume can hardly be considered an essay at all. Sebastian Faber's "Post-Scriptum," structured as a dialogue, takes seriously Bourdieu's call for scholarly "reflexivity" as it colloquially and cogently examines the current state of the field of Hispanic Studies. Faber scrutinizes the context in which the volume's essays, including his own, have been produced. He speaks openly about his own doubts and misgivings about the collective work of a field that has experienced a "loss of clarity about the *nomos* of scholarly activity" (307). The confusion is due to a variety of factors, including the "perverse institutional incentives" that drive the publish-or-perish mentality and lead to scholarly overproduction (312). He advocates for a widespread, true commitment to understanding the personal and institutional conditions in which scholarly work is produced. Ultimately, Faber argues that "gatekeepers" like himself who have the symbolic capital to consecrate

in a system that operates on peer review, hold the keys to changing the accepted forms of scholarly work such that it goes beyond the 8,000-word essay or 300-page monograph. Faber's contribution should be widely disseminated among Hispanic Studies scholars of all ranks, especially in the current age of the corporatizing university's culture of silence that hides the effects of neoliberalism on academic workers.

This collection achieves its goal of demonstrating Bourdieu's continued relevance in the field of Hispanic studies. The authors take care not to frame these fields as mere recipients of foreign theoretical discourse, but attempt to show how Bourdieu's concepts have circulated and been adapted to them. In the post-financial crisis world we inhabit, reflecting on power, exposing the structures that govern our actions, and dismantling the illusion of autonomy are more important than ever, and this volume adds important voices on culture and literature to that conversation.

Katie J. Vater
University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee