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## Martha E. Sánchez. A Translational Turn: Latinx Literature into the Mainstream. U of Pittsburg P, 2018.

Belen Rodríguez Mourelo  
Penn State University, Berks, brm4@psu.edu

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**Martha E. Sánchez. *A Translational Turn: Latinx Literature into the Mainstream*. U of Pittsburg P, 2018.**

**Abstract**

Review of Martha E. Sánchez. *A Translational Turn: Latinx Literature into the Mainstream*. U of Pittsburg P, 2018. xiv +178 pp.

**Keywords**

Latinx Literature, mainstream, translation

Martha E. Sánchez. *A Translational Turn: Latinx Literature into the Mainstream*. U of Pittsburg P, 2018. xiv +178 pp.

This book is about translation, languages, border crossings, bilingualism, and multilingualism. *A Translational Turn* is the culmination of years of teaching Latinx literature and reflecting on the changes brought about by publishing translations as well as the type of translations these texts have experienced. Or, as the subtitle suggests, the focus is an analysis of the works that have been translated into the mainstream and how this concrete process has materialized.

Martha E. Sánchez's careful review offers a detailed and well-researched account of the development undergone by Latinx and Hispanic literature in the United States in order to fit the needs of market trends, especially after the 1990s. The trend evolved from the more traditional, one-directional translation (from Spanish to English), into bidirectional—multidirectional, rather—interpretations. The process describes how what seemed to be a positive development of incorporating more names and titles into the corpus of books by Spanish authors in the US has resulted in the suppression of their unique cultural, bilingual, and multicultural idiosyncrasy. While attracting readers and expanding the corpus, incorporating these translations also damaged their own expression of bilingualism and understanding of multiple cultural backgrounds.

Following the metaphor offered by the three images of La Malinche on the cover, the book focuses on three significant texts that exemplify these directional perspectives: the Chicano novel *Pocho* ([1959] 1970 1984) by José Antonio Villareal (translated by Chicano writer Roberto Cantú in 1994 as *Pocho en Español*); the 1993 memoir *When I was Puerto Rican* by Esmeralda Santiago (*Cuando era puertorriqueña*, translated by herself); and the Mexican-Latinx *Diario de un mojado* (2003) by Ramón “Tianguis” Pérez (*Diary of an Undocumented Immigrant* by Dick J. Reavis in 1991). The latter represents a unique example because it was originally written in Spanish but first published in English, to then be converted into Spanish again: a peculiar case of transborder translation.

Sánchez presents a well-structured and developed examination, reviewing important notions related to theories of translation per se, as well as structuring terms (bilingual, multilingual, multicultural, internal and external translations, code-shifting, Spanglish). Sánchez includes an analysis of terms and tropes like *pocho*, *jíbaro* or *mojado* and the reasons to consider them “untranslatable” and provides an overlook of the publishing houses and presses both in the Spanish-speaking and the US context around the 1990s. In addition, the author offers an in-depth assessment of Latinx narratives and translations in the US market, as well as an illuminating discussion of the “new” status of Spanish in the United States. These earlier chapters developed her analysis which offers three categories of translations. 1) International (e.g. from Spanish to English or French to Italian).

This is the most prevalent category of translation. It is used when moving from different geopolitical areas and it is meant to address monolingual audiences. 2) Transnational (presuming a source text that is multilingual, as in *Pocho* or *When I was Puerto Rican*.) This category is connected to global markets and with a tendency to “flatten” languages into monolingual unities. 3) Transborder (as in *Diario*) where the source text is fully located in the Mexican side of the border, while the publication, translation, and audience of both the source and the translated texts are in the United States: it is published for audiences that a state codes as foreign. Each of these works and cases is analyzed in detail. Sánchez also offers an example of the loss of the multilingual effect of Junot Díaz’s *Drown* in the translated title *Negocios*.

Little attention had been given to the issues presented by translation, bilingualism and multilingualism in Latinx literature. Not only does Sánchez’s book shed light onto the evolution of translations and considerations of English and Spanish in the United States since the 1990s, but she also claims that the two languages have been culturally entangled and partnering in exciting communicative ways. The author offers two appendixes: one with a list of about sixty translations from English to Spanish, and another with thirteen from Spanish to English, ranging from 1990 to 2010. Together with the works of major writers being currently translated, Sánchez calls for further studies, inviting to test her argument and to observe how the relation among languages, theories of translation, and Latinx literature evolve.

Belén Rodríguez Mourelo  
*Penn State Berks*