

The Corpus: Cultural Magazines from Spain and Hispanic America

Hanno Ehrlicher

The corpus of cultural magazines, from which data have been systematically collected, was designed in accordance with the overall research goal to investigate the dynamics of transatlantic exchange within the Spanish-speaking cultural world in two phases of modernization between 1890 and 1936, and to map the two aesthetic currents of Modernismo and the avant-garde.

In compiling the data, we followed a number of criteria to ensure that the data corpus was as meaningful as possible:

1. Accessibility of the journals in digital form:

As was discussed more fully in the first chapter, the research project did not focus on the historical printed originals but on digital objects (see file “01_Hanno-Ehrlicher_Cultural-Magazines-as-Digital-Objects”). The criterion of accessibility therefore refers to digitised material and was mainly guided by pragmatic considerations. The project benefited from the fact that in recent years retro-digitisation and open-access policies of archives in Spain and Hispanic America have made it easier to access historical materials from different library repositories. The sources of the digitised material can be found in the corpus overview which is attached as an appendix to this presentation and therefore need not be listed here in detail.

However, the Berlin-based Ibero-American Institute of Prussian Cultural Heritage (IAI) should be emphasized, as it was a privileged collaborative partner in the project,

and, following specific requests, both supplemented its already substantive holdings of Latin American cultural journals and magazines as far as was possible, and digitized existing holdings. We would therefore like to take this opportunity to express our sincere thanks for all of the IAI's efforts and support for this project.

The possibilities of acquiring historical materials on the free market naturally also have their limits; however, some titles that were interesting from a research perspective and were initially intended for analysis had to be discounted in the end due to lack of accessibility.

2. Variability of publication types:

The term 'cultural magazine' has – for good reason – not yet been determinately defined. Although there have been attempts in Journalism and Communication Studies to clearly differentiate certain subtypes within the field of periodical publications which is formally and in respect to content very heterogeneous,¹ a fixed typology is neither feasible nor meaningful. From a comparative literary-historical perspective it is more relevant to recognize the historical dynamics of a medium which is characterized not by fixed features but rather by its flexible intermedial position, with the newspaper market on one side, and the book market on the other.² The need to take 'magazine' as an umbrella term is also due to the fact that there are terminologically independent

¹ Attempts to define specific types of printed journals such as 'magazine' or 'revue' were made in Germany, especially by Wilmont Haacke. See "Das 'Magazin' – ein unentdeckter Zeitschriftentypus", *Archiv für Geschichte des Buchwesens* 11 (1971), columns 429-448, „Der Zeitschriftentypus ‚Revue‘“, *Archiv für Geschichte des Buchwesens* 11 (1971), 1035-1056.

² With this approach, we are close to the definition of cultural magazines as 'little archives' given by Gustav Frank, Madleen Podewski and Stefan Scherer in "Kultur-Zeit-Schrift. Literatur- und Kulturzeitschriften als 'kleine Archive'", *Internationales Archiv für Sozialgeschichte der deutschen Literatur* 34: 2 (2010), pp. 1–45. DOI: [10.1515/iasl.2009.013](https://doi.org/10.1515/iasl.2009.013).

traditions in different cultures (Spanish, for example, has no conceptual equivalent to the 'little magazine' of the English-speaking world³) and that magazines, especially with regard to the use of imagery, are closely linked to the historical dynamics of the development of reproductive technologies and are therefore necessarily typologically unstable.

The vague term 'cultural magazine' is therefore not used metaphorically and improperly in this study, but was in fact purposely chosen in order for us to grasp the dynamics of periodical publication in the field of modern literature. It is precisely the tension between journals or 'little magazines' that are closely focused on literature, and formats such as the illustrated magazine, in which literature is negotiated with other art forms and more general social issues, that should be investigated. Similarly, it is not possible to distinguish clearly between art and literary magazines in the avant-garde phase, which is why magazines with a stronger focus on the visual arts were also included in our corpus. In short, the development of literary forms in the medium of the cultural magazine during the two phases of modernism is coupled with an extremely strong dynamic of typologies and formatting of the medium itself. This dynamic was one of the central objects of our analysis.

3. Geographical and historical representativeness:

The journals or magazines we selected had to be representative, on the one hand, of the literary currents of modernism and the avant-garde to be studied, and, on the other hand, of the breadth and internal differentiation of the Spanish-speaking cultural

³ In fact, most of the 'magazines' from our corpus, if they have an explicit genre marker in the title, opt for 'revista' (review) with a qualifier (e. g. 'revista chica', 'revista nueva', 'revista internacional'). In addition, there is also a 'bulletin' (*Boletín Titikaka*) and a 'gazette' (*La Gaceta literaria*).

area, especially in regards to 'Hispanic America'. The difficulty in finding a terminological term for this cultural area beyond Europe, which has generated an endless effort to name 'that which Columbus had found'⁴ reflects the well-known problem of a cultural area that cannot be reduced to an identitarian denominator and to which the non-identical is therefore supposed to be essential, as the intensive discussion about 'culturas híbridas' and 'mestizaje' shows.

In our selection of the 'Hispanic American' magazines it was therefore necessary to choose the most diverse contexts possible. While Modernismo as a whole is characterized by a widespread lack of thematization of specifics of its own cultural context, the avant-gardes in particular are marked by an increasing awareness of cultural specifics, be it the local indigenous culture (as seen in *Amauta* or in *Boletín Tititkaka*, for example), or the cultural impact of extracontinental migrations, which in each case had very different foundations (compare, for example, the contemporaneous wave of mass economic migration from Europe in the Argentinean context vs. the African cultural substrate in the Caribbean with its centuries-old origins in the slave trade).

The following graph of the examined magazines on a world map illustrates their geographical distribution (see figure 1). This graphic shows how, on one side of the Atlantic, Hispanic America's cultural diversity is laid bare with publishing hubs in Argentina (Buenos Aires being the publication centre), Mexico (with activity mostly centred on Mexico City), the Caribbean (Havana) and the Andean region, while on the other side of the ocean, with regard to the Iberian Peninsula, the two rival publication

⁴ For this problem see especially Miguel Rojas Mix: *Los cien nombres de América. Eso que descubrió Colón*. Barcelona: Lumen 1991.

centres of Madrid and Barcelona predominate, although there are also journals from Galicia (*Alfar*) and Andalusia (*Grecia*) ensuring some level of cultural heterogeneity.

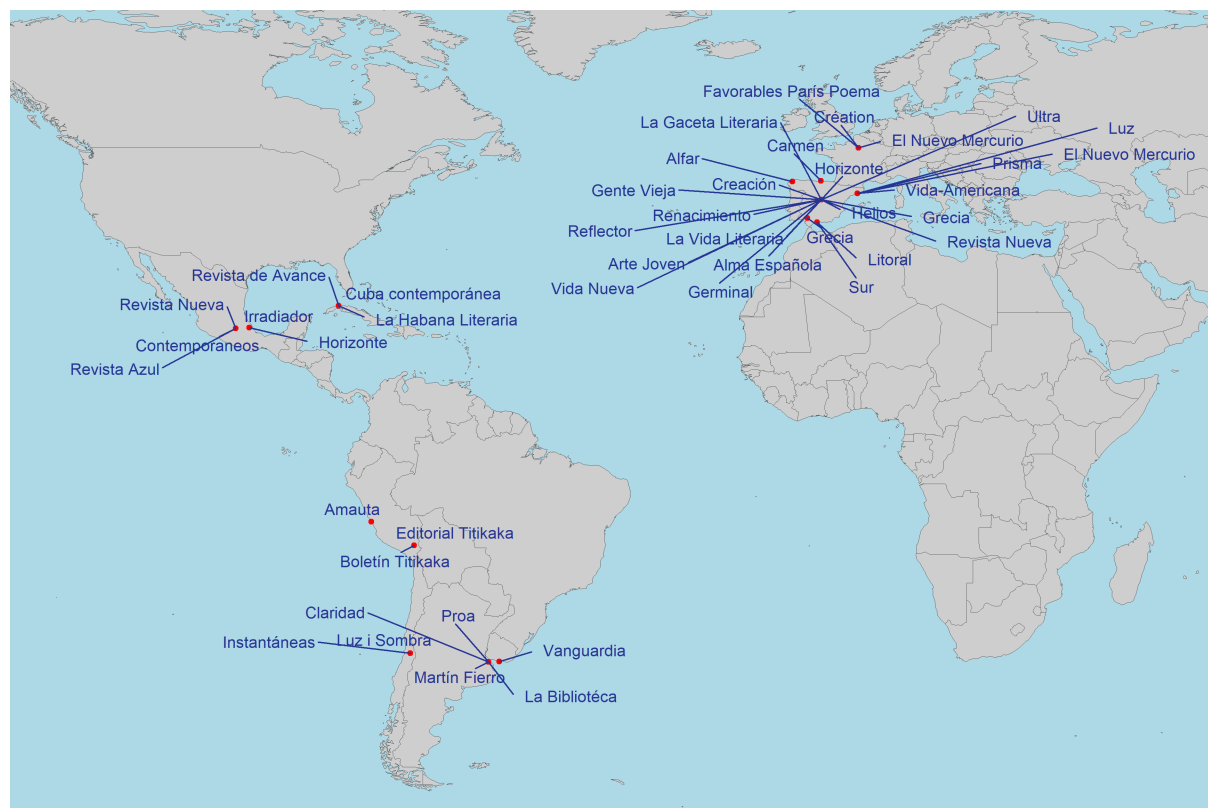


Figure 1: The 42 magazines of our corpus on a world map.

Historically, the scope of our study ranges from the early 1890s, i.e. the early phase of the emergence of Modernismo, to the year 1936. The beginning of the Spanish Civil War represented a meaningful historical caesura, at least for the Peninsular context, because under the conditions of the war, the logic of the literary field naturally also changed fundamentally. With the sudden upending of the order of things came a paradigm shift in cultural practices, as the previously rather symbolic militancy of the avant-garde found itself having to give way to a real war event.

4. Limitations, or nothing is perfect:

Of course, a corpus compiled with these criteria – like any other – has its limitations. Our corpus was developed based on preliminary categorical decisions whose premises can be questioned just as much as alternatives to them are conceivable. Fortunately, nothing in science is ‘without alternatives’. In addition, there were of course practical limitations. The availability of sources for digitization at the IAI has already been mentioned as a practical limitation. As a result, the intermediate zone of ‘Posmodernismo’, i.e. the transition from Modernismo to the avant-garde, which was originally intended for a separate quantitative analysis, could not be covered as broadly as was originally intended. Of the total of 42 magazines, 16 were assigned to the phase of Modernismo and 23 to the avant-garde, leaving only 3 journals for the transition phase of Posmodernismo. It is precisely at this point that the corpus presented here could be expanded and supplemented in the future. The time limit of the project did not allow for more. It also explains why not all 42 magazine titles could be analysed for the whole length of their run, if they were available to us in digital form at all. A number of digitized copies were already incompletely available in the archives used, so the gaps there are logically reflected in our data corpus. In other cases the time limitation on the project forced us to define representative sections for the phase of data acquisition.

Nevertheless, with a total of almost 32,000 datasets, we are convinced that the data collection compiled from this corpus is a result which is not only impressive, but above all one which can and should be used for further research.