

Rogers

Incomparable Empires

Modernism and the Translation of Spanish and American Literature

The Spanish-American War of 1898 seems to mark a turning point in both geopolitical and literary histories. The victorious American empire ascended and dominated the globe culturally in the twentieth century, while the once-mighty Spanish empire declined and became a minor state in the world republic of letters. But what if this narrative relies on several faulty assumptions, and what if key modernist figures in both America and Spain radically rewrote these histories—at the foundational moment of modern literary studies? Rogers follows the networks of American and Spanish writers, translators, and movements to uncover surprising arguments that forged the politics and aesthetics of modernism. He revisits the role of empire—from its institutions to its cognitive effects—in shaping a nation's literature and culture. He reads the provocative, often counterintuitive arguments of John Dos Passos, who held that "American literature" could only flourish if the expanding U.S. empire collapsed like Spain's. He follows Ezra Pound's use of Spanish poetry to structure the Cantos and the poet Juan Ramón Jiménez's interpretations of modernismo across several languages. And he tracks the controversial theorization of a Harlem-Havana-Madrid nexus for black writing, and Ernest Hemingway's development of a version of cubist Spanglish in *For Whom the Bell Tolls*.

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