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Transatlantic Authors in European Publishing after 1945

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This article on the circulation of books in the transatlantic space starts with a historically datable observation: the lopsided exchanges between European countries and their colonies in the 19th century. When Europe discovered the richness of African and Latin American literatures, the balance became more equal, especially after 1945.

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Europe long exported books in the continent's major languages: especially English, French, Spanish and Portuguese and, to a lesser extent, German and Italian. Europe considered literary and linguistic exchanges in the 19th century a supplementary tool of domination. Writing in the colonizer's language at the risk of losing their souls was the only way the peoples of America and Africa could make their voices heard. That is why, in the aftermath of African independence, Nigerian novelist Chinua Achebe vehemently rejected the rules of the Western literary canon. When he wrote *Arrow of God* (1964), an Igbo tale based on African tradition, Achebe paved the way for challenging the aesthetic standards prevailing until then. Although another of his novels, *Things Fall Apart* (1958), is now considered a classic of world literature, Achebe laid the groundwork for the radical positions of Kenyan Ngugi wa Thiong'o, who in 1968 went so far as to call for abolishing the English department at the University of Nairobi. In taking aim at language, which he described as the worst form of mental alienation, Thiong'o went further than the French-speaking poets who had coined the term "négritude" in the late 1930s and proclaimed loud and clear the originality of their writing.

Writers in France's colonial empire never did anything comparable to spurning a language seen as one of the most harmful instruments of man's exploitation of man. In March 1966, Léopold Sédar Senghor told a group of students at Quebec's Laval University that he rejected the idea of associating Africa's cultural decolonization with challenging the French language, of which he had become one of the leading lights. However, in 2007 several French-speaking Caribbean and North African authors published an opinion piece in the newspaper *Le Monde* assailing the excessive domination of academic language in the francophone cultural sphere and calling for the emergence of a "world-literature in French." [1] Unlike Senghor, these writers seem to aspire to the emergence of a language independent of a national space in order to finally shift the balance of cultural exchanges. Three days after their piece was printed, the Senegalese secretary-general of the Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie, Abdou Diouf, responded by asking the signers to look at the reality of French-language African writing and not confuse a political institution, effectively dominated by France, Quebec and Belgium to the detriment of formerly colonized countries, with the extreme diversity of literature that uses language as a tool malleable enough to allow Côte d'Ivoire's Ahmadou Kourouma and Algeria's Boualem Sansal to express themselves in radically different styles. [2]

The debates that emerged after 1945 have grown in intensity since the early 21st century. They raise the issue of persistent inequality dating back to the inception and formation of cultural empires. The global growth of Lusophone literature makes it clear that cultural transfer was long a one-way street. From Camoens to Pessoa, Portugal exported more of its writers than Brazil, Angola and Mozambique did. The same can be said about the Anglosphere. London publishers massively exported the United Kingdom's literature to India, Australia and the part of Africa they dominated. This was even easier in India after the 1813 Charter Act, when Anglicizing the colonial elites became a priority. The same held true in the Victorian empire, when the English universities of Nairobi, Johannesburg, Cape Town and Cairo trained elites who had to come from the French, Spanish and Portuguese empires to Europe to study. The Sorbonne in Paris, and the universities of Madrid, Spain and Coimbra, Portugal, long remained the focus of aspirations for Latin-American students such as Mario Vargas Llosa, Pablo Neruda and Alejo Carpentier. All three were drawn to Paris or the exalting past of the Iberian Peninsula's most prestigious cities.

The golden age of African writers

The balance of symbolic exchanges between France and its colonies is often dated to René Maran's 1921 Prix Goncourt for *Batouala,* subtitled *Un Véritable Roman nègre* (*A Genuine Negro Novel*). But this rosy view does not stand up under scrutiny. The *Revue du monde noir* appeared in 1931, *L'étudiant martiniquais* (*The Student from Martinique*) and *Légitime Défense* (*Self-Defense*) the following year. Martinique poet Aimé Césaire's 1939 *Cahier d'un retour au pays natal* (*Notebook of a Return to My Native Land*) strongly voiced the issues that he and Senghor put at the center of the idea of "négritude". In 1945, the Haitian Communist poet Jacques Roumain published *Sales nègres* (*Dirty Negroes*) in the collection *Bois d'ébène* (*Ebony Wood*), one of the highest achievements of the movement calling for the liberation of literature from all the ethical and aesthetic conventions prevailing until then. [3] In the early 20th century, Georges Braque and Pablo Picasso discovered and valued *art nègre*, and objects from indigenous cultures entered Paris art galleries *before* some Europeans changed their views. The arrival of jazz in Europe in 1917 and the *revues "nègres"* fashionable in the nightclubs where Josephine Baker performed opened the eyes of French publishers. After taking an interest in Russian and Swedish literature in the 1880s, and regional schools from 1900 to 1920, they published writers who made the Black man's problems the focus of their concerns.

During the Second World War, some French publishers went into exile in Algeria and New York, where readers had different expectations. They finally gave North African, African and Caribbean literature the attention they deserved. This shift occurred in a short period from 1944 to 1958. It must be put back into a context where Black American authors, from James Baldwin to Richard Wright, and detective novelists James Hadley Chase and Peter Cheney, were translated on a massive scale, raising them to the rank of such famous writers as Erskine Caldwell, Ernest Hemingway and John Steinbeck. The same is true for novelists from non-Anglophone linguistic and cultural spheres, especially Karel Capek, Manès Sperber, Virgil Gheorgiu and Giovanni Guareschi—a Czech, an Austrian, a Romanian and the Italian author of *The Little World of Don Camillo*. The number of translations rose from 81 in 1944 to 955 in 1947 and 1,088 in 1948. [4] All the publishers raced to break into the foreign literature market. In France, Les Éditions du Seuil asked Senghor to edit its newly-created "Pierres vives" collection, while Pierre Seghers launched the "Terre vivante" collection, Robert Laffont started "Pavillons" and Gallimard put Roger Caillois in charge of the "La Croix du Sud" collection and Louis Aragon of "Littératures soviétiques."

From 1944 to 1958, the ten-year average of French translations was 1,023 titles, which accounts for 10 to 15% of books published during that period. The share of English was obviously considerable, but this was also a period when authors from the former colonies wrote their most powerful works in French. The newcomers included Algerians Kateb Yacine, Mohammed Dib and Mouloud Feraoun, who was killed by the OAS (Organisation de l'armée secrète, a paramiltary organization opposed to Algerian independence) in March 1962. Feraoun's novel *Fils du pauvre* (*Poor Man's Son*) came out in 1950, Mouloud Mammeri's *La colline oubliée* (*The Forgotten Hill*) in 1952, Dib's *La Grande Maison* (*The Great House*) the same year, Tunisian Albert Memmi's *La statue de sel* (*The Salt Statue*) in 1953 and *Passé simple* (*The Simple Past*) by Moroccan Driss Chraïbi in 1954. Yacine's most powerful work, *Nedjma*, appeared in 1956. This literature was rooted in a deeply changing colonial landscape. At the same time many writers from sub-Saharan Africa under French rule published their stories, all of which are indictments of Western colonialism, in a Paris-based magazine, *Présence africaine*, edited by Alioune Diop with support from Albert Camus, Jean-Paul Sartre and Michel Leiris. Sembène Ousmane's 1956 *The Black Docker*, Bernard Dadié's 1959 *Un*

nègre à Paris (*A Negro in Paris*) and Aké Loba's 1960 *L'étudiant noir* (*The Black Student*) illustrate the magazine's goal of offering its readers realistic stories prompting them to reflect upon plight of peoples living under colonial rule.

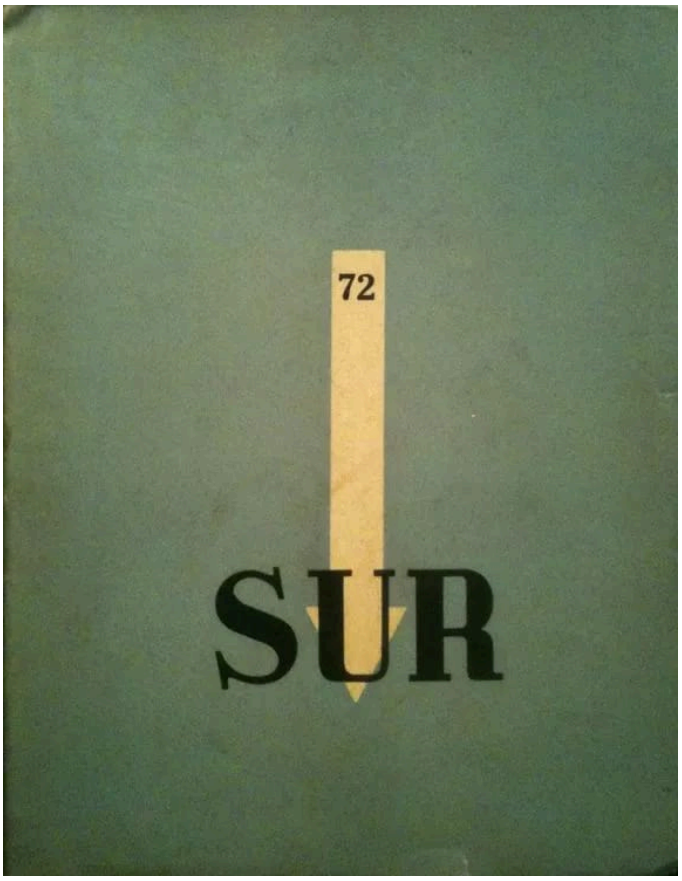
Along with pre-publications in *Présence africaine*, the release of *The African Child* by Guinean Camara Laye in 1953, *Ville cruelle* (*Cruel City*) by Cameroonian Mongo Beti in 1954, the same year as *Légende de M'Pfoumou Ma Mazono* (*The Legend of M'Pfoumou Ma Mazono*) by Congo's Jean Malonga and *Ô pays mon beau peuple* (*Oh country my beautiful people*) by Senegal's Ousmane in 1957 finally convinced readers that these works were unlike anything that had come before them and that authentic writers outside France could breathe new life into literature. Senghor's 1948 *Anthology of New Negro and Malagasy Poetry in the French Language* and works by Haitian writers René Depestre, Philippe Toby Marcelin and Jacques Roumain, and Martinique's Aimé Césaire, Lionel Atuly and Georges Desportes, gave French readers in the years 1944-1958 an opportunity to understand that their Cartesian worldview could come under challenge. This was masterfully accomplished by the 1968 translation of *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, which revealed the baroque world of Colombian writer Gabriel Garcia Marquez. He ranks among those who did the most to get Europe, especially France, to accept the idea that Old World literature could no longer ignore voices from the other side of the Atlantic. In a way, a new triangular trade emerged. Original cultural products were bought in Africa, shipped to France and re-exported to Latin America, whence works published in Spanish or Portuguese were sent to delighted readers in Europe.

A new kind of triangular trade

French publishers based in Rio de Janeiro, especially Baptiste-Louis Garnier, did not wait for the middle of the twentieth century to introduce their adopted country's great writers to Europeans. Machado de Assis was among the first to gain recognition for his work, which became a source of income for authors participating in the early empowerment of national culture. Through their Garnier Hermanos subsidiary offices in Mexico City and Buenos Aires, Auguste and Hippolyte Garnier brought hundreds of thousands of books printed in Spanish in Paris to Latin America, while their brother, Baptiste-Louis, received his own stocks of books in Portuguese, also printed in Paris. In addition to this one-way trade, the Garniers gradually began seeking out authors whose French translations would be sufficiently well-received to justify the cost of acclimatizing them to other countries. Working also with Spain and Portugal, the Garniers could easily export authors published in their language in Mexico, Argentina, Colombia and Brazil to these two countries.

In Madrid and Lisbon, publishers focusing on exchanges with Latin America did the same. But it was the rise of travel to Europe by the generation of Victoria Ocampo and Jorge Luis Borges, to mention only Argentina, that quickened the pace of exchanging symbolic goods between the two continents. Ocampo was published in Madrid by José Ortega y Gasset and founded the magazine *Sur*. She published translations of most of the great European writers, which sold as well in Buenos Aires and Mexico City as they did in Madrid. *Sur* itself was readily available in Paris. The same goes for Jorge Luis Borges and his magazines, including *Martin Fierro*, which was very active in translating, but his own work was not translated worldwide until after the Second World War. By driving some Republican intellectuals into Mexican exile in 1939, the Spanish Civil War played a key part in increasing the exchange of symbolic goods within and outside Latin America. Founded in Mexico in 1934, the prestigious international publishing house Fondo de Cultura Economica greatly contributed to the translation into Spanish of works

considered fundamental to the economic education of Mexican students. When Argentina's Arnaldo Orfila Reynal took over the helm in 1948, the FCE suddenly picked up steam. It found outlets not only throughout Latin America, but also in Spain and all the countries with a Castilian-speaking diaspora.



The literary magazine *Sur* founded by Victoria Ocampo. *Sur* 40, Septembre 1940

Source: Wikimedia

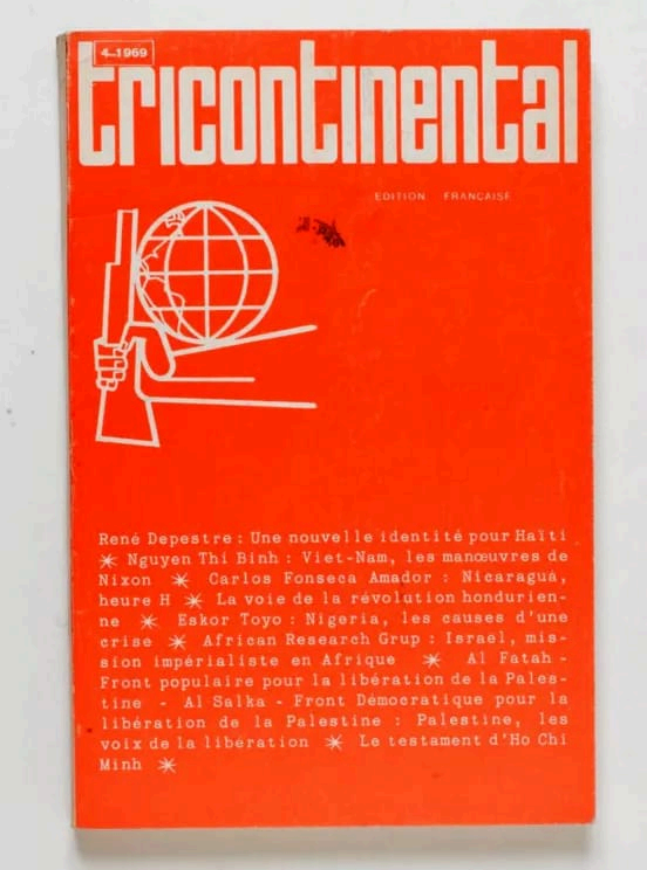
The history of the FCE from 1934 to Reynal's departure in 1965 is entwined with the CIA's direct intervention in Mexico's domestic affairs and speaks volumes on the circulation of books in the transatlantic space. Daniel Cosio Villegas founded the FCE to meet the needs of social science students at the Autonomous University of Mexico State. It quickly became a force in Latin America's main countries, starting with Argentina. The arrival of Spanish Republicans after the Civil War and the founding of Colegio de Mexico added another dimension to the publishing company, whose original mission was to translate great works of economic thought. The FCE's decision to extend its editorial policy to all the social sciences precisely at the time when French intellectuals were asked to lay the foundations of the University of São Paulo paid off: in the early 1960s, its catalogue reflected the worldwide rise of the social sciences. Marxists made an important breakthrough there, all the more remarkable given the international context of the Cold War, but French Structuralist thinkers, German sociologists Max Weber and Norbert Elias and English economist Keynes were also published.

FCE publications were available from Mexico City to Santiago de Chile, where the social sciences also arrived in these years. Some were originally published in Buenos Aires and many were exported to Europe, where they found a significant readership. FCE books even penetrated Franco's theoretically Marxist-proof Spain through official or underground channels. Publishers on the Iberian Peninsula maintained strong ties with their Mexican counterpart. Its focus on the same issues that 1960s intellectuals were concerned

with—Cuba, the Vietnam War and the Third World—eventually led to the ouster of the publishing company's management, who were deemed too friendly with Castro and Communism. The 1964 publication in Spanish of *The Children of Sanchez, Autobiography of a Mexican Family* by American anthropologist Oscar Lewis was the pretext to get rid of Reynal. The book met with an unremarkable reception when it came out in English, but in Mexico the Spanish translation unleashed a vehement campaign against the publisher, who was accused of deliberately portraying the average Mexican family in a negative light. Reynal moved on to Buenos Aires, where he founded Siglo XXI, which picked up where FCE left off and in a few years became as representative of the circulation of books and ideas worldwide as its illustrious predecessor was. In this sense, the shunning of a great Latin American intellectual, to whom Mexico would later pay tribute with its highest national honors, proved to be counterproductive in the fight against the Eastern bloc and its allies. The American decision to impose an economic, political and cultural blockade on Fidel Castro's regime pushed Cuba into the arms of the Soviet Union, triggered an outcry and made *Tricontinental*, a magazine printed in Cuba in Spanish, English and French, a tool of opposition to capitalism and imperialism.

In 1957, the anti-imperialist Organization of Solidarity with the Peoples of Africa and Asia (OSPAA) was founded in Accra, Ghana. Four years later, they met in Cairo to discuss admitting Cuba and other Latin American nations, but the 1963 creation of the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) strengthened the hand of the moderate countries to the detriment of the most revolutionary ones. This prompted Castro and Che Guevara to host a January 1966 conference in Havana where the OSPAA was renamed *Organizacion de Solidaridad de los Pueblos de Africa, Asia y America Latina*, known by its Spanish acronym OSPAAAL. The 82 movements or political parties represented at the meeting, which thought of itself as a new Bandoeng [5], were expected to join the organization. While Che's death the following year and Cuba's alignment with the USSR dealt the movement a harsh blow, *Tricontinental*, which French publisher François Maspero carefully nurtured, [6] took part in intellectual exchanges between America, Africa and Europe. The Latin Quarter bookstore "La Joie de lire" sold works by Che, Martinique-born Franz Fanon, a psychiatrist who joined Algeria's National Liberation Army, and Amilcar Cabral, the leader of the armed struggle in Guinea Bissau. José-Carlos Mariategui's *Seven Interpretive Essays on Peruvian Reality*, the collection *Avec Douglas Bravo dans les maquis vénézuéliens* (*With Douglas Bravo in the Venezuelan Resistance*), translated by Maspero himself, and *The Bolivian Diary of Ernesto Che Guevara*, translated in Cuba by Fanchita Gonzalez-Battle, the publisher's companion, after the revolutionary icon's death, sold in relatively high numbers.

Here again, it can be seen to what extent a new triangular trade of books, magazines, ideas and cultural mediators emerged at a time when some of the world's youth were taking a stand against imperialism. France's Interior Ministry banned sales of that country's edition of *Tricontinental* from 1966 to 1981, but this did not deter Les Éditions Maspero from clandestinely importing the magazine to France. In addition, many books from Africa about the reality of so-called decolonization joined its catalogue. Beti's also-banned *Main basse sur le Cameroun* (*Stranglehold on Cameroon*), *L'Ascension de Mobutu: du général Sésé Seko au maréchal Mobutu* (*The Rise of Mobutu: from General Sésé Seko to Marshal Mobutu*) and many other titles opened readers' eyes to a reality that the French government at the time carefully tried to conceal. Paralleling this professional and at the same time activist work, more moderate publishers such as Christian Bourgois were having books it deemed important translated. In 1970, Les Éditions du Seuil published Carlos Marighella's *For the Liberation of Brazil*, a book that prompted all the Paris publishers to protest the Interior Ministry's threat to ban books and mete out sanctions.



French edition of *Tricontinental*, 1969

Source: Centre Pompidou

Transatlantic exchanges today

In this age of globalization, the concentration of publishing groups and the tightening grip of finance on the planet, it is hard to put a figure on exchanges between the continents. Nevertheless, the changes that have taken place since 1945 can be confirmed. The wealth and lushness of Brazilian literature have shifted the balance of exchanges with Portugal. Several publishers in France today specialize in translating Brazilian authors. Liana Lévi and Les éditions Anacaona are devoted to that task, while strictly Portuguese literature in translation is hard to find. Hispanic Latin American literature has become a force to be reckoned with: Argentinean, Chilean, Colombian, Mexican and Peruvian books are available from all the major French, German, Italian, American and English publishers. The Nobel Prizes awarded to Gabriela Mistral (1945), Miguel Angel Asturias (1967), Pablo Neruda (1971), Gabriel Garcia Marquez (1982), Octavio Paz (1990) and Mario Vargas Llosa (2010) illustrate the remarkable breakthrough of these writers, who have turned Spanish-language literature into what should be a quasi-model of "world-literature" belonging to hundreds of millions of Hispanophones. Consequently, Spanish, Argentinean and Mexican publishers today base their sales projections and initial print runs on equations designed to break down the number of books they hope to sell in each Spanish-speaking country. Turning their back on the idea of working primarily for their countries' own readers, Spanish and Portuguese houses have taken up the methods of the English-speaking world, where expected sales in Great Britain, the United States, Australia, India and other English-speaking countries guide publishing decisions.

Given the lack of purchasing power in French-speaking Africa, France can only turn to Quebec, Belgium and Switzerland for its exports. However, it is likely that over time, African readership will expand and become integrated into a wider market. Similarly, African publishing suffers from the gravitational pull exerted by Paris publishers on Algerian, Moroccan, Tunisian, Ivorian, Senegalese, Cameroonian, Togolese and Guineans writers. Ahmadou Kourouma, Tahar Ben Jelloun, Alain Mabanckou and Boualem Sansal have significantly enriched the French language without contributing to the development of their respective countries' literature. History accounts for this phenomenon, which is not as prominent in Anglophone Africa. The relationship benefits the former colonizer, but in sub-Saharan Africa local radio stations have fuelled the development of vernacular languages. It is reasonable to think that literatures relying more on local languages will eventually emerge, following the example of writers using Arabic as a vector, which gave Egypt a Nobel Prize winner, Naguib Mahfouz, and has introduced books by Iraqi, Syrian, Palestinian and Lebanese authors to the world.

For the past 20 years, the International Alliance of Independent Publishers has developed groundbreaking ideas for cooperation between wealthy and emerging countries in order to promote writers whose work is available outside the major book distribution channels. The IAIP, which has a strong presence in Africa and Latin America, coordinates co-publishing programs to rebalance exchanges based on or inspired by the rules of fair trade. The selling price of books published in association with the Alliance varies depending on the strength of the local currency, which allows rich countries to subsidize sales in poor ones. A work published in French in Tunisia or in English in South Africa can thus cross the Atlantic and be marketed in the right conditions in Paris, Montreal, London and New York, while one published in Bogota will be available in Spain and the rest of the Spanish-speaking world. The IAIP has a growing presence at major book fairs in Guadalajara, Rio de Janeiro, São Paulo, Cairo, London, Frankfurt and Paris. With 750 partner publishers today, the push for diversity is increasingly successful. [7]

Nevertheless, 56 gargantuan groups post over €50 billion in annual sales. [8] The top 10, called the RELX Group (formerly Reed Elzevier)—Pearson, Thomson Reuters, Bertelsmann, Wolters Kluwer, Hachette Livre, Springer Nature, Wiley (the world's leading producer of bundled digital magazines), Harper Collins and Scholastic—account for over half the total (€28 billion). In this world, the share of independents is negligible. The giants are crushing international trade with all their weight and dominate transatlantic exchanges. Their huge share of the school and university textbook market gives them control over the "classics" and, thereby, the literature of most of the world's countries. In the future, independent publishers hope to tilt the balance of power by trying to penetrate the textbook market. This new battle will undoubtedly be a long one, but it may prove decisive in the fight for what is now called bibliodiversity. While the IAIP has championed this idea since its founding in 2002, it first appeared in Chile 12 years earlier at LOM Ediciones. UNESCO approved the push for diversity in 2005 [9] and Latin American publishers have made *Dia de la Bibliodiversidad* a day of international solidarity since 2010. This exemplary new triangular trade is respectful of everyone's rights, may help to eclipse the old slave trade and confirms that the world has entered a 21st century that has made the fight for diversity one of its essential commitments.

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NOTES

1. "Pour une littérature-monde en français," an opinion piece signed by, among others, Tahar Ben Jelloun, Maryse Condé, Edouard Glissant, Alain Mabanckou, Amin Maalouf, Erik Orsenna and Jean Rouaud published in *Le Monde* on March 16, 2007.
2. "La francophonie, une réalité oubliée," *Le Monde*, March 19, 2007.
3. Jacques Roumain, *Bois d'ébène* (Montréal: Mémoires d'encrier, 2003 [1945]).
4. Jean-Yves Mollier, "Paris capitale éditoriale des mondes étrangers," *Le Paris des étrangers depuis 1945*, ed. Antoine Marès and Pierre Milza (Paris: Publications de la Sorbonne, 1995), 377-378.
5. Eleven years earlier, in April 1955, the first meeting of non-aligned states took place in Bandoeng, Indonesia.
6. François Maspero, "Une brève histoire des librairies et des éditions Maspero, 1955-1982," in *François Maspero et les paysages humains* (Lyon: A plus d'un titre/La fosse aux ours, 2009), 93-208.
7. See *Bibliodiversity* magazine, special issue 4, February 2016, "Édition et engagement. D'autres façons d'être éditeur."

8 Fabrice Piault, "Classement Livres Hebdo 2019 de l'édition mondiale," *Livres Hebdo*, August 30, 2019, 28-37.

9 "Déclaration des éditeurs indépendants pour la protection et la promotion de la bibliodiversité," *Les Assises et leurs suites* (Paris: Alliance internationale des éditeurs indépendants pour une autre mondialisation, 2007), 73-78.