

A Tale of Two Translation Programs: Politics, the Market, and Rockefeller Funding for Latin American Literature in the United States during the 1960s and 1970s

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In the 1960s, the Cuban Revolution sparked great interest in Latin America throughout the U.S. Not coincidentally, the promotion and translation of literature from Latin America increased dramatically during this period. Numerous organizations developed programs to subsidize the dissemination of Latin American literature in an effort to counter Cuba's influence on Latin American writers and to make U.S. cultural activity attractive to the latter. This paper explores the interplay of market and political forces in the promotion of Latin American literature in the U.S. through an examination of two programs funded by Rockefeller family philanthropies during the 1960s and 1970s: a translation subsidy program supported by the Rockefeller Foundation and administered by the Association of American University Presses from 1960 to 1966; and the Center for Inter-American Relations, which first received funding from the Rockefeller Brothers Fund in 1967. I trace the efforts of both programs at working the U.S. market to promote works and authors and create bestsellers. I also study the political motivations fostering these efforts, demonstrating how these programs were sometimes implicated in conflicting aims, seeking to promote cross-cultural understanding throughout the Americas on the one hand and, on the other, to further U.S. foreign policy interests.