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Die Revista de Occidente (1923–1936) und
der deutsch-spanische Kulturtransfer der
Zwischenkriegszeit. Editionen der Iberoamericana.
Literaturgeschichte und -kritik. Band 68, by
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Europabild – Kulturwissenschaften – Staatsbegriff. Die Revista de Occidente (1923–1936) und der deutsch-spanische Kulturtransfer der Zwischenkriegszeit. Editionen der Iberoamericana. Literaturgeschichte und -kritik. Band 68, by Carl Antonius Lemke Duque, Frankfurt am Main, Vervuert, 2014, 858 pp., €120.00 (hardback), ISBN 9783954873203

Examining Spanish contemporary history, especially reflecting the conception of Spain as a nation and in its relation to the broader European context, you may notice a somewhat recurrent discursive pattern of perceived societal backwardness and imitation of modernising role models, as well as attempts to “nationalise” these international concepts. Especially after losing the prestigious remains of its former colonial empire and the Crisis of 1898, within the political and cultural elites there was a broad demand for a modernisation and Europeanisation of Spanish society. Like the other participants of the so-called Generation of 98, research has attributed to José Ortega y Gasset, one of Spain’s first-rank thinkers, and his magazine *Revista de Occidente* a paramount role in the process of (elitist led) modernising Spanish society at the beginning of the twentieth century. (Cf. for example lately proposition of “the cultural revolution put into operation” through Ortega’s *Revista* by Jordi Gracia in *El País*.¹)

The recent book by the historian, political and cultural scientist Carl Antonius Lemke Duque *Europabild – Kulturwissenschaften – Staatsbegriff. Die Revista de Occidente (1923–1936) und der deutsch-spanische Kulturtransfer der Zwischenkriegszeit*, which is based on the author’s doctoral thesis, has to be located exactly in this historical and discursive context. Correspondingly, the author’s explicit “aim of the in hand study is to prove research’s dominant assumption of the *Revista de Occidente* and its environment as main players of Spanish modernisation in the interwar period” (p. 16). According to Lemke, there is an academic lacuna that arises in the gap between the amount of studies and their merely “descriptive” (pp. 12 and 13) analytical quality regarding research on the *Revista de Occidente* and Ortega y Gasset alike.²

Thus, focusing on the first period of the *Revista de Occidente* after the establishment of the magazine (1923–1936) – which he claims, to some extent surprisingly in the course of backing his project, to be the magazine’s period best explored (p. 12) – Lemke analyses three major thematic subjects – the image of Spain and its relationship to Europe, the concept of science and the socio-political ideas – of positioning of the *Revista*, and their environment. Astonishingly enough, given the subtitle of the Iberoamericana Edition, literary accounts are explicitly excluded of this design (p. 629). Within these three thematic focal points, the

¹Cf. Jordi Gracia, “Fulgurante Ortega,” *El País*, May 17, 2014, p. 4. Available at http://elpais.com/elpais/2014/05/12/opinion/1399909699_557311.html (accessed February 27, 2015).

²This lacuna is already stated in Jaime Ferreiro Alemparte, “José Ortega y Gasset y el pensamiento alemán en España,” *Glosse. Revista de Historia del Derecho Europeo*, no. 2 (1989–1990): 143–159, p. 157: “We are still lacking an evaluating study of the contribution of Ortega and his circle, via the *Revista* and Publishing House, in favour of German culture, especially in the field of philosophy, and his influence in the different spheres of Spanish Culture over more than two generations.” This shortage seems to correspond exactly to Lemke’s programme.

German–Spanish discourse and cultural transfer represent an important cross-sectional issue.

The organisational structure of the voluminous book is rather homogeneous. After a short introductory chapter, which characterises the *Revista* and the corresponding publishing house, the collaborating writers and the different types of publications considered within the analysis, Lemke examines – analogous to the three thematic foci – in the following three main chapters the respective discourse of the *Revista* and its environment. His structural approach is broadly the same in all chapters: Lemke identifies a thematic focal point of the *Revista*'s discourse, surveys the respective contemporary academic state of the art, reviews the corresponding publications of the *Revista* and its environment and finishes with the culmination of the sectoral discourse. The chapters end with a short concluding summary. Ultimately, after a conclusive discussion of the study's 10 "results" (pp. 629–633), the book is supplemented by an enormous appendix including informative biographical hints concerning actors productive within the *Revista* and its environment as well as an elaborated and complex, although hardly explained and barely embedded within the study, index of citation and productivity regarding the *Revista*'s collaborators and reference models.

Based on this analytical and organisational structure, the author arrives at the convincing thesis that the dominant assumption of the *Revista de Occidente* and its founder Ortega y Gasset as the main modernisation actors of interwar Spain has to be "modified" (p. 633). According to this important actualisation of the state of the art of research, the *Revista*'s environment indeed played an important discursive – and also political – part in modernising Spanish society at the beginning of the twentieth century, but the specific discourse of modernisation identified leads Lemke to the very plausible presumption that these circles of cultural elites also represented – in spite of the "progressive tone" – "factors of a rather conservative maintenance" of the given order and stability.

This original argument seems to be implied by the thematic foci and intellectual sources identified in the *Revista* and its circle. Indeed, while referring (marginally) to a concept of cultural transfer, which includes the connotation of changing significations in the process of circulation of ideas (p. 18) and furthermore discussing in a critical manner their selectivity in the initial context as well (p. 19), Lemke examines a strong influence of German thinking and a tight linkage of the *Revista*'s environment with agents of the conservative cultural elite and publicity of the Weimar Republic. This trace can be studied in an exemplary manner by reflecting the intellectual sources of Ortega y Gasset and his (and his intellectual environment's) reception of German-speaking thinkers in different fields such as philosophy (for example Kant, Simmel, Nietzsche or Schmitt), psychology (Jung) or cultural and historical studies (e.g. Spengler). In particular the traces of Oswald Spengler in Ortega's philosophy and the *Revista* are very well analysed and it is in the reflection on Ortega y Gasset and the "Kulturkreislehre" of Spengler – a cultural determinist theoretical construct, which in its apocalyptic perception of the "Occident's decline" currently seems to receive a reinforced reception³ in the

³Cf. for example, thus questioning the merely apocalyptic connotation, Cord Reichelmann, "Die Rückkehr der Religion: Frankreichs Präsident ein Muslim? Wer dabei an den 'Untergang des Abendlandes' denkt, sollte wissen, was Oswald Spengler wirklich gemeint hat," *Frankfurter Allgemeine Sonntagszeitung*, January 11, 2015, p. 45.

context of the debates concerning sceptical perceptions of Europe's pretended Islamisation – where Lemke's study shows its very best moments.

According to this, Lemke notes a considerable (while moderate in its quality) impetus of modernisation within the *Revista's* discourse, based on a modified Spenglerian “cultural pessimism”, accompanied by an Aristotelian interpretation of Kant and a – somewhat eclectic – attempt to harmonise modern philosophical thought and scholasticism. Spain was to be seen in its “essence” as well as integrated into a European perspective. On the level of political thought (and action), the specific discourse of modernisation was in part configured following doctrinarian and Krausist traditions and shaped by an approximation to conservative-revolutionary concepts of society following the respective circles of the Weimar Republic (particularly Schmitt), exemplified by Ortega y Gasset's formula of “estado integral”.

In spite of the recurrent emphases on Ortega and Spengler, the book is characterised by a vast thematic variety, incorporating discussions from biology, physics and astronomy via theology, psychology and political theory to cultural or arts theories (although often culminating in a philosophical or cultural theorist interpretation of these subjects, where cyclical and elitist theories such as Spengler's seem to be an analytical link). On the one hand, the amount and diversity of handled theories, thinkers and sources is impressive and provides interesting information for – Spanish speaking, as for instance extensive quotations are not translated – researchers in many different fields. On the other hand, this extremely broad approach at times impedes profound contextualisation and further analysis. This can be observed in an exemplary manner regarding the discussion of pedagogical aspects. There are a few educational glances incorporated into the study, namely the centrality of education in the thought of Ortega y Gasset and his respective “elitist turn”, the thematic incorporation of psychological aspects of children's development or the historic parallelisation of the institutionalisation of Spanish pedagogy, but this does not lead to much further detailed information or analysis (for example, some information on the conceptual educational impacts of the *Revista's* rather reactionary concept of women's position in society would have been interesting), possibly because the author's focus remains tightly connected with the text-based level of analysis.

Furthermore, the criteria for the selection of incorporated themes and articles are not always very manifest and the recitation of publications from such diverse thematic subjects (from Einstein via Picasso to debates on continental drift or gender psychology – just to mention some aspects of this variety) illustrates the – very comprehensible – diversity of the author's specific knowledge, which leads to a differing quantity and quality of the book's main chapters. In accordance with Lemke's obvious and deep knowledge of Ortega, Spengler and related thinkers, the section referring to the *Revista's* concept of science is much more extensive (pp. 221–513), informative and critical regarding the state of the art than the chapters examining the concept of Spain within Europe and especially the *Revista's* socio-political position. In the case of the first, there are rather poor references to the historical context of Spanish self-examination as well as the Crisis and demanded Regeneration at the turn of the century; regarding the latter, the study largely shows a lacuna in view of the promised “sociopolitical” positions and implications of the *Revista*. The enormous methodological and thematic approach – the vast and sometimes intricate appendix is an example of this far-reaching

ambition – thus at the same time has certain repercussions regarding the corresponding depth of sectoral analysis.

Nevertheless, Lemke's erudite and source-intensive work provides much information for researchers in different fields and encourages further analysis. The book draws a broad panorama of European, especially German, (philosophical) thinking and of the specific modernisation discourse of Spanish cultural elites in the interwar period. In its best moments – especially examining the thinking of Ortega y Gasset and Spengler – Lemke's study is an in-depth analysis and offers an important actualisation of the state of research. Moreover, the study shows in a fascinating way the specific manner of thinking in the interwar period in Europe (especially Germany and Spain) and beyond. It therefore exemplifies the strengthening of paradigms of a particular "conservative revolution" and its cultural determinist, biological or even racist and eugenic repercussions in a broad spectrum (here, Lemke's broad approach shows its benefits) of the (intellectual) society. Furthermore, in this knowing illumination of this peculiar cultural psychologism, the study can provide helpful footholds to understand present-day movements of reinforced cultural determinism and scepticisms. However, although researchers in different fields may find plenty of interesting information and stimulation, the enormous thematic variety and the vast amount of sources considered impede deeper analysis of many cited matters – a methodological implied shortage, of which the superficiality of the rarely addressed educational matters seems to be exemplary proof.

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La scuola degli Asburgo. Pedagogia e formazione degli insegnanti tra il Danubio e il Po (1773–1918), by Simonetta Polenghi, Società Editrice Internazionale, 2012, 300 pp., €15.50 (paperback), ISBN 978-88-05-07299-6

The 11 essays in this volume edited by Simonetta Polenghi are the result of research that converged in an international conference, held in Milan at the Catholic University in May 2011, under the eminent patronage of the General Consulate of Austria and the Austrian Forum of Culture.

The international perspective of the book, motivated by the objective of the research, is clear from the index: alongside the contributions of Italian scholars, there are Italian translations of original research conducted by scholars from Austria, Hungary, Slovenia and Romania. The volume meets the call for cross-national studies and collaborative relationships with leading European researchers, a request that over the last 10 years has become more pressing in the Italian context of educational studies.

To date, the themes object of comparative studies and international conferences have mainly been related to the "material culture" of school and to the new sources