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Arts Beat

The Culture at Large



October 1, 2010, 6:30 am

Granta Names Best Young Novelists Writing in

Spanish

By [LARRY ROHTER](#)

Through its periodic lists of the best young novelists, the British literary magazine Granta has built a reputation for spotting and promoting emerging talents long before they become widely known. A [1983 list](#) of British writers included Martin Amis, Julian Barnes, William Boyd, Ian McEwan, Salman Rushdie, and Graham Swift, while a [similar inventory of American writers in 1996](#) drew attention to Sherman Alexie, Madison Smartt Bell, Edwige Danticat, Jonathan Franzen and Lorrie Moore.

Now the publication has ventured for the first time outside the Anglophone realm, to the Western world's second most widely spoken language. At a ceremony in Madrid on Friday, the magazine announced the inclusion of 22 writers, from Spain and seven Latin American countries, all of them 35 years of age or under, in a new category called "The Best Young Novelists in Spanish."

"Spanish is one of the great global languages, and obviously it has a deep and huge purchase in the United States, where it is spoken and read by many millions," John Freeman, Granta's American-born editor, said in an interview in New York before heading for Spain. "Obviously translated literature is an uphill battle in this country. We can't see the rest of the world because of the barrier of language, but these writers are out there and doing terrific work, so we hope this will get some of them publishers" in the U.S. and U.K.

One of the writers, [Santiago Roncagliolo](#), a 35-year-old Peruvian who lives in Barcelona, has already had books published in both countries. But about two-thirds of the writers on the list have not yet had any work translated into English, and will make their debut with short stories or excerpts from novels in Granta's next issue, scheduled to appear in November.

Reflecting the global reach of Spanish, and the rising prominence of Spanish-language literature since the 1960s boom that brought Gabriel Garcia Marquez, Mario Vargas Llosa and others to prominence, the 22 writers are a diverse group. Eight of them, the largest contingent, were born in Argentina, and six come from Spain, but Bolivia, Chile, Colombia, Mexico, Peru, and Uruguay are also represented.

"We set out to paint a realistic portrait of what is going on in the language, where the talent is coming from and what the trends are, so were very careful not to impose any kind of quotas," said Valerie Miles, co-editor of Granta en Espanol, the magazine's Spanish-language edition, which began publication in 2004. "Argentina has a long publishing history and a particularly cultivated reading public, so it is not surprising that out of that culture comes a very strong new generation."

In another indication of the trend towards transnational literature, many of the writers chosen, who include five women, are not living in their native countries, among them four who are now residing in the United States. One of those, Carlos Yushimito, is a Peruvian of Japanese descent who writes mostly about Brazil and is working on a graduate degree at Brown University.

"I am surprised to have been included, because I'm the kind of writer who has always circulated in small editions by alternative presses," Mr. Yushimito, 32, said this week in a telephone interview from Providence, R.I. "This puts me in a different sphere, one that is much more public, so I received the news with a mixture of anxiety and curiosity. This certainly opens new panoramas for me, and could change my life, so it will be interesting to see what the repercussions are."

Work by more than 300 writers was considered by a five-person jury made up of writers, critics, editors and journalists from several Spanish-speaking countries. The writers they chose are:

1. Andrés Barba, Spain
2. Oliveira Coelho, Argentina
3. Federico Falco, Argentina
4. Pablo Gutiérrez, Spain

5. Rodrigo Hasbún, Bolivia
6. Sonia Hernández, Spain
7. Carlos Labbé, Chile
8. Javier Montes, Spain
9. Elvira Navarro, Spain
10. Matías Néspolo, Argentina
11. Andrés Neumann, Argentina
12. Alberto Olmos, Spain
13. Pola Oloixarac, Argentina
14. Antonio Ortuño, Mexico
15. Patricio Pron, Argentina
16. Lucía Puenzo, Argentina
17. Andrés Ressa Colino, Uruguay
18. Santiago Roncagliolo, Peru
19. Samanta Schweblin, Argentina
20. Andrés Felipe Solano, Colombia
21. Carlos Yushimito, Peru
22. Alejandro Zambra, Chile

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