

Beyond Paulo Coelho: Brazil Pushes Its Less Famous Writers Overseas

Contributed by Alexandre Rocha
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Brazil is going to promote its literature abroad. The Brazilian Chamber of Books (CBL) and the Brazilian Export and Investment Promotion Agency (Apex) signed an agreement July 23 establishing an Integrated Sector Project (PSI) to that extent. The idea is to sell the rights to books by Brazilian writers to foreign publishing houses.

Even though some national writers, such as Jorge Amado and Paulo Coelho, are very well known throughout the world, that is not a general rule. "Except for a few cases, Brazil does not export its literature much, the country's production is not very widespread in foreign countries," said the advisor at CBL, Mirian Gabbai. In that respect, according to her, the initiative is "an innovative one."

As in other programs developed by the Apex, the PSI with the CBL provides for a series of actions, such as consultancy services to participating companies, identification of potential markets, participation in international fairs and promotion of buyer projects and image projects. The agreement is born with 28 participating publishing houses.

There will be no limitations concerning themes. According to Mirian, the project aims to promote exports of Brazilian culture, be it by means of fictional work, technical books, books for universities or books about religion, among others. It is not restricted to CBL members either; therefore, non-affiliated publishing houses may participate.

By the same token, there are no restrictions with regard to the size of the company. According to the advisor, the smallest among the publishing houses affiliated so far has 70 titles in its catalogue and the largest, 2,000. The only requirement is for books to have been written by Brazilian authors.

The PSI, which should last two years, has an initial budget of 2.8 million reais (US\$ 1.7 million), half of which will be supplied by the Apex and the other half, by the companies and the CBL. Organizers expect US\$ 1.56 million in deals to be generated within that period.

According to Gabbai, one activity has already been promoted, namely the coming to Brazil, early this month, of the German Frank Jacoby, who specializes in the field of author's rights. Scheduled actions include the launch of a catalogue, in English and Spanish, of publications by the publishing houses involved, at the Frankfurt Book Fair, to take place in October in Germany; at the Feria Internacional del Libro de Guadalajara, in Mexico, to take place in December; at the Bologna Book Fair, due in Italy in March 2009; at the London Book Fair, to be held in April next year; and at the Feria Internacional del Libro de Madrid, in October 2009.

The first buyer project, according to the organizers, should take place as early as August this year, during the Ibero-American Publishers Congress, in Rio de Janeiro. The project consists of bringing executives from publishing houses, literary agents and representatives of international fairs to Brazil, to negotiate with the national companies.

At the São Paulo International Book Biennial, also due in August, the organizers want to promote the first image project, with the presence of international journalists at the event.

In terms of markets, according to Mirian, the project will initially focus on Europe. "The Europeans are accustomed to buy and sell author's rights, and it is easier to negotiate non-best selling books with them," she stated.

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