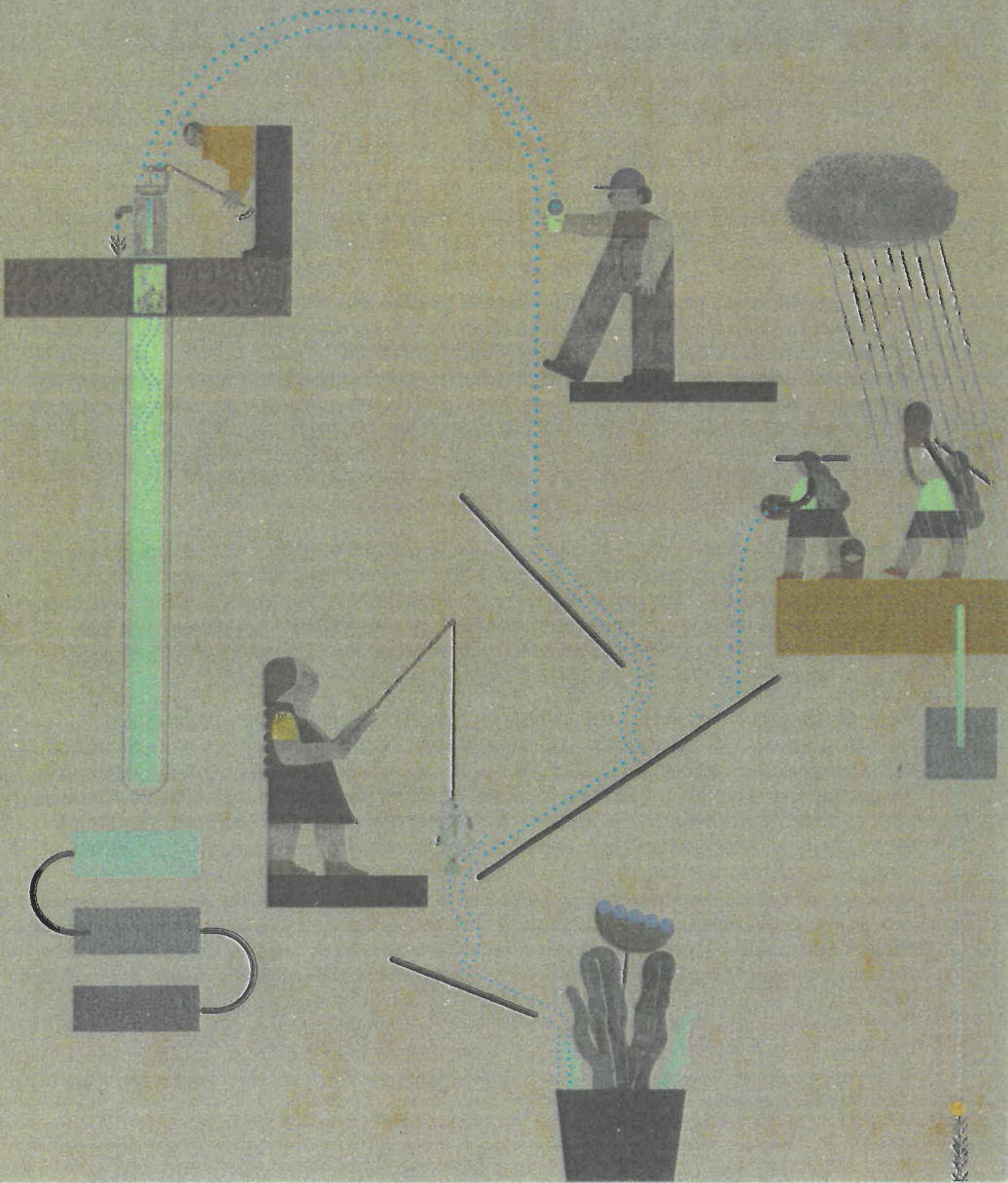




2019

SPANISH CULTURAL PROGRAM / U.S.  
Spring / Summer



# EIGHTY YEARS OF SPANISH REPUBLICAN EXILES IN THE USA:

KEEPING THE STUDY  
OF SPAIN ALIVE IN  
OUR HEARTS

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*JOSÉ MARÍA NAHARRO-  
CALDERÓN*

*Professor of Spanish Literature,  
Iberian Cultures, and Exile Studies.  
University of Maryland*

Exile is a global, plural and protean phenomenon that has touched every people and nation at one particular juncture of their history. Contemporaneously, it is identified by political forms of exclusion that banish sine die large groups of opponents from the modern nation-states created after the liberal bourgeois revolutions. Exiles and diasporas are politically motivated, as well as humanly disastrous, and keep displacing millions of souls on every continent, coined as refugees by international conventions since 1922. But often, while sparing the expellees from home death and repression, many displacements have uniquely shaped intellectual legacies through some of the most noted global creations: Dante's Divine Comedy, Picasso's Guernica, or 1956 Nobel for Literature Laureate, Juan Ramón Jiménez's poetry.

In Spanish, exile, a Latin though French and Catalan latecomer in the 1930's, began replacing pilgrimage, deportation, expatriation, emigration, immigration and destierro, unrenderable into English or outland. The latter rooted the key Medieval epic in the new Romance-Castilian language, Cantar del Mío Cid (Poem of the Cid). It gave way in 1939 to neologisms such as transtierro or cotierro, in order to acknowledge the welcoming in Latin America, particularly Mexico, which sheltered close to 40,000 Spanish Republicans.

Nevertheless, Henry Kamen has contended that Spanish culture is almost a pathological anomaly plagued by displacements systematically inflicted throughout history by Spaniards on their own compatriots: Jews, Protestants, Muslims, Liberals and Spanish Civil War intellectuals. Meanwhile, based on Edward Said's perception, he added that the USA had thrived as a culture open to diversity and émigrés. But Kamen confused expulsions based on religious faith prior to the formation of nation-states. These had similarly and widely plagued Europe's monarchies throughout the revocation of the Edict of Nantes (1680), and have to be differentiated from modern political banishments. These also affected liberals, ethnic minorities, etc. in democracies such as France, Germany or Italy: particularly during the rise of totalitarianisms that led, among other conflicts, to the Civil War against the democratic Second Spanish Republic and the fleeing of about half a million Spaniards (1936-39). A cataclysm where modern historiography has unveiled its local and international Italian Fascist and Nazi German plotting roots, as well as the dismal Non-Intervention Society of Nations policies, and the US arms embargo. It anticipated the catastrophe that spread worldwide through 1945 and left more than 50 million refugees that failed to be resettled for three decades: among them, the mostly symbolic return to Transitional democratic Spain of a few Republican exiles.



Contrary to Mexico, US administrations were particularly restrictive in the influx of exiles. In fact, their numbers were marginal, mostly representing a minority of intellectuals, backed by affidavits of support that could circumvent the 1920's 259 immigration yearly quotas for Spanish citizens, while standing clear of any Communist leanings, which did not prevent many to be actively spied on by the FBI: writers Luis Cernuda, José Herrera Petere, José Rubia Barcia, Ramón J. Sender, or members of the *Sociedades Federales Confederadas*, etc. Meanwhile, other exiles spied among their own for the Feds, such as the Basque Government representative, jurist José de Galíndez, later kidnapped and assassinated by Dominican dictator Rafael Trujillo.

Other reasons justify such restrictions. The shifting of the Roosevelt administration's arms embargo through immigration, despite the President's later regrets when facing the Republic's defeat. The rhetorical and active repatriation to the US of the ad hoc aid to Spain through the Abraham Lincoln Brigade surviving volunteers (1936-1938), or the North American Committee to Aid Spanish Democracy's. Its postwar offspring, the Joint Antifascist Refugee Committee, eventually fell prey to the chasm of some of the new usurpers' allies: the Committee for Un-American Activities and the red scare. The former had refused to surrender their records of support to Spanish survivors from the Dachau extermination camp in the Walter B. Cannon Varsovie Hospital in Toulouse.

Concurrently, plenty of Spanish Republican women kept alive in exile the liberation claims they had harbored during the progressive Republican Spanish years (1931-1939) as artists, actresses, editors or writers. Most notably, journalists Constancia de la Mora (*In Place of Splendor* 1939) and Isabel de Palencia (*Smouldering Freedom* 1945), and former Deputy Victoria Kent, editor of the journal *Ibérica: for a Free Spain* (1954-1966). Another noted publication, the trade unionist *Sociedades Españolas Confederadas' España libre* (1939-1977), edited by José Castillo Morales, gathered over 60,000 members (1940-50), and collected over \$2,000,000 for the exiles and resistance in Spain.

They all attempted to sway US public opinion and officials for the removal of the dictatorship, particularly, with the defeat of the Axis, and the creation of the United Nations at the April 25 1945 San Francisco Conference. Intense diplomacy brought many Spanish Republic prime ministers in exile (José Giral, Rodolfo Llopis, Álvaro de Albornoz, or Félix Gordon) to the USA to lobby at the UN General Assembly for an international solution. But the December 12, 1946 Resolution on "Relations of the UN members with Spain" failed to impose an intervention on Franco's Fascist regime, and placed the burden of change on accords from within, weakening the Republican possibilities to force a real debunking of the dictatorship.

In fact, a parallel diplomacy was taking place in which France's bolder moves (border closure from March of 1946 to February of 1948) were systematically countered by Great Britain's non-intervention, and the US' lukewarm stand. The Leader of the Free World systematically resisted intervening in a domestic matter that could not risk any Soviet influence, while eventually accepting to lend to the Franco regime, the lifting of the 1946 UN resolution, the reinstatement of an ambassador in Spain (1950), and the signing of the Madrid accords on September 26, 1953 for the establishments of four US military bases — one of them still open at Rota —.

Despite their successive setbacks, culminated by the admittance of Franco's Spain to the UN in 1955, or president Eisenhower's visit to Madrid in 1959, the exile representatives kept requesting their democratic aspirations but faced un-surmountable stumbling blocks. Among them, the realpolitik of the Cold War (from Eastern Europe and Korea to Vietnam and Cuba), the nuclear escalation, the failure of positive lobbying to counter pro Franco's, or the increasing international weakness of the exile institutions and meager finances that failed to move their headquarters from Paris back to Mexico and the Americas.

Finally, the continuous bickering (Communist suspicions, Socialist and Republican power struggles, or Basque and Catalan separatist agendas) among the Republic's exiles. Consequently, the émigrés in the USA were also perceived suspiciously by other exile compatriots as compromising residents within the world power that had decisively contributed to delay the return of liberties to the homeland. For example, Pau Casals, had to soften his exile and Catalan ethics when playing at the White House.

All things considered, US institutions were able to attract a select group of exiles that upgraded, within US pan-Americanism, the prestige of the Spanish language, literature and culture, particularly, around the Golden Age, which paradoxically contributed to a sort of mimesis with Peninsular Hispanism. Among this incomplete but extraordinary list of writers, we may point out the elders, such as poets Pedro Salinas, Jorge Guillén, or Luis Cernuda. They were followed by the children's group: Carlos Blanco Aguinaga, Manuel Durán, Juan Marichal, Roberto Ruiz, Elena Castedo, Claudio Guillén, or Víctor Fuentes. Others emigrated on the coattails of the Center for Historical Studies: Américo Castro, who would contribute his tri-cultures theory, or linguist Tomás Navarro Tomás. Meanwhile, the New School for Social Research sponsored former Ambassador to the USA Fernando de los Ríos and sociologist Alfredo Mendizábal.

Some re-emigrated from Latin America, particularly from the intellectual hub at the University of Puerto Rico-Río Piedras: sociologist and writer Francisco Ayala, Surrealist artist Eugenio F. Granell, or emigration historian Vicente Llorens. Others from the continent included etymologist Joan Corominas, Hora de España's editor Antonio Sánchez Barbudo, or music composer Pedro Sanjuán, etc.

The prestige of this unique but non exhaustive crop of Silver Age intellectuals in exile thrived on campuses, as well as film, scientific or artistic institutions. These consistently supported them as proof of the Fascist transnational perils, besides the paradoxical official contradictions toward their democratic hopes. Juan Ramón Jiménez, back from Cuba to Florida in 1939, after having acted in 1936 as "honorary cultural attaché" in the USA, alongside his spouse Zenobia Camprubí, kept up his Political Poetics from Washington, D.C. to the University of Maryland (1942-1951), while nurturing all along a relationship with progressive US Vice President (1941-1945) Henry Wallace. Luis Buñuel worked on propaganda films for the MOMA and as a dubbing producer in Hollywood (1938-1945), while painter Luis Quintanilla's drawings were prefaced by Ernest Hemingway. Bryn Mawr College hired José Ortega y Gasset's disciple, José Ferrater Mora, a decisive influence for historian Jaume Vicens Vives's theory of Catalan seny and rauxa.



↑ Guernica © Pablo Picasso - Courtesy of Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía

↓ Juan Ramón Jiménez y Zenobia Camprubí, Dorchester House, 2480 16th Street Washington D.C., circa 1943



## 80 ANNIVERSARY OF THE SPANISH EXILE

Josep Lluís Sert, who designed the Republican pavilion for the 1937 Paris World Fair, where Picasso first exhibited his Guernica, became Dean of the Harvard School of Architecture. The painting brought over in 1939 by Spanish prime minister Juan Negrín, to lobby for the loyalist cause through the MOMA, eventually remained there until its 1981 final journey to Madrid, as a key symbol for the return of exile and democracy to Spain.

As a vivid example of this Republican saga, Juan Negrín's son became a noted neurologist, and his father's disciple, Severo Ochoa, was the 1959 Nobel Prize Laureate in Physiology. Meanwhile, NYU hired historian Nicolás Sánchez-Albornoz, the son of one of Negrín's successors at the Republican helm: Claudio Sánchez-Albornoz (1962-1971). Ironically, Nicolás had fled from the Valley of the Fallen Concentration Camp. Set up to build the standing mausoleum I have coined The Uncivil Mountain, the dictator, through his family's conniving, defies his exhumation and the memory rightfully sought, and owed to all of these exiles and other victims: "an admirable wandering Numancia which prefers to fade away than accept defeat."

An endless flame that the undersigned and students have strived to fertilize throughout the last three decades at the University of Maryland, a shelter to this most relevant Spanish exile tradition in the US: Juan Ramón Jiménez, Graciela Nemes, José Ramón Marra López, Gonzalo Sobejano, or Américo Castro's disciple and one of my former teachers, Russell P. Sebold.

Delenda non sunt studia et memoriae Exilii Hispaniae Republicae in Mariae terrae Universitate!



↑ Victoria Kent

During five days, several experts, including Professor James D. Fernández, will delve into the topic of Spanish exile in New York City. The panels will focus on the history of "Grupo Salmerón", a group of people from Almería who settled in Brooklyn more than a century ago.



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