**Sebastiaan Faber**

**Rethinking Spanish Civil War Exile**

Changing the shape of an academic field—let along creating a new one—is slow and frustrating work. If it were only a matter of changing people’s ideas—even if these ideas are fed by powerful ideological veins like nationalism or sexism—we could simply rely on an effective mobilization of intellectual logic, even if not all academic actors are equally susceptible to persuasive arguments. (“To believe that enlightened discourse can move disciplinary mountains or the trumpets of critique can instantly bring down curricular walls,” Joan Ramon Resina remarks cynically in his recent *Iberian Modalities,* “is to believe in miracles.”) The problem is, however, that when it comes to the configuration of academic fields, *institutional logic* and *professional habit*—the powerful twin forces of academic inertia—invariably trump intellectual logic. Very few of the academics who work on the cultural production of the wider Spanish-speaking world (the geographic area encompassing Latin America, the Iberian Peninsula, and the Spanish-speaking parts of Africa, Asia, and the United States) still believe in the intellectual logic that defines a cultural product *primarily* as part of a single national cultural tradition. Yet our courses, programs, handbooks, and requirements overwhelmingly continue to reflect that logic.

How do we get enough of a grip on institutional logic and professional habit to shift these outdated structures? For one, we can try to take advantage of elements that *are already part of the curriculum* but that, through their very presence, expose the absurdity of the curriculum’s organization. For those of us working in the twentieth century, one such element is political exile. We already teach Max Aub, Gabriel García Márquez, Jorge Semprún, Julio Cortázar, María Zambrano, Luisa Valenzuela, Juan Larrea, Mercè Rodoreda, Cristina Peri Rossi, Carlos Blanco Aguinaga, and Luis Buñuel. But in not a single one of these cases does it make sense to understand the genealogy, meaning, reception or influence of their life and work through a narrowly national lens, or through an artificial division between “Peninsular” and “Latin American” areas.

For the past twenty years or so, scholars on both sides of the Atlantic have been using exile studies as an operational base from which to slowly but surely redefine the whole field. Key players in this effort have been Michael Ugarte, Sophia McClennen, Amy Kaminsky, Manuel Aznar Soler, Carlos Blanco Aguinaga, and Mari Paz Balibrea, among others. How entrenched old structures still are, however, is clear from recent literary histories of Spanish Civil War exile published in Spain, which continue to attempt to insert decades’ worth of texts—produced by displaced Spaniards in Mexico, Argentina, the United States, France, and other countries—into a literary history confined by a scandalously narrow definition of “Spanish.” Indeed, chief among the many challenges facing Trans-Atlantic Iberian Studies is not only to transform institutional structures in the United States and the United Kingdom, but also in Latin America and Spain, where institutional logic and academic habit—especially in the disciplines tasked with analyzing high culture—are weighed down by much more substantial ideological investments.

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