

REVIEW TEXT

Sandra Barriales Bouche, ed., *España, ¿labyrintho de exilios?* (Newark, DE: Juan de la Cuesta, 2005). 220 pp. ISBN 1588710793

SEBASTIAAN FABER

Spain, the doubly gendered *Madre Patria*, has not exactly been a model parent. For centuries she only managed to maintain the hegemony of her ruling classes by expelling large groups of dissident children from her soil. “La identidad etno-patriótica española,” Sandra Barriales-Bouche points out in the introduction to this volume, “hunde sus raíces en la intolerancia” (11). The relationship between Spanish nationhood and progressive or dissident thought has been a perpetually fraught one. But does this warrant characterizing Spain as a uniquely intolerant nation? A conference organized around that question in 2002 has now given rise to a collection of fourteen essays studying different moments, aspects, and cases of Spain’s long history of expulsions.

Intellectual exile poses a nagging problem for traditional cultural history. To what extent can or should expelled communities be considered part of their national culture? As Barriales-Bouche writes: “el exiliado no puede regresar jamás del todo a su lugar de origen” (13). To a certain extent, turning exclusion into a defining characteristic—and chronic symptom—of Spanish national identity helps solve this problem of belonging: it erases the notion that there *is* a single entity to belong to. Spanishness becomes a void, the abyss between the expelled and those who remain. This is the argument that Barriales-Bouche, relying on Derrida’s notion of spectrality, lays out in the introduction. Although she does so convincingly, she undercuts herself by repeatedly speaking in a first-person plural that seems to posit the existence of a particular Spanish *nosotros*: “somos herederos de los exilios, y su ausencia conforma lo que hoy somos,” she writes (11); “Los textos exiliados difieren de nuestra identidad, nuestro tiempo y nuestro espacio” (17); “Nuestra identidad está condicionada por la diferencia de esos textos y esos textos dependen de nosotros para serlo” (17). A second unfortunate side-effect of this invocation of a non-exiled Spanish “we” is the tendency to fetishize the exile in “la inmensidad de su otredad” (15).

This book covers a wide time period, from the fifteenth through the twentieth centuries, and a great variety of approaches. Michael Iarocci convincingly analyzes the poetry of Espronceda to argue that the Romantics’ physical exile also signaled the birth of a quintessentially modern, topological conception of exile as the mark of the artist’s problematic relationship to modernity. Iarocci also points out the danger of this figurative notion of exile, however, because it tempts writers and scholars to apply it too easily across different places and epochs, losing sight of the historical and cultural specificity of each case. Domingo Ledezma focuses on the presence of the returning exile in *Don Quijote II*, where the figure of Ricote brings home the profound injustice and human tragedy of the expulsion of the *moriscos*. Ángel González García

deals with a similar topic, comparing the detention, death, and burning of a sixteenth-century *curandero morisco*, Román Ramírez, with the adaptation of the episode in a text by Ruiz de Alarcón. González García shows how Alarcón's rhetoric associates the *moriscos'* presence with a danger of social and physical mutilation, and in turn justifies the "amputation" from Spanish society of the "infected" *morisco* limb. Julia Lieberman analyzes the changing conception of exile among different waves of Sephardic Jews as manifested in their sermons. For many, she shows, the notion of exile was in fact associated with life in Inquisition-ruled Spain, while the actual expulsion was experienced as a first step toward redemption.

José-Ángel Sainz's insightful analysis of Max Aub's imagined and real returns to Spain provides a welcome illustration of Barriales-Bouche's notion that the exile can never be fully reincorporated into the homeland. Mar Inestrellas analyzes María Zambrano's autobiography *Delirio y destino*; she argues that the author's use of the third person to describe her own youth illustrates that Zambrano experienced exile as a radical break in her sense of identity—a break that made it impossible to fully remember or recuperate her pre-exile self. Ana González-Tornero reads autobiographical texts by the painter Ramón Gaya, showing how he embraced nomadism as an exilic survival strategy. Instead of wallowing in nostalgia, Gaya replaced his lost nation of birth with a new, cosmopolitan homeland consisting of art and literature. Pepa Novell looks at the representations of life in a concentration camp by Montserrat Roig, Joaquim Amat-Piniella, and Jorge Semprún. Faced with the limits of language, all three adopt different generic and narrative strategies to represent the camp experience. María Estela Harretche's essay on García Lorca and Juan Ramón Jiménez shows how a set of specific poetic images travelled from Jiménez's *Diario de un poeta recién casado* to Lorca's *Poeta en Nueva York*, and back to Jiménez's exile collection *Espacio*.

A different kind of exilic intertextuality is the topic of Francie Cate-Arries' essay, which shows how Cervantes's *Don Quijote* not only served as the literary piece of driftwood that allowed Eulalio Ferrer to keep his head above water during his stay in a French concentration camp, but also as the representational paradigm through which he saw his fellow inmates. More generally, Cervantes helped Ferrer maintain his faith in the Republicans' moral superiority in the face of military defeat. José Ignacio Álvarez-Fernández argues that specific geographical spaces that are central in the texts produced by Spanish Civil War exiles—particularly the harbor of Alicante and some of Franco's concentration camps—should be seen as "places of memory" in Pierre Nora's sense. The essays by María Llobart Huesca and Dolores Pla Brugat, finally, are the most historical in nature. Dealing, respectively, with Spanish exiles in Mexico and Catalans in France, they lay out the ways in which the cultural and political authorities of the Generalitat and the Republican government in exile set up institutional and economic structures to maintain a minimum level of cultural and political continuity. Both essays make clear that the obstacles faced were tremendous, and that the exiles' efforts were only partially successful.

Copyright of *Journal of Spanish Cultural Studies* is the property of Routledge and its content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. However, users may print, download, or email articles for individual use.