

## A Look Behind the Scenes at the Spanish Mid-Century Generation

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Teruel, José. *Historia e intimidad: Epistolarios y autobiografía en la cultura española del medio siglo*. Ed. José Teruel. Madrid: Iberoamericana, 2018. 296 pp. ISBN 978-84-16922-51-2.

José Teruel has already established himself as a leading expert in Spanish Mid-Century studies with his edition of the correspondence between Carmen Martín Gaité and Juan Benet and *Los años norteamericanos de Luis Cernuda*, as well as his directing the edition of Carmen Martín Gaité's *Obras completas*. Thus it is no surprise that he has put together an impressive list of scholars to consider the autobiographical and epistolary writings of key authors of the Mid-Century generation. Taken together, the essays provide a captivating look at the innermost thoughts of certain authors and the relationships they forged with each other via correspondence. Correspondence between authors and intellectuals and other autobiographical materials have been slow to appear in Spain, especially for the complex and repressive Franco regime when so much of intellectual life was clandestine. Therefore this collection of essays (many of which include previously unpublished autobiographical and epistolary materials) is especially welcome. Teruel and Ana Garriga Espino's introduction frames the collection with a thorough review of theories of autobiographical and epistolary writing.

Among the authors addressed, Gonzalo Torrente Ballester, Jaime Gil de Biedma, and Carmen Martín Gaité receive the most extended attention. The struggles all the writers underwent to forge their careers under the Franco regime hover over many of the analyses. For example, José Lázaro traces Torrente Ballester's shift away from Phalangist ideology as the dictatorship wore on, asserting that selections from his unpublished diary are more valuable than "docenas de declaraciones públicas muy posteriores de su autor, en las que se mezcla la sinceridad con los 'pecadillos de supervivencia'" (65). Also revealing previously unpublished material is Pedro Álvarez de Miranda's essay, which shares with readers a long letter of March 3, 1952 from Dionisio Ridruejo to Álvarez de Miranda's father, then director of the Instituto Español de Lengua y Literatura in Roma. The letter is of special interest because it was written at the time that Ridruejo was shifting his political views away from fascism toward democracy.

José Antonio Llera uncovers another little known or studied aspect of the Mid-Century Generation, usually considered as neo-realists. Llera details the Surrealist interests of Carlos Edmundo de Ory and Miguel Labordeta found in their correspondence that are so at odds with the prevailing, officially sanctioned aesthetics of the early Franco era. Julio Neira's article on Caballero Bonald is an impassioned defense of epistolary sources for literary history that employs as an example the literary projects and fear of censorship inherent in a planned trip by several authors, including Blas de Otero, Jaime Gil de Biedma, and Carlos Barral, among others, to Antonio Machado's tomb in Collioure, France in 1959. In his own article, editor José Teruel does a subtle and important job of laying out how Jaime Gil de Biedma reveals his sexuality in letters and diaries, a daring and risky project under the Franco regime. Teruel's conclusion that includes references to Gil de Biedma's sad death from AIDS is poignant: "La autobiografía de Jaime Gil de Biedma entraña a la luz de su significación moral el reconocimiento de una doble decepción: 'la de la insuficiencia del arte' y 'la de la irremediable insuficiencia de la vida'" (151). The emphasis on Gil de Biedma continues in José Luis Ruiz Ortega's fascinating study of the interplay between the writing diaries of Gil de Biedma and Carlos Barral ("De *Metropolitano* a *Moralidades*: diarios de una pasión").

Santiago López Ríos asserts the need to take into consideration correspondence between members of different generations in his article "La genesis de *Reinvindicación del conde don Julián* a la luz de la correspondencia Américo Castro-Juan Goytisolo." His essay is an important reminder that Américo Castro's ideas about Spain, which had such a profound influence on US Hispanism, having formed a whole generation of major Hispanists including E. Inman Fox, Joseph Silverman, and Fred Armistead, also had an impact on Spanish writers and intellectuals. Celia Fernández Prieto studies memoirs about childhood during the Spanish Civil War by Jacint and Joan Reventós, Antonio Rabinad, and Jaime Armiñán. Sergio García García traces a link between Barcelona and Madrid via correspondence between Claudio Rodríguez and José Agustín Goytisolo. Andrea Toribio Álvarez does the same for the epistolary link between Carmen Martín Gaité and Esther Tusquets. The letters between the two women reveal important personality traits of each and how each maneuvered to keep the relationship alive, despite perceived slights and misunderstandings to chronicle a truly fascinating chapter in the history of women's publishing in Spain. Elisa Marín Ortega nicely concludes the cluster on Esther Tusquets with a meditation on memory as an intimate and public phenomenon in her work.

Another cluster of articles focuses on Carmen Martín Gaité. Maria Vittoria Calvi demonstrates how integral Martín Gaité's ubiquitous paratexts—prologues, notes, dedications, and epigraphs—are to the texts they frame. Although ostensibly about Martín Gaité's fondness for Virginia Woolf's writing, Elide Pittarello wonderfully captures Martín Gaité's ability with the visual arts in her collages. Pittarello displays a real art critic's ability to tease meaning out of the disparate materials Martín Gaité included in her ingenious collages. Pittarello's text is accompanied by several beautiful color plates of these collages. Pittarello's essay reminded me of the time when I was driving Martín Gaité in my car in southern California. Carmen rescued from the floor in front of her seat a gilded rubber band from a package of stationary I had carelessly discarded there. When Carmen saw my

surprise, she said that the glittery item that I considered garbage would be worked into one of her collages.

While it is gratifying that vanguard women, especially Victoria Kent, Consuelo Berges, Concha Zardoya, Gabriela Mistral, and Carmen Conde, and Mid-Generation women, Carmen Martín Gaité and Esther Tusquets receive attention ("Epistolarios e historia. Mujeres de las vanguardias y de la posguerra a través de sus cartas" by Carmen de la Guardia), I was surprised at the absence of Carmen Laforet, who produced a vast amount of autobiographical writing, including her travel diaries (one published as *Paralelo 35* and others her son Agustín Cerezales and I are editing). In addition, Israel Rolón-Barada, Laforet's co-biographer, has collected as many as 600 letters by and to Laforet. His doctoral dissertation comprised an edition of some 400 of these letters. Rolón-Barada theorizes that although Laforet appeared to have stopped writing in about 1963, when her novel *La insolación* was published, she, in fact, continued her authorial career via the private epistolary mode. If Camilo José Cela can be considered a part of the Mid-Century generation (see p. 185 of the volume under review), surely Carmen Laforet can be as well. One hopes that José Teruel will continue his important work of revealing the personal underpinnings of writing during the Franco era and beyond, a seminal part of the cultural history of the period.