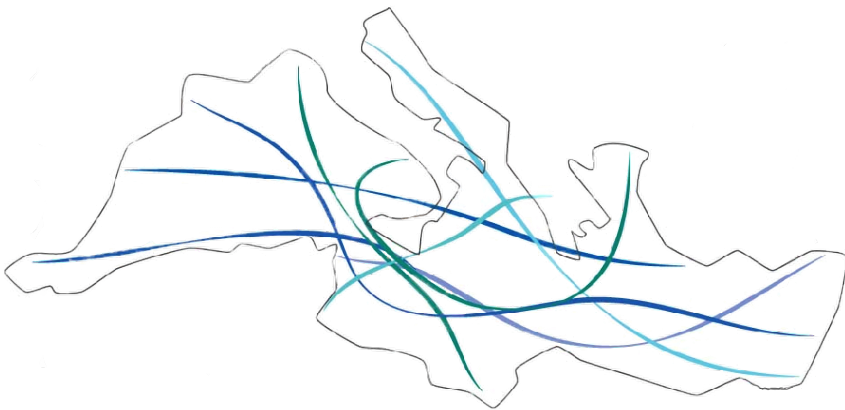


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Introduction. Political exile in the 20th and 21st centuries



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Introduction. Political exile in the 20th and 21st centuries

Abstract

An introduction to the current issue of the *Journal of Mediterranean Knowledge* in which the guest editors highlight their vision of the concept of exile and, at the same time, focus on exile for political reasons and with a temporal delimitation centred on contemporary times (20th-21st centuries) that they have wanted to give to this volume; an approach also adopted by the authors of the nine articles and the review presented.

Keywords: Exile from and to the Mediterranean area, 20th and 21st centuries, Migrations

Introducción. El exilio político en los siglos XX y XXI

Resumen

Una introducción al presente número de la revista *Journal of Mediterranean Knowledge* en que las editoras invitadas destacan su visión del concepto de exilio y, a la vez, hacen énfasis en el exilio por razones políticas y con una delimitación temporal centrada en la contemporaneidad (siglos XX-XXI); un enfoque adoptado también por las y los autores de los nueve artículos y de la reseña aquí presentados.

Palabras Clave: Exilio desde y hacia el área mediterránea, Siglos XX y XXI, Migraciones

Introduzione. L'esilio politico nei secoli XX e XXI

Sinossi

Un'introduzione al numero attuale della rivista *Journal of Mediterranean Knowledge* in cui le curatrici evidenziano la loro visione ampia del concetto di esilio e, allo stesso tempo, si soffermano sull'esilio per motivi politici e con una delimitazione temporale centrata sulla contemporaneità (secoli XX-XXI); un approccio adottato anche dalle autrici e dagli autori dei nove articoli e della recensione qui presentati.

Parole chiave: Esilio da e verso l'area Mediterranea, Secoli XX e XXI, Migrazioni

Introduction.

Political exile in the 20th and 21st centuries

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Exile is strangely compelling to think about but terrible to experience. It is the unhealable rift forced between a human being and a native place, between the self and its true home: its essential sadness can never be surmounted.

(Edward Said, *Reflections on exile*)

Quien se mueve de su patria pierde la voz, pierde el color de los ojos, ya no se llama igual, y aunque logre afortunarse tampoco ya es el mismo; tiene otro color de piel, y de noche, y aun de día, sueña siempre un mismo sueño que le está recordando alguna cosa dulce y perdida.

(Héctor Tizón, *El cantar del profeta y el bandido*)

1. Sadness and hospitality

Individual or collective displacements have characterized the history of the Mediterranean: over the centuries, countless people have had to leave their countries to save their lives. Wars, dictatorships, famines, natural catastrophes, all kinds of persecution have pushed human beings to seek spaces in which to live with dignity and peace.

Exile, asylum, migration, expatriation... are terms that are closely related and whose conceptual borders move according to the theoretical, historical and cultural perspectives with which they are viewed.

The issue 6(2) of the Journal of Mediterranean Knowledge focuses on the role of exile in the history of the Mediterranean, on its effects and its limits, with particular attention to the politically

motivated exile of the 20th and 21st centuries that involve Mediterranean countries both as places of departure and as places of reception.

This is a moment in history when the *Mare Nostrum* has become a grave for so many migrants fleeing hunger or violence, when borders have become violent barriers for those who seek to save their lives and those of their loved ones. Now we seek to recover the political force of the notion of exile, encompassing with it various types of migrations forced by the circumstances of the places of origin.

Imposed or voluntary, exile is two-faced: condemnation and salvation at the same time. Poets have sung about this throughout centuries. The same pain joins Ovid in *Tristia*, III (“Look what I’m wearing: you will see nothing here, only sadness ...”¹), with Edward Said, Héctor Tizón and María Zambrano (“I cannot conceive of my life without the exile that I have lived. Exile has been like my homeland, or like a dimension of an unknown homeland, but once it is known, it cannot be renounced.”²).

The volume that we present today weaves Mediterranean and transoceanic networks: of violence and solidarity, of loss and remembrance, of inflexible laws and saving embraces. It is just, we know, an outline of a complex map, real and symbolic, of movements that during the 20th and 21st centuries have marked our history and the multiple territories that we inhabit. It is also a map of ethics and affections that opposes “hospitality” to intolerance and death, understood as proposed by Emmanuel Lévinas as “love (affection or kindness) to strangers”.

2. *The current issue of the Journal of Mediterranean Knowledge*

The nine articles that are included in this issue of JMK are extremely diverse. However, all of them propose new approaches and new interpretations of some of the main exiles of the 20th

¹ “Inspice quid portem: nihil hic nisi triste uidebis”.

² María Zambrano, “Yo no concibo mi vida sin el exilio que he vivido. El exilio ha sido como mi patria, o como una dimensión de una patria desconocida, pero que una vez que se conoce, es irrenunciable” (cit. in Abellán 2001, p. 54).

century and up to the present time linked to the Mediterranean countries.

To organize it in this brief introduction, we have decided to start from those referring to more distant times until we reach the present.

In this sense, we highlight as a starting point the texts dedicated to the Spanish Republican exile, the topic with the greatest presence in this corpus.

We begin with the article by Paula Simón, “The ‘Ethics of Care’ in the Testimonial Narrative of Spanish Republican Exiled Women”, which focuses in particular in two testimonials of women exiled in 1939, *Sola* (1954), by María José de Chopitea, and *Los diablos sueltos* (1975), by Mada Carreño.

These were written by women who survived the exodus through the northern border of Spain after the end of the Spanish Civil War, the subsequent experience of concentration camps located in the south of France, and the exile to Mexico.

Based on the notion of “ethics of care” by Carol Gilligan and on Todorov idea that women are “more susceptible to helping each other and building spaces of solidarity and collective support”, the author works on the importance of female voices in the process of social remembrance.

In Daniela Natale’s article, “Teresa Pàmies’ letters of exile: from individual to collective memory”, the main path passes, as in the previous case, through the reflection on the importance of female literary voices in the construction of the remembrance of the Spanish Civil War and Francoism.

Natale uses the works of the Catalan writer and activist Teresa Pàmies. Her abundant work (she wrote about fifty books, a large number of articles for newspapers, magazines and radio programmes, essays and novels) is closely related to her experience as a political exile in Latin America, USSR, Czechoslovakia and France. During her long exile Pàmies started writing to recover her historical memory, and that of common people with their common lives. She used to incorporate both real and fictional letters in her novels, to preserve memory, or to (re)construct it.

We know that among the Latin American countries that opened their doors to the Spanish exile, Mexico occupies a special place,

both for the number of people who arrived and for the symbolic weight they have had in Mexico, both in a cultural and academic scene. However, this recognition has been much less or almost non-existent in the case of female writers who have been marginalized from the canon, as Ileana Olmedo highlights it in her article “Historiographical Exclusions: Female Spanish Writers in Exile within the Literary Mexican Field”. Based on the contributions of Pierre Bourdieu and Harold Bloom, as well as feminist theory, especially Lillian Robinson, Susan Gubar and Toril Moi, Olmedo’s paper seeks to answer the following questions: Who draws up the canon and by what means? What are the criteria that the critic and the literature scholar use to select authors? Who determines the authority and who legitimizes this authority in Mexico? Is literary quality a historiographic criterion, how and by whom is it established? What interests does it respond to? Furthermore, it focuses on the literary creation of Mercedes Pinto, who at her time was influential in the Mexican cultural field but whose works have been unknown and ignored for many years.

An interesting case in terms of reflection on the European and the American sides of the Atlantic is the one presented by Irene Jones in “Cultural options of transatlantic exile: Rosalía de Castro’s image as conjured up by Galician Day commemorations on the two shores”.

Starting from the celebration of Galicia Day, it analyzes the figure of the writer Rosalía de Castro as a symbol that brings together the Galicians who live in her land and those who migrated to Buenos Aires. The context in which this bridge was built in the 1950s is that of the profound impact that Francisco Franco’s dictatorship had on the ways the poet was conceived. It could be said to have been a turning point in the social representation of the poet and in the process of canonization that she went through over the years following her death.

The article by Carmen de la Guardia Herrero, “The Price of Refuge. Spanish Republican Exiles in the US Cultural Cold War”, also talks about the 1950s. It explores the importance of the collaboration of the different groups of European exiles in the United States, after the rise of totalitarianism, in the construction of open and covert American diplomacy at the height of the Cold War. And this, in one sense, was logical. Refugees knew well the languages and traditions

of their home nations and many shared their strong ideologies of anti-totalitarianism with the US government; there were synergies between both parties.

In addition, de la Guardia analyses the link and then the confrontation on the part of one group of those European exiles in the US: that of the anti-Franco and anti-Stalinist community of Spanish republican exiles in New York, to American policies and interests during the nineteen forties and fifties. Especially from 1953 with the Madrid Pacts and the recognition of the Franco's regime by the US.

In the same cycle of texts linked (also) to the republican Spanish exile, there is Mariela Sánchez's analysis of a contemporary television series, *Vientos de agua*, which bridges the gap between migrations and exiles from Mediterranean countries, especially Spain and Italy, to Argentina in the first half of the 20th century and the later displacements of many Argentinians³ to Spain. It also focuses on the situation of women from other countries (Colombia, Senegal...) who have sought refuge in Spain at the beginning of the 21st century and how it is dealt with in this series. With the title "Women's Migration to and from some Mediterranean Countries in *Vientos de agua* by Juan José Campanella", Sánchez points out the importance of the particular features that migrant women show in *Vientos de agua* (Water Winds), 2005. Women who fled from Mediterranean Europe to America, moving away from fascism in different Mediterranean latitudes, and women who, years after, seek in Spain a subsistence not guaranteed in their places of origin, share similar miseries in the process of leaving homeland. Sánchez's article gives account of their vulnerabilities and the reason why is relevant to focus on them.

A different European political situation, located in the first half of the 20th century, is that of exile about which Matteo Macinanti speaks in "Music in exile: Russian émigré composers in interwar Paris and the mission of Russia Abroad's musical creativity after the 1917 revolution". This essay provides historical and sociocultural

³Argentina, that of the 1976-1983 dictatorship, is also the starting point of Nora Strejilevich's exile and of her excellent literary elaboration in *Un día, allá por el fin del mundo*, reviewed in this same issue by Griselda Zuffi.

coordinates to the reality of Russian émigré composers' community based in Paris within the milieu of the so-called Russia Abroad. This cultural category has been the subject of many studies in the last decades. These latter have thoroughly underlined the literary expressions of the Parisian émigré ambient in the light of the links with the homeland, the pre-revolutionary culture and the expectation of the return to Russia. Features that may be summarized in the concept of the *Missija russkoi emigratsii* whose principal domain is to be found in the "free creative work" characterized by a twofold outlook: on the one hand it is aimed at providing continuity to pre-soviet Russia's traditional culture and, on the other hand, it is intertwined with the development of new languages, forms and aesthetics, inextricably bound with the contemporary artistic achievements of the host metropolis, the *Ville Lumière*.

"From the Mediterranean Sea to the Pacific Ocean, the exile of Algerian prisoners in the penal colony of New Caledonia. An analysis of their descendants' identity processes", by Rachid Oulahal, approaches the issue of exile through the study of case of descendants of Algerians in New Caledonia. The first Algerians to arrive in this territory were sentenced by the French colonial administration, in the 19th and early 20th centuries, to punishments they had to serve in New Caledonia. Most of them will never be able to go back to their home country.

The article highlights the current impact of this exile on the Algerian descendants in New Caledonia but also at the Mediterranean area level through the way this historical fact is dealt with by both France and Algeria in the contemporary period. Among other things, the debate about possible independence - and, in this context, also the very recent referendum - has revived "the theme of territorial membership and national identity".

And we close the article sections of this issue with a Human Right's approach to the European response to the migratory crisis that the world experiences today: "The 'Immediate Protection' Status under the New Pact on Migration and Asylum: some remarks", by Rossana Palladino, addresses painful and dubious points of the European Union's migration policies.

Responses to the crisis of the Common European Asylum System (CEAS), after a long period of impasse, currently lie in the New Pact

on Migration and Asylum (European Commission, 23 September 2020). Palladino in her essay focuses on the Proposal for a Regulation addressing situations of crisis and force majeure as part of the Commission package of proposals following the New Pact, and especially on the “immediate protection” status envisaged therein, concluding that, regrettably, “the proposed Regulation presents some highlighted issues that makes the provision on immediate protection status a too weak positive element, without a general paradigm shift”.

3. Conclusions

It is clear to everyone that the reception of people forced to leave their country is, sadly, anything but a priority in European policies. In this sense, and remaining close to the themes covered by most of the authors of this volume, we like to recommend a recent film by Luis Cintora, *Un viaje hacia nosotros* (ESP 2021), which has just been released: in it the actor - and also co-writer - Pepe Viyuela, the grandson of a Spanish refugee from the Civil War, guides viewers on a journey which combines the memory of the painful past of the Republicans who were victims of the “Bando nacional” and of Francoism with the present of those who seek refuge from other countries and clash with the cruel myopia of many decision-makers and much of the European public opinion, while also encountering - when the conditions of the journey are not fatal - the solidarity of many individuals and activist organisations.

These aspects have also been highlighted recently by Nanni Moretti in his film *Santiago, Italia* (ITA-FRA-CHL 2018), in which the hospitality given by Italy in 1973 - when Pinochet led the coup d'état that began the long, bloody period of the Chilean dictatorship - is compared with the current closure, with the egoistic blindness to the suffering of those who try to cross the land borders or the Mediterranean to reach the European Union.

In this regard, it is illustrative that Enrico Calamai - one of the few Italians who worked to save lives in Argentina during the last dictatorship, author, years later, of the indispensable book *Niente asilo politico* (2003), is also one of the founders of the Committee

“Nuovi desaparecidos”⁴, which seeks “truth and justice for the new desaparecidos of the Mediterranean”.

If we have coordinated this monographic issue, accepting the kind invitation of the *Journal of Mediterranean Knowledge*, and if we are grateful to the authors of the texts presented here, it is also because we believe that all of us scholars have the duty to remember the need - in history and in the present - of so many human beings to leave their homeland in search of a better future; and we must accompany contemporary exiles with our work, helping them to be welcomed and, as far as possible, also working to put an end to the causes of their forced migration.

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