

## *NORTH AMERICA AND SPAIN: TRANSVERSAL PERSPECTIVES.*

JULIO CAÑERO, EDITOR.

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It is undeniable that there are many historical links between Spain and the United States, especially in the territory now occupied by that country and that one day belonged to the Spanish Crown. Not long ago, the city of San Augustine, Florida, commemorated its 450th anniversary, which makes the city the first stable European settlement in the present United States. On the other coast of North America, Spanish Franciscan fathers, known as *Padres*, also played a fundamental role in the settlement of the Continent through the establishment of a network of *presidios* and *misiones*. These networks were built along the Camino Real and remain a testimony to a common heritage. However, the relationship between Spain and the U.S. is not only limited to Spain's former presence in America. There are many more links: Spanish troops participated in the American Revolution (Gutiérrez-Steinkamp); Spaniards fought on both sides of the U.S. Civil War (Cancio); many years later, U.S. volunteers of the Lincoln Brigade gave their lives in the Battle of Jarama during the saddest moments of Spain's recent history (Faber); and the U.S. turned into a sanctuary for many Spanish refugees who fled the country after Franco's victory (Faber and Martínez Carazo). But above all, since 1953, the United States and Spain are allied countries that, despite the natural ups and downs of history (Morera), regard each other with respect and mutual admiration.

The book *North America and Spain: Transversal Perspectives / Norteamérica y España: Perspectivas Transversales* (2017) was published by the New York publisher, Escribana Books, with the

objective of studying more in depth the historical relations between the United States and Spain. From a multidisciplinary perspective, this volume collects the works of renowned scholars –from disciplines such as Cultural Studies, Literature, History, Communications, or Political Science– who fill a gap of knowledge concerning the Spain-US relationship, which until now has been examined from a limited perspective. From the first essay of the book, signed by Professor Julio Cañero, the need to promote the study and teaching of historical ties between the United States and Spain, not only at an academic level but also at a governmental level, is evident. Subsequently, the rest of the contributions which make up this edition are close to the links between the two countries from the economy, financial world, society and politics in the first section; to the artistic, cultural and religious exchanges in the second section; and to the perception of the ‘other’ through the eyes of travelers, journalists or writers in the third section.

The essays dedicated to the commercial exchanges or financial management between the United States and Spain analyse, with different examples, the intense economic activity between the two nations during the last two hundred and fifty years. This practice could be increased if, as José Manuel Estévez recognizes in his article, the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) between the United States and the European Union was signed. Along with the economic relationship, there has been a remarkable intellectual exchange between the U.S. and Spain. Not in vain, there is a high degree of influence in the transmission of American liberal thought to that country. However, at the same time, some Spaniards, such as Pedro Esteve and his editorial project *El Despertar*, have also served as an intellectual bridge, this time between Spanish and American anarchism. In the field of social ties, it is important to highlight the relevance of Vassar College as a facilitator of aid to the Spanish refugees and exiles from the Civil War in the United States; and, at the same time, as a catalyst in spreading a positive image of Spain among parents, teachers, administrators and graduates linked to that institution. Finally, international relations close this section with two works that trace the evolution in the Spanish diplomacy from the socialist anti-Americanism with its accession to power in 1982, to the forging of the ‘special relationship’ that is created between the administration of President George W. Bush and José María Aznar. A good political

and diplomatic tuning that caused a change in the Spanish foreign policy, and that implied a turn towards clearly atlanticist positions.

In the second section, dedicated to artistic, cultural and religious exchanges, the different articles explain the intense relationship between the United States and Spain in areas such as the arts—thanks, for example, to the efforts of the former conservative, writer and critic James Johnson Sweeney; or music, especially in certain left-wing American spaces after the Spanish Civil War. Right after that dramatic period, the regime of General Franco, so eager to receive international recognition, had to submit to pressures from the United States authorities so that, despite the censorship, the success of Hollywood could be released in the ultra-Catholic Spain. Given the scant exposure of the Spaniards to the Americanization of the 40s and 50s—so important in Europe, but very slight in that country as a consequence of the Franco dictatorship and its censorship—post-Franco Spain did not reject the American cultural influence, as it occurred in the cultural anti-Americanism of the rest of the countries of Western Europe. Although anti-Americanism existed in the Spanish society in the 1980s, American cultural products were assumed by Spanish society as necessary elements to achieve the coveted convergence with Europe.

The book ends with a third section in which the works focus on how different aspects of life in Spain or in the United States have been perceived by Americans, or by Spaniards and Latin Americans, respectively. Some of the articles in this section highlight, for example, how it is possible to find images and stereotypes about the Spanish people taken literally from the readings that American intellectuals—Washington Irving, for example—have made of classic authors, which mediated their interpretations about being Spanish. Other essays, on the contrary, study how Spanish historical figures, such as Emilia Serrano, Carolina Marcial Dorado or Luis Cernuda, have described their impressions of the American reality in which they lived. The finishing touch of this edition is provided by Alberto Manguel, whose article “Bartleby of La Mancha” reveals Jorge Luis Borges’ relationship with Spain and the United States. Manguel explores the Borgian writings, finding different common denominators between the literature of both countries, mainly between “Bartleby” by Melville and *Don Quixote* by Cervantes, but also with Borges’ own artistic creation.

For decades, Spanish students have understood that there was once a Spanish Empire in which –under the influence of Burgundy– a melting pot of cultures, languages and confessions coexisted and fought to remain or separate from the powerful Spanish monarchy. As students, they had to know the battles against the Turkish and the French; be aware of religious conflicts in the Flemish provinces; know about the avarice of the perfidious Albion; and to record in their memory the deeds of the conquerors and colonizers of the New World. However, this last episode in history inexplicably omitted any reference of the Spanish conquest of large areas of what is now the United States. Therefore, books such as *North America and Spain: Transversal Perspectives* are essential, because, as the editor of the compendium says, “so that the links continue to bear fruit, it is as necessary to make present the historic Spanish presence in the United States, as making visible that presence in Spain” (20).

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