

A CATHOLIC PERSPECTIVE ON THE HISPANIC AMERICAN WORLD: THE CSIC's "MAR ADENTRO" COLLECTION (1953-1966)

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On 24th November 1939, the Spanish National Research Council (CSIC) was established, an organisation driven by the Franco regime aimed at shaping academic activity and configuring an official culture that met the needs of the dictatorship. Within its scientific endeavours, History held a significant role, addressed by various institutes such as the Jerónimo Zurita Institute of General History, the Gonzalo Fernández de Oviedo Institute of Hispanic American History, and the Rodrigo Caro Institute of Archaeology, among others. However, the CSIC did not settle for merely being an agent of historiographic production; it also positioned itself as the state apparatus for crafting discourses on the past. Among the various centres dedicated to historical studies, Americanism played a crucial role, being the discipline with the closest connection between cultural diplomacy and historiographic work.

Studies on the American past were organised around two nuclei: the Gonzalo Fernández de Oviedo Institute and the Escuela de Estudios Hispano-Americanos (EEHA) (School of Hispanic American Studies). The former, located in Madrid, had been directed by Antonio Ballesteros Beretta since 1940, who had previously led an American Studies Seminar at the Central University in the 1930s. The latter emerged somewhat later: initially as a section of the Fernández de Oviedo Institute in 1942, and later as an autonomous centre in 1946. The Americanist tradition in Seville had a long history,

thanks to the presence of the General Archive of the Indies and the creation of various organisations during the first third of the 20th century. In 1913, the Institute of Americanist Studies was founded, led by Pedro Torres Lanzas, which in 1914 was renamed the Official Centre of Americanist Studies and finally the Centre of Americanist Studies. In 1928, Rafael González Abreu founded the Hispano-Cuban Institute of American History, directed by José María Ots Capdequí during the Republic. Meanwhile, in 1927, the first chair of Hispanic Colonial Art History at the University of Seville was established, held by Diego Angulo Íñiguez and later by Enrique Marco Dorta.

After the Civil War, some prominent figures like Ots Capdequí went into exile. However, this heritage remained latent and resurfaced in the School of Hispanic American Studies, adapted to the new political circumstances. The key figure was Vicente Rodríguez Casado, who led the School despite the honorary title of official director being held by Cristóbal Bermúdez Plata (also in charge of the Archive of the Indies). The connection between this centre and the University of Seville was very close: Rodríguez Casado introduced many of his disciples into the University, whose activities became linked to the EEHA. In this context, the role of the University of La Rábida as a space for academic sociability within the discipline, also under Rodríguez Casado's influence, was crucial.

The EEHA was established as a university centre to promote cultural and academic exchange between Spain and America. Additionally, it quickly began to outpace the Madrid-based Gonzalo Fernández de Oviedo Institute in both material

resources and personnel. With the support of José María Albareda, the CSIC's secretary-general, Rodríguez Casado integrated the EEHA with chairs in Pre-Columbian American History, History of Colonisation and Contemporary America, History of Indian Law, Colonial Art History, and Modern and Contemporary Spanish History. This turned the centre into a place where, in addition to conducting research, future researchers, teachers, and specialists in various fields of American History were trained and guided. In this context, its international ambition was notable, aligning with the regime's desire to serve as a vehicle for political and cultural relations, as well as to institutionalise historiography as part of Hispanic science.

The situation changed in 1945 with the creation of the American History Section in the faculties of Philosophy and Letters at the universities of Seville and Madrid, which reinforced the academic power of EEHA members. The section was to be composed of five chairs: Pre-Hispanic American History; History of Geographical Discoveries and American Geography; History of America in the Modern and Contemporary Ages; History of Hispanic American Art; and History of Indian Law. All of this contributed to the definitive consolidation of Americanism, driven by the regime's interest in a useful discipline and the influence of this academic group through its social capital.

This process culminated in the definitive separation between the goals of the American History Section and the Sevillian School. Teaching services were confined to the American History Section of the University of Seville, while the EEHA focused on research, under the auspices of the CSIC. Consequently, the EEHA lost its educational

function but was granted autonomy and legal personality, receiving funds from the ministry and the boards of trustees of the Council Raimundo Lulio, Marcelino Menéndez Pelayo, and Santiago Ramón y Cajal. The boundaries between the EEHA and the University of Seville became blurred: although legally distinct, some of their functions and personnel overlapped in practice.

The Sevillian School and the Madrid Institute conducted their activities independently, without establishing links or collaborations. The EEHA had a significant advantage: it had its own printing press, which allowed it great independence and exclusive dedication. This press produced two of the School's periodicals, *Anuario de Estudios Americanos* and *Estudios Americanos*, as well as various monographs and collections.

The “Mar Adentro” collection

Initially, the EEHA's publishing activity was organised into seven series: the *Anuario de Estudios Americanos* itself (which ended up publishing some of the studies from the journal as monographs); Monografías (Monographs); Memorias, relaciones y viajes (Memoirs, accounts and travels); Ensayos (Essays); Manuales de estudio (Study manuals); Colecciones de documentos (Document collections); and Ediciones y reediciones de libros raros y curiosos (Editions and re-editions of rare and unusual books). Once its activity was consolidated, two new collections were added to these series in the 1950s: “Dos Colores” and “Mar Adentro”. The latter, launched in 1953,

was named through a contest held among the residents of the School's residence, with Juan Gómez Arjona emerging as the winner. Its aim was to present a series of syntheses on Hispanic American thought, bringing together various authors from both Spain and America to create small-format volumes. Directed by Jesús Arellano and Francisco Elías de Tejada, it addressed philosophical, legal, literary, artistic, and social issues.

The collection was driven by the Seminar on the History of Hispanic American Thought, led by Arellano and Elías de Tejada, who made their intentions clear in the Council's records by stating it should be an "effective means to contribute to the unification of a Catholic ideology within the Hispanic American cultural framework"¹. Perhaps this is the reason why, the first volume, by Peñalver Simón (also a member of the Seminar), won the Francisco Franco Prize in 1953. "Mar Adentro" eventually encompassed a wide range of works. Generally, it compiled the thoughts of American and Spanish intellectuals, as well as reflections on various historical processes of the continent and the state of contemporary thought on certain issues in the Social Sciences.

However, from 1958 onwards, the collection began to lose momentum. The Seminar on Hispanic American Thought balanced promoting "Mar Adentro" with other activities, such as organising a specialised library and creating a file to compile material on philosophy and the history of philosophy, with the goal of eventually including all

¹ CSIC. (1958). *Memoria de la Secretaría General, 1952-1954, volume I*. Madrid, Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, p. 215.

existing bibliography on the subject. It focused especially on the contemporary period. Five new issues were published between 1958 and 1961, with a final, almost token, issue in 1966.

A study² on the thought of Jovellanos was chosen to open the collection. This work avoided any biographical sketch, instead focusing on the development of intellectual concepts where the Christian element played a central role.

Pero a través de la presencia y la problemática concreta de este hombre significativo, se quiere en este estudio alumbrar ideas fundamentales sobre dos cosas apasionantes: España, Cristianismo.

Al pretender extraer de la naturaleza histórica del hombre todo el hondo sentido que ello tiene, nos encontramos, por lo pronto, con un modo de entender a España, que resulta ser el único modo de entenderla bien. España es, sin duda, un concepto universal, que incluye una totalidad abierta de cosas singulares. Pero un concepto que se volatiliza, incomprendido, cuando se acerca uno a él con pretensiones de fundarlo en unidad de raza, de espíritu o de estilo; y que sólo permanece entero cuando se funda en el único ser auténtico que España, por sí misma, tiene: su ser histórico. [...]

Pero es que en el fondo de estas páginas se hace también muy patente otra idea: la conciencia de un cristianismo viviendo en seres que tienen la dimensión esencial de la historicidad. Dios, al

But through the presence and specific issues of this significant man, this study aims to highlight fundamental ideas about two fascinating subjects: Spain and Christianity.

When attempting to extract from the historical nature of man all the deep meaning it holds, we immediately encounter a way of understanding Spain that turns out to be the only way to understand it well. Spain is, undoubtedly, a universal concept that includes an open totality of singular things. But it is a concept that becomes elusive, misunderstood when approached with the intention of founding it on a unity of race, spirit, or style; and it remains whole only when founded on the only authentic being that Spain itself has: its historical self. [...]

Moreover, at the core of these pages, another idea becomes very evident: the consciousness of a Christianity living in beings with the essential dimension of historicity. God, being with man, does so according to this historical structure. God's interventions in the timeline have

² Peñalver Simó, Patricio. (1953). *Modernidad tradicional en el pensamiento de Jovellanos*. Sevilla, CSIC / Escuela de Estudios Hispano-Americanos, pp. 3-4.

estar con los hombres, lo hace según esa estructura histórica. Las inserciones de Dios en la línea del tiempo han afectado ontológicamente al hombre y perduran a lo largo de su existencia histórica.

Cristo no ha redimido a un hombre de un momento, sino a todos los hombres de todos los momentos. Cristo está muriendo en la Cruz — todavía— para los tiempos nuevos.

ontologically affected man and endure throughout his historical existence.

Christ has not redeemed a single man for a single moment, but all men of all moments. Christ is — still— dying on the Cross for the new times.

This established the discursive line that would sustain the collection, characterised by the presence of the Catholic element, numerous references to Menéndez Pelayo and his *Heterodoxos*, and a single possible and “correct” way of fully understanding that historical self of Spain. The work featured a prologue by Jesús Arellano, another collaborator of the School. In this prologue, Arellano addressed one of the then-current debates: he denied the fact that Spaniards had intended to colonise America or that it had been a colony, differentiating it from the colonisation processes in Africa or Asia. Instead, he accused the United States of having caused profound and far-reaching damage to Hispanic America, although he softened this accusation by stating that it had been done unconsciously. Thus, he called for the need to write a history of “Christian vitality” in the 18th century, for which the study on Jovellanos could be a beginning, providing a history of thought crafted with a Catholic criterion.

Agustín de Asís Garrate chose the figure of the Peruvian priest and politician Bartolomé de Herrera, valuing his strong roots in the Catholic tradition³. This was the

³ Asís Garrate, Agustín de. (1954). *Bartolomé Herrera, pensador político*. Sevilla, CSIC / Escuela de Estudios Hispano-Americanos.

path followed by the second issue of the collection, which presented the political doctrines of the contemporary Brazilian philosopher Raimundo de Farias Brito. Francisco Elías de Tejada created a sort of intellectual biography in which a significant part was dedicated to presenting the philosopher's thoughts on the relationship between science and faith, followed by a review of the journey from materialism to Christianity⁴. Two years later, he returned to these topics in a more general study on the political thought of the founders of New Granada, a territory "born in the heart of Castile, nurtured by Castilian cultural milk, aligned behind its banners in the struggle against Europe. At the beginning of the 19th century, that people, until then a bastion of anti-European Christianity, wanted to be independent and achieved it [sic], but did so [sic], only to fall completely into Europeanisation"⁵. The work was a denunciation of liberalism and a staunch defence of the Hispanic element: "This book seeks to enter the arena, then, with battle gear in favour of the much-neglected truth. A battle against the spiritual heirs of the enemies of the old New Granadians; a battle against those who seek to build a 19th-century Europeanising nationalism against a secular and Hispanic tradition; a battle against those who forget the refined sense of freedom upheld by the founders and the Christian purity of their directives; a battle against those who ignore that the conquest was nothing less than the conscious foundation of a new and separate people, with a clear will for delineation"⁶.

⁴ Elías de Tejada, Francisco. (1953). *Las doctrinas políticas de Raimundo de Farias Brito*. Seville, CSIC / Escuela de Estudios Hispano-Americanos.

⁵ Elías de Tejada, Francisco. (1955). *El pensamiento político de los fundadores de Nueva Granada*. Sevilla, CSIC / Escuela de Estudios Hispano-Americanos, p. IX.

⁶ Ibid., p. 9.

Other researchers, such as Francisco Morales Padrón, also made significant contributions. He defended the conquest process as “a gigantic positive endeavour and a true affirmation of manhood”⁷. His intention was to go beyond the warlike aspect, arguing that the conquest of America was also spiritual, carried out by the “soldiers of Christ”: “More than one will speak of obscurantism, intellectual stubbornness, cruelty, religious intolerance, etc. We know it; it is the same enemy current set in motion already in the 16th century by a Europe boiling with political-religious differences upheld by Spain”⁸. This discourse was undoubtedly familiar: the Council’s Americanism took much longer to distance itself from the national-Catholic rhetoric of the 1940s than any other historiographical discipline. Thus, he concluded that America did not truly exist until the arrival of the Spaniards, who provided unity and meaning to that world by integrating it into Christendom.

Despite “Mar Adentro” featuring titles covering different periods, contemporary themes were prioritised through the selection of various figures and historical processes, such as the May Revolution in Buenos Aires⁹. José Vila Selma chose Venezuelan novelist and politician Rómulo Gallegos to reflect on the transition from colonial to “independent” literature in Hispanic American writings¹⁰. Some of the published works showed his interest in sociology, though the gap between proposal and practice was sometimes insurmountable. Asís de Garate, along with his mentor

⁷ Morales Padrón, Francisco. (1955). *Fisionomía de la conquista indiana*. Seville, CSIC / Escuela de Estudios Hispano-Americanos, p. IX.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Acevedo, Edberto Óscar. (1957). *El ciclo histórico de la revolución de mayo*. Seville, CSIC / Escuela de Estudios Hispano-Americanos.

¹⁰ Vila Selma, José. (1954). *Rómulo Gallegos*. Sevilla, CSIC / Escuela de Estudios Hispano-Americanos.

Francisco Elías de Tejada, aimed to carry out a series of studies on the 15th-century Salamanca doctrine, starting with the figure of Alfonso de Madrigal. He claimed his work as a study of power, anchored in the ideas of Max Weber and his “Economy and Society”¹¹. That interest in sociology was also demonstrated by Carlos López Núñez in a study on the state of Hispanic American sociology. Rather than discussing what was being done there, he presented the potential these studies had if they took Hispanic America as their subject, and he exemplified this with topics such as indigenism, demography, migration policy, class politics, and the particularised action of environmental obstacles¹².

The final issues of “Mar Adentro” did not exhibit a clear thematic line in their content. Initially conceived as a collection to capture Hispanic American thought, from 1958 onward it shifted almost entirely to literature. Some studies had a more generalist nature, such as George Robert Coulthard’s work on race and colour in Caribbean literature¹³. Coulthard, an English critic based in Jamaica, noted that he would limit his discussion to these elements as literary, rather than social or political subjects, though occasional references might be made. Other studies focused on specific figures, particularly those straddling the 19th and 20th centuries. Manuel Alvar, a philologist from the Council, concentrated on the poetry of Delmira Agustini¹⁴, while Juan Collantes

¹¹ Asís Garrate, Agustín de. (1955). *Ideas sociopolíticas de Alonso de Polo (el Tostado)*. Seville, CSIC / Escuela de Estudios Hispano-Americanos.

¹² López Núñez, Carlos. (1953). *Horizonte doctrinal de la sociología hispanoamericana*. Seville, CSIC / Escuela de Estudios Hispano-Americanos.

¹³ Coulthard, George Robert. (1958). *Raza y color en la literatura antillana*. Seville, CSIC / Escuela de Estudios Hispano-Americanos.

¹⁴ Alvar, Manuel. (1958). *La poesía de Delmira Agustini*. Sevilla, CSIC / Escuela de Estudios Hispano-Americanos.

analysed Ricardo Güiraldes's presence in Latin American literature¹⁵. Collantes continued this line of work in the School's journal, publishing a study on Esteban Echevarría's romanticism years later. The final publication in the collection was dedicated to five contemporary Franco-Canadian poets¹⁶.

Outside the literary realm but somewhat related to thought, Pedro Borges planned a reconstruction of the missionaries' identity in America, outlining their defining traits and how they carried out their mission of spiritual conquest¹⁷. The only work whose inclusion in the collection (and even in the School's editorial plan) is surprising is Manuel Romero Gómez's study on the British Constitution. This work made no references to America, instead analysing the constitutional evolution of Great Britain from the 15th to the 20th centuries, its contemporary constitution, and his personal impressions of various agents like political parties, public opinion, symbolism, etc. With these works, the collection's activity dwindled and eventually ceased.

The impact of the "Mar Adentro" collection was somewhat limited, but its importance lies in its attempt to promote a Catholic ideology within the Hispanic American cultural framework. From its inception, it claimed to be a platform for disseminating thought and reflecting on various historical and contemporary processes in Hispanic America. However, over time, the collection lost its initial focus and shifted towards literature. Despite this, "Mar Adentro" remains a reflection of a historical

¹⁵ Collantes de Terán, Juan. (1959). *Las novelas de Ricardo Güiraldes*. Sevilla, CSIC / Escuela de Estudios Hispano-Americanos.

¹⁶ González Martín, Jerónimo Pablo. (1966). *Cinco poetas franco-canadienses actuales*. Seville, CSIC / Escuela de Estudios Hispano-Americanos.

¹⁷ Borges, Pedro. (1961). *Los conquistadores espirituales de América*. Sevilla, CSIC / Escuela de Estudios Hispano-Americanos.

narrative aligned with Francoist regime postulates, particularly concerning the essential bond between Spain and America, vital in the context of cultural diplomacy, and the role of Catholicism in approaching this past.



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