**GENERATION OF ’27** [*Generación del 27* or *de 1927*], in Spain, a group of poets, also called Generation of 1925, Generation of the Dictatorship (referring to Primo de Rivera’s regime, 1923 – 1930), Generation of the Avant-Garde, the Friendship Generation, and Generation Lorca-Guillén, among other appellations. The term “Generation of ‘27” arises from a gathering of poets of the Spanish avant-garde at the *Ateneo de Sevilla*, an influential cultural association, on December 16 and 17, 1927, to commemorate the 300th anniversary of the death of Andalusian baroque poet Luis de Góngora y Argote (1561-1627). The Genration of ´27 belongs to what has been called the *Edad de Plata* [Silver Age] of Spanish literature and culture, a period comprising the first three decades of the 20th century up to the beginning of the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939). Two other literary generations flourished during this period: The Generation of 1898 and the Generation of 1914.

The term “Generation of ‘27” most often designates a group of ten poets born between 1891 and 1905: Pedro Salinas (1891-1951), Jorge Guillén (1893-1984), Gerardo Diego (1896-1987), Federico García Lorca (1898-1936), Vicente Aleixandre (1898-1984), Dámaso Alonso (1898-1990), Emilio Prados (1899-1962), Luis Cernuda (1902-1963), Rafael Alberti (1902-1999), and Manuel Altolaguirre (1905-1959).

In a broader sense, the term may also include other artists such as painters Salvador Dalí (1904-1989) and Maruja Mallo (1902-1995), filmmaker Luis Buñuel (1900-1983), and musician Rosa García Ascot (1902-2002).

The term “literary generation,” as defined by Julius Petersen in *Die literarischen Generationen* (Berlin, 1930), has been widely used in Spanish literary history, but it remains controversial, some critics opting to use less restrictive labels, such as group or constellation. As a matter of fact, this cluster of writers seem to lack some of the criteria that define a literary generation: historical motivation, clear leadership, and shared influences, technique, and style.

Some critics have proposed the gathering at the Ateneo de Sevilla as the historical event that bounds the poets together as a “literary generation.” The Generation of ´27 contrasts in this regard with the Generation of ´98, which is marked by the Spanish-American War of 1898, commonly known as “el desastre” (“the Disaster”) in Spain, an event that leads many intellectuals of the time to inquire into the question of Spanish national identity. The 300th anniversary of the death of Andalusian baroque poet Luis de Góngora y Argote (1561-1627), celebrated at the Ateneo, created fertile ground for a questioning of aesthetic approaches that gave the group of writers a sense of common purpose.

Although the poets of the Generation of ’27 do not have a clear leader, they did hold poet Juan Ramón Jiménez (1881-1958) in high regard and were fond of philosopher and essayist José Ortega y Gasset (1883-1955). Jiménez was a guide and source of inspiration, rather than a leader. He impressed the younger writers with his seminal role in literary movements in the late teens of the 20th century.

An eclectic assortment of influences, techniques, and styles characterizes the generation’s literary production. Nonetheless, the poetry of the group in its initial stages reveals some commonalities, such as their use of metaphor, the stylization of reality, and youthful optimism. Disparate literary trends such as neo-*Gongorismo* (a revival of Góngora’s baroque style), *neopopularismo* (a stylization of traditional popular culture), neo-Romanticism, pure poetry, and surrealism, along with other avant-garde movements, influence the members of the Generation of ’27 at different points in time. In a modernist vein, they reject the style of realist writers and their belief in the possibility of objectivity, but many do remain loyal to Spanish literary traditions.

Under the influence of neo-*Gongorismo* and *ultraísmo*, a Spanish avant-garde movement that arose in 1918 as a reaction to the then-predominant *modernista* style, some members of the Generation of ’27 initially envision metaphor as an act of creation, a process that links two objects in surprising and unexpected ways to produce a new and wondrous entity, devoid of the emotional and intellectual connotations of the original terms. In his talk on Góngora’s poetic image, “La imagen poética de don Luis de Góngora” [“The Poetic Image in Don Luis de Góngora”], Lorca makes a statement that may well summarize the essence of metaphor for the poets of 1927: “La metáfora une dos mundos antagónicos por medio de un salto ecuestre que da la imaginación” [“A metaphor unites two opposing worlds thanks to the equestrian jump of the imagination”].

Many members of the group and their friends met in Madrid at an influential cultural centre known as the *Residencia de Estudiantes,* founded in 1910. The *Residencia* became an important gathering place for intellectuals, writers, and artists from all over Spain. Catalan painter Salvador Dalí (1904-1989) and Aragonese filmmaker Luis Buñuel (1900-1983) spent several years in residence along with Lorca and other intellectuals, such as Aragonese engineer José Bello (1904-2008), nicknamed Pepín, and composer Salvador Barcarisse Chinoria (1898-1963). Some members of the generation, such as Alberti, were regular visitors at the *Residencia*, even though they never lived at the institution. Nowadays, the library and archives of the *Residencia* (*Centro de Documentación*) hold important collections of documents written by and related to figures of the Generation of 1927, such as Lorca and Cernuda. According to its website, “the Centro places especial emphasis on the intellectual tradition of theSilver Age of Spanish culture, a period which includes the historic decades of the *Residencia* [1910-1936], especially the *Generaciones del 98* and *27*, and on the groups and institutions that led the scientific and educational renovation, such as the *Institución Libre de Enseñanza*, theMuseo *Pedagógico Nacional* and the *Junta para la Ampliación de Estudios*” ([www.residencia.csic.es/en/doc/doc.htm](http://www.residencia.csic.es/en/doc/doc.htm)).

Around the advent of the Second Spanish Republic in 1931, most members of the Generation of ’27 become politicized and support the new government. As a result, the Generation moves towards a more humanized type of literature, social poetry, of which Alberti, who joins the Communist Party, is its main representative. Lorca founds La Barraca, a travelling university theatre troupe charged with the mission of taking 17th-century Spanish drama to the most disadvantaged areas of Spain. Altolaguirre leads La Barraca during the Civil War (1936-1939) and, along with Prados, joins the Republican forces. Diego, as opposed to most of his poet friends, sides with the Nationalist faction that rises against the Republic.

The Spanish Civil War (1936 – 1939) disbands the Generation of ’27. Lorca is murdered at the outset of the conflict in 1936; Alberti, Altolaguirre, Cernuda, Guillén, Prados, and Salinas go into exile; Diego, having supported the Nationalists, remains in the country; Alonso does not leave Spain, but keeps a critical position vis-à-vis the dictatorship; and Aleixandre stays after the fighting ends in 1939 to live under the dictatorship of Francisco Franco in what he calls “exilio interior” [“internal exile”].

The creation of the category “Generation of ’27” illustrates how canon formation has often silenced the female voice. Although women, in spite of their unequal access to education, partook in the creative fervor that overtook Spain in the late 1920s and early 1930s, their work was long undervalued or simply excluded from literary, intellectual, and artistic histories of Spain.

The women of 1927 are many and it is difficult to compose a comprehensive list of the members without leaving some names out. If one considers the Generation of 1927 strictly as a group of poets, the list of the women would include the names such as Concha Méndez (1898-1986), María Teresa León (1903 – 1988), Rosa Chacel (1898-1994), Ernestina de Champourcín (1905-1999), and Josefina de la Torre (1907-2002). If the term were to include visual artists, Marga Gil Röesset (1908-1932), Maruja Mallo (1902-1995), Margarita Manso (1908-1960), and Ángeles Santos (1911-2013) would join the list of members. Philosopher María Zambrano (1904-1991) should also take her rightful place alongside her generational colleagues.

The women of the Generation of ’27 have become known as *Las Sinsombrero* (roughly translated “Women Without Hats”), a term derived from an anecdote told by Mallo. One day, likely at the beginning of the 1920s, Mallo, along with Manso, Dalí, and Lorca decided to take off their hats as they were taking a stroll along the Puerta del Sol in the heart of Madrid. As Mallo recounts, it occurred to them that wearing hats led to a congestion of ideas. Upon seeing the colourful group breaking a long-held social convention of hat-wearing in public, passersby hurled stones and insults at them. This anecdote is emblematic of the activism of the women of 1927 who made themselves visible, voicing and performing their world views in influential public cultural spaces such the *Residencia de Estudiantes* and the journal *Revista de Occidente*.

*Las Sinsombrero* created their own cultural and social space, founding in 1926 the *Lyceum Club Femenino*, an institution modeled on similar ones in London and Paris, where women would associate to share ideas, plan projects and commune. The *Lyceum Club Femenino* provided a safe place for women to gather outside their homes and aimed to promote women helping each other to break down social, cultural, and political barriers.

The women and men of 1927 not only shared literary, artistic and intellectual spaces, but were also friends and partners. Méndez had a seven-year romance with Buñuel and maintained closed friendships with Alberti, Cernuda, Lorca, and Mallo. Lorca introduced her in 1931 to Altolaguirre, whom she married in 1932. Méndez and Altolaguirre founded a printing press, *La Verónica*, which played a role in publishing works by female and male writers of the Generation of ’27. Alberti had a relationship with Mallo between 1924 and 1930 and married León in 1932 in a civil ceremony. Alberti and León helpeds each other in their intellectual, literary and artistic pursuits. Alberti drew illustrations for some of León’s works and together they were founders of the communist-leaning journal, “Octubre.”

Just like many of the men, most of the women of 1927 suffered years of exile during the decades of the Francoist dictatorship (1939-1975). Their literary and artistic production, both before and after exile, was known in Spain in a fragmentary manner. With the gradual return of exiled writers, artists, and intellectuals towards the end of the dictatorship and during the early years of democracy, the works and lives of the male members of the Generation became better known and valued. That was not to be the case with their female counterparts. In many ways, the women of 1927 are still being rescued from obscurity.

Among the many efforts bring *Las Sinsombrero* to light and grant them their rightful place alongside the men in Spanish literary, intellectual, and artistic history, the online “crossmedia” project, *Las Sinsombrero* ([www.lassinsmobrero.com](http://www.lassinsmobrero.com)), must be mentioned. It constitutes an accessible and user-friendly resource where one can become familiar with the women of 1927. The components of the project currently include a TV documentary by RTVE, the Spanish public broadcaster (<http://www.rtve.es/alacarta/videos/imprescindibles/imprescindibles-sin-sombrero/3318136/>) , a webdoc, a Facebook page, an educational project, and a book by Tània Balló, *Las Sinsombrero: sin ellas la historia no está completa* [*Las Sinsombrero: Without them History Remains Incomplete*]. An online exhibition of the women’s works and a WikiProject are in the works.

There is yet another component to the Generation of ´27, known in Spanish as *La otra generación del ’27* [*The Other Generation of ‘27*]*.* This is an all-male group of humourists (playwrights, filmmakers, and cartoonists) who played and important role in the transformation of Spanish humour under the influence of the avant-gardes. The members of this group include Antonio de Lara, *Tono*, (1896-1978), Edgar Neville (1899-1967), Enrique Jardiel Poncela (1901-1952), Miguel Mihura (1905-1977), and José López Rubio (1903-1996). They all eventually coalesced around the satirical publication *La Codorniz* (1941-1978), which was often at odds with Francoist censorship, suffering several publication bans during the years of dictatorship. *La Codorniz*, founded by Mihura, bore the subtitle “La revista más audaz para el lector más inteligente” [“The Most Daring Journal for the Most Intelligent Reader”], which might have implied the presence of a political or social message presented under the veil of laughter.

The 1920s and 1930s in Spain were years of literary, artistic, and academic effervescence. If used to refer strictly to a group of ten poets, the label “Generation of ’27” may be a useful tool for literary history, but it fails to capture the complexity of the period. Tanià Balló reminds us in the title of her book that without a consideration of women writers, artists, and intellectuals, the history of the Generation of ’27 is incomplete. That is indeed the case and, to their histories, we have to add other histories beyond those of the original ten poets to get a fuller and more accurate picture of early twentieth-century Spanish Modernism.

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Further Reading

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