

# UNAMUNO & Desperate Author Series 2019 Literature Festival

## The 2019 Unamuno Author Series Festival: 60 international poets to read in Madrid's first Anglophone literary celebration of this scale

- 80 events at 5 locations during 6 days.
- Organized by **The Unamuno Author Series** and **Desperate Literature**, collaborating institutions include the **Residencia de Estudiantes**, the **Fundación Federico García Lorca**, the **Latinx Writers Caucus**, the **International Institute of Spain**, **Civitella Ranieri Foundation**, **Aleatorio**, **El Instante Fundación**, the **Casa Museo Unamuno**, and the **Centro Federico García Lorca**.

**Madrid, 23, 2019.** - After three years of events together, the grassroots Unamuno Author Series (founded 2012) and independent bookstore Desperate Literature (founded 2014) are organizing the first international Anglophone poetry festival in Madrid's history. **The 2019 Unamuno Author Series Festival will take place May 27-June 1 and feature events with 60 poets and 20 authors, academics, and translators hailing from Canada, England, Greece, Northern Ireland, Ireland, Italy, and the U.S.** Event location partners in Madrid include Desperate Literature, the Residencia de Estudiantes, the International Institute of Spain, Aleatorio, and El Instante Fundación.

Acclaimed Anglophone poets who will read include Gregory Pardlo (Pulitzer Prize), Mark Doty (T.S. Eliot Prize, former Chancellor of the Academy of American Poets), Jericho Brown (National Endowment for the Arts fellow), Monica Youn (William Carlos Williams Award), Campbell McGrath (MacArthur Grant), Pádraig Ó Tuama, and John Koethe. American Poet Laureates reading include Luis J. Rodríguez (Los Angeles, California), Kathleen Flenniken (Seattle, Washington), Octavio Quintanilla (San Antonio, Texas), and Dana Gioia

(California, former head of the National Endowment of the Arts). Tom Healy, the former head of the U.S. Fulbright Foundation will also present.

“This series has shown me such joy of the art, and how essential friendship is to poets and our larger community. I want our festival to be a giant thank you to Spain, a country that adopted me when I wasn’t looking,” **said Spencer Reece, poet, Anglican priest, and founder of the Unamuno Author Series.**

Monday through Wednesday night, twenty-seven poets will read at Desperate Literature, a hub of independent English-language literary activity in Madrid.

On Thursday May 30, the Residencia de Estudiantes will host a bilingual poetry event to celebrate U.S. Latinx poetry, the Generación del 27, and transatlantic friendship. The Unamuno Author Series Festival has partnered with the Latinx Writers Caucus and the Fundación Federico García Lorca to create the García Lorca Poetry Prize for an Emerging Latinx Poet; the inaugural winner Steven Sanchez will be the first to read that night. The evening will close with internationally acclaimed Spanish poet Luis Muñoz.

On Friday May 31, the award-winning documentary film VOICES BEYOND THE WALL (Producer James Franco, Director Brad Coley), featuring Unamuno Author Series founder and poet Spencer Reece, will be shown at the International Institute of Spain (Instituto Internacional). That evening, the Instituto Internacional and Civitella Ranieri Foundation will host a celebration of the Foundation’s 25th anniversary, featuring nine Anglophone poets who are former fellows.

After a full day of poetry readings at Aleatorio in Malasaña, the festival will close on June 1 with poets Richard Scott, Gregory Pardlo, and Spencer Reece and a concert by Lila Blue at El Instante Fundación.

Spanish cultural institutions beyond Madrid are also participating in the historic Unamuno Author Series Festival. The Casa Museo Unamuno in Salamanca will welcome festival participants with a private visit to Miguel de Unamuno’s former home on May 25. The Centro Federico García Lorca and the Fundación Federico García Lorca will host a small group of the poets for events on June 3 and 4.

### **About the Unamuno Author Series:**

The series began by accident on March 27, 2012, the day American poet, Adrienne Rich died. Founder, poet and Episcopal priest, Spencer Reece, held what was intended to be a “one-off” reading on the patio of the Catedral del Redentor to cheer up his friend, Cuban-American poet, Richard Blanco, who was despairing over poetry’s diminishing readership. Ten people attended.

Unbeknownst to all, in less than a year Richard Blanco would be reading to millions of people for the second inauguration of Barack Obama.

While the Unamuno Author Series unknowingly began that day between Blanco and Reece, its spirit originates in a much older relationship between a priest and a poet connected to the very same church community. In the 1930s, the esteemed and famously heterodox Spanish writer Miguel de Unamuno befriended the only protestant minister in the city of Salamanca, Rev. Atilano Coco. They wrote letters to each other, and Unamuno occasionally attended services at Rev. Coco's church. Their friendship endured as Spanish society teetered on the brink of civil war, divided between opposing ideological forces. But it came to a tragic end with the Fascist military uprising in the summer of 1936, during which Coco was arrested and shot dead in a firing squad. Unamuno died shortly afterward of a heart attack while under house arrest ordered by the Fascists.

Our series echoes at its core friendship and the enduring bond between poetry and the human spirit that Coco and Unamuno shared years ago. To date, our series has grown to organize more than 40 events with numerous international poets and authors. Today, we are a team of 10 volunteers who are building this bond into an ever expanding, borderless poetry community with its heart in Madrid.

**More information:**

To view the complete schedule of readings and events, and for more information on The Unamuno Author Series, visit [unamunoauthors.com](http://unamunoauthors.com) or follow us on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram at @UnamunoAuthors.

**Media contact:**

Clarissa Watson, +34.384.043.84  
unamuno.author.series@gmail.com