

**The Theatre of  
Twenty-First Century Spain**  
Identities, Anxieties, and  
Social Immediacies

**El teatro de España del siglo XXI**  
Identities, ansiedades  
e urgencias sociales

Edited by

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and

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Bridging Languages and Scholarship

**Series in Performing Arts**



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*El presente libro constituye una monografía de candente actualidad en lo que respecta a las temáticas abordadas, ya que el teatro es uno de los territorios más propicios para indagar en las cuestiones identitarias que nos afectan diariamente como país.*

*Por otra parte, combina con mucho acierto la amenidad con el rigor académico, lo cual es importante para recabar audiencias de distintas generaciones, a las cuales se les ofrece una mirada crítica plural que parte de ensayistas de distintas nacionalidades, lo que demuestra el interés que despierta el teatro español fuera de sus fronteras.*

*Otro de los puntos fuertes y originales de la monografía se relaciona con la elección del corpus teatral analizado, así como con el elevado número de obras de autoría femenina. También es muy certera la variedad y novedad de temas abordados que van desde la identidad de género no binario, la posmemoria, la autoficción, las dialécticas entre las identidades privadas y públicas, o la capacidad de agencia femenina, es decir, un rico abanico que ofrece un retrato completo de cómo España se ha enfrentado y se enfrenta a las inestabilidades de la identidad a través del teatro y los problemas sociales divisorios que interrumpen el progreso tanto en el presente como en el futuro.*

Dra. Concha Fernández Soto

Instituto Provincial de Educación Permanente, Almería, Spain

*Un volumen estimulante y perfectamente ideado y construido sobre la cuestión identitaria en el teatro español actual desde los más variados enfoques (identidades de género, nacional, cultural, social, etc.). Panorámico, con una doble contextualización inicial a cargo de las editoras del volumen, las investigadoras de renombre internacional Helen Freear-Papio y Candyce Crew Leonard; y del autor, de larga trayectoria dramaturgica y excelente conocedor del teatro español, Jerónimo López Mozo, que nos ofrece también un rico abanico de nueve análisis pormenorizados sobre nueve obras del teatro español de las dos últimas décadas, firmados por reconocidos investigadores e investigadoras procedentes de Europa y de Estados Unidos. Se establece además un fructífero diálogo entre estos nueve estudios y las reflexiones de los ocho dramaturgos y dramaturgas invitados a expresarse sobre la cuestión. De todo ello se obtiene un rico caleidoscopio de sensibilidades, miradas y planteamientos teóricos y teatrales, de nada menos que dieciocho representantes de la mejor escritura teatral española del siglo XXI, escogidos con un riguroso equilibrio de género, de edades –veteranos y emergentes– y procedentes de seis comunidades autónomas.*

*Se trata de un libro indispensable para quien se interese por el teatro español, y el modo en que este explora y escenifica las evoluciones de los discursos, las representaciones y la sociedad española, sobre estas cuestiones de identidad, una sociedad sobre la que sigue pesando la larga sombra de un pasado atormentado y represivo, tanto en el campo de las identidades nacionales y culturales, como en el de las identidades de género.*

Dra. Isabelle Reck  
Institut d'Études Romanes  
Université de Strasbourg, France

*This volume represents an exceptional depth and breadth of scholarship by an international community of highly respected scholars on the cutting edge of contemporary Spanish theater studies. It provides a nuanced analysis of the role of theater in representing and questioning conflicts of identity in contemporary Spain.*

*The combination of playwrights and approaches in these essays addressing the polyphony of identities of contemporary Spain as seen through its theater is unprecedented. Most notably, the unique structure of this volume echoes the thematic thread of its content: one of multidimensionality, inclusion, and plurality of voices.*

*This will appeal to a variety of audiences, such as scholars in Hispanic studies, cultural studies, and modern drama studies, to name but a few. Taken as a whole, this volume provides a critical approach to the question of Spanish identity today, as expressed via the genre of theater – perhaps the most immediate of literary genres with the power to confront these issues. No doubt it will become an oft-referenced source.*

Prof. Dr. Jerelyn Johnson  
Dept of Modern Languages and Literatures  
Fairfield University

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A very special word of thanks is extended to Jerónimo López Mozo (Gerona 1942- ), a long-time friend and gifted playwright, for his prompt agreement to write the Foreword to this collection of studies.

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Juana Escabias  
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As a visual art, theatre is performed on stage before live audiences. Images, however, capture these performances in order that an art form so ephemeral may have lasting memory.

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Their contributions lend depth and breadth to the content and quality of this book.

Vernon Press requires a rigorous, double blind peer review to assess the quality of each paper. Due to the nature of this process, we are unable to publish the names of the five scholars who served as peer reviewers, nor can we give them the public recognition they deserve. As co-editors we cannot thank them enough.

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Helen Freear-Papio  
Candyce Crew Leonard

# **Foreword:**

## **El teatro español ante las actuales crisis identitarias**

**Jerónimo López Mozo**

*Dramaturgo, Madrid, España*

Detallar los cometidos que asume el teatro, desde el más elemental de convocar a un amplio y variado auditorio para entretenerle y aliviar su cansancio hasta el de invitarle a sumergirse en asuntos de mayor trascendencia que afectan a la sociedad de la que forman parte y, por tanto, a sus vidas, ocuparía buena parte de un prólogo que pretende ser breve. Obligado es, pues, que me ciña al que se refiere este libro. Se trata del que aborda la que podemos denominar cuestión identitaria. Buscar el encaje de nuestra existencia en el marco político y social que nos rodea y ayuda a saber quiénes somos, de dónde venimos y, sobre todo, como queremos ser. Es, sin duda, un asunto de alcance universal, pero de candente actualidad en España por las vicisitudes de su historia reciente. Abordarlo por parte de quienes nos dedicamos a la escritura dramática es, a la vez, una tentación y un deber, del mismo modo que antes lo fue para los autores de otros países que vivieron situaciones traumáticas, como Alemania tras el nazismo o Estados Unidos tras la Guerra de Vietnam. Aclaro que no es una tarea que corresponda en exclusiva a los dramaturgos. También compete a los narradores y poetas y, por supuesto, a los investigadores. Pero pienso, no niego que influido en buena parte por mi pertenencia al mundo del teatro, que es éste, por sus especiales características, el territorio más propicio para indagar en por qué somos de una manera determinada y en qué medida se lo debemos a hechos acaecidos en nuestro entorno. En la representación teatral todo sucede en tiempo presente aunque los personajes aludan a acontecimientos pasados o elucubren sobre perspectivas de futuro. Por otra parte, su presencia física a solo unos pasos de los espectadores, convierte a estos más en interlocutores que en testigos del debate. Y, en fin, las ideas llegan nítidas, como es propio del lenguaje teatral, que, en aras de la eficacia, prefiere la austeridad verbal al exceso de los adornos literarios.

Para analizar el estado de la cuestión en España, se han reunido en este volumen una serie de ensayos que analizan la aportación de un grupo de dramaturgos actuales al tema que nos ocupa y cuya mirada abarca un periodo que incluye buena parte del pasado siglo y las dos décadas que llevamos

transitadas del actual. No son, claro está, los primeros que abordan esa tarea. Otros les precedimos. Las editoras han querido encomendar este prólogo a uno de ellos que está a punto de cumplir los ochenta años de edad y bastante más de medio siglo dedicado al teatro. El hecho de que siga en activo y de que la cuestión identitaria esté muy presente en mi obra, me da pie para hacer algunas consideraciones en torno a los asuntos tratados y a las muy distintas circunstancias en que unos y otros afrontamos nuestros trabajos.

Para los dramaturgos que iniciamos nuestra actividad tras la Guerra Civil, la mayor dificultad no estuvo tanto en la investigación necesaria para escribir nuestras obras como en la dificultad para darlas a conocer. Siendo el asunto que más nos ocupaba y preocupaba el de la situación del país, sometido a una férrea dictadura tras un sangriento golpe de estado contra el gobierno republicano, la censura era, en primera instancia, un freno para una actividad creativa libre de miedos y reservas mentales, y, en segunda, una barrera administrativa infranqueable. Desaparecido ese obstáculo, los nuevos dramaturgos —y quienes, de los veteranos, seguimos en activo— gozan de una absoluta libertad de expresión. Cosa bien distinta es el acceso a las fuentes. Las de los que al estallar la Guerra Civil ya eran adultos fueron sus propias vivencias y las informaciones obtenidas de primera mano. Para los nacidos tras la contienda, como es mi caso, sufrimos en carne propia sus consecuencias y conocimos los hechos que las provocaron por el relato de nuestros familiares y amigos. Más difícil fue acceder a documentos fiables, pues solo disponíamos de los facilitados por la propaganda franquista, poco veraces por tendenciosos y, con frecuencia, manipulados. Estando prohibida la publicación y difusión de literatura sobre la materia, solo disponíamos de la que, editada en el extranjero, llegaba de forma clandestina a determinadas librerías españolas.

Es cierto que las cosas cambiaron tras el fin de la dictadura, pero la larga y todavía no concluida transición política no está siendo el camino de rosas soñado. Las peculiaridades de un cambio de régimen sin ruptura en el que el titular de la corona española lo era a propuesta del dictador, aunque su nombramiento fuera ratificado por el nuevo parlamento, tuvo un precio que impedía el rendimiento de cuentas de los responsables de una guerra civil y de la consiguiente dictadura. Siendo la española una democracia formal, quedan, sin embargo, muchas cosas por saber. Los esfuerzos por conocer la verdad de lo sucedido, por reparar los daños causados, por recuperar de las cunetas de nuestras carreteras y de decenas de fosas comunes los restos de miles de republicanos fusilados siguen chocando, a pesar de la existencia de leyes de Memoria Histórica, con la resistencia de los herederos del franquismo cuyo discurso sigue proclamando que la causa de la guerra fue la deriva comunista del gobierno de la República. Los hay que no llegan tan lejos e intentan establecer cierta equidistancia entre las razones de los contendientes. En

consonancia con ello, un dirigente de la derecha ha llegado a decir que aquel enfrentamiento se produjo entre los defensores de una democracia sin ley y los de una ley sin democracia. Es alentador que, a pesar de tantas trabas —o quizás estimuladas por su existencia—, las nuevas generaciones continúen trabajando en el rescate de nuestro pasado reciente venciendo los obstáculos de la desinformación y la manipulación y haciendo caso omiso al consejo de que el olvido es mejor que la memoria. Sus herramientas son la información, cada vez más abundante, que va saliendo a la luz, pero sobre todo la que todavía alcanzan a escuchar de viva voz de sus mayores, las generaciones a las que pertenecen sus padres y abuelos, y, cuando eso ya no es posible, la contenida en esos diarios, cartas y fotos guardados en cajones y armarios o vendidos en almoneda a librerías de viejo.

El mapa de temas que están forjando la identidad de la actual sociedad española ofrece un abanico muy amplio que incluye, de una parte, asuntos de índole política y, de otra, los derivados de los cambios sociales y culturales que afectan a la vida cotidiana, no solo en España, sino también en buena parte del mundo occidental. Entre aquellos, unos son heredados del pasado, como el terrorismo etarra, en vías de extinción, pero con muchas heridas sin cicatrizar; otros han surgido en los últimos años, entre ellos el terrorismo islamista, una amenaza permanente; el de la crisis financiera de alcance mundial de 2008, que, para los españoles supuso el hundimiento de numerosas empresas, la pérdida de miles de puestos de trabajo y el deterioro de la sanidad y la educación públicas; la corrupción económica que afecta a la clase política y a la más alta institución del Estado, que ha indignado a una ciudadanía ya muy castigada, cansada y al borde de la resignación; el de la inmigración ilegal, que divide a la sociedad española y aviva los sentimientos racistas de una parte nada desdeñable de ella; los intentos independentistas en Cataluña, una de cuyas consecuencias ha sido la ruptura de la convivencia, incluso en el ámbito familiar; y, en fin, una pandemia que ha causado miles de muertes, que nos ha impuesto confinamientos y aislamiento social y que ha puesto sobre el tapete con toda crudeza qué es más importante, si la salud o la economía. Todos estos asuntos han merecido la atención de nuestros dramaturgos, aunque justo es decir que en muy distinta medida. Reflexionar sobre hechos muy recientes no es fácil debido a la falta de perspectiva. Por eso, ese interés se ha expresado fundamentalmente a través del teatro documento y testimonial, en los que prima el compromiso y la información casi periodística sobre el análisis profundo y reposado.

Cosa muy distinta sucede con aquellos asuntos que, aun teniendo derivadas políticas, afectan de forma muy directa a la vida de las personas y forman parte de su intimidad. En paralelo con el auge de movimientos que reivindican cambios en materia de derechos humanos, la aparición de textos dramáticos

sobre la materia es notable. Me refiero a cuestiones como la violencia de género, la identidad sexual, los derechos de la mujer, la alteración en las relaciones humanas que ha supuesto el desarrollo de las redes sociales o, en otra vertiente, las dificultades de los jóvenes para construirse un futuro seguro y satisfactorio o la legalización de la eutanasia. No parece que, en estos casos, la falta de perspectiva sea un freno. A riesgo de equivocarme, pienso que se debe a que, en buena medida, las fuentes son autobiográficas o a que, en su defecto, los autores beben en experiencias que se dan en su entorno.

No quiero pasar por alto algo que, al margen de las motivaciones que justifican la publicación de este conjunto de ensayos, merece ser destacado. Me refiero al elevado número de autoras cuyas obras son analizadas. El hecho no me parece casual ni que obedezca al deseo de establecer una determinada proporcionalidad entre hombres y mujeres. Por el contrario, diría que es el reflejo de una realidad que empezó a materializarse en el último tercio del pasado siglo y que hoy podemos considerar plenamente consolidada. En los años setenta, el número de dramaturgas podía ser contado con los dedos de una mano y hoy faltan manos para hacerlo.

Una última cuestión. En este tipo de propuestas cuya finalidad es ofrecer una visión amplia y abierta del tema objeto de estudio, en el caso que nos ocupa cómo afronta el teatro español actual las crisis identitarias que ocupan a los miembros de una sociedad que navega enfrentada y sin rumbo, afrontando el futuro con más incertidumbres que certezas, importa tanto la buena elección de los dramaturgos como la de quienes han de analizar sus obras. Respecto a los primeros, no caben objeciones. Todos, sin excepción, reúnen méritos para figurar en estas páginas. De los autores de los ensayos he de decir que los conozco a todos y puedo afirmar que son voces autorizadas en la materia. Me parece un acierto de Helen Freear-Papio y Candyce Crew Leonard, editoras del libro, que no se hayan limitado a solicitar esa mirada crítica a ensayistas españoles y estadounidenses, sino que la hayan extendido a colegas alemanes e italianos, lo cual da una dimensión más universal a su contenido y certifica el interés que el estudio del teatro español despierta fuera de sus fronteras, un fenómeno que se inició en los años sesenta del pasado siglo y se ha ido consolidando con el paso de los años.

# Introduction: Identity and the Human Condition

Helen Freear-Papio

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## I. Identity as human essence

That the awareness of identity dates from the earliest cave and rock art,<sup>1</sup> then passes into literature and theatre from Homer and Aeschylus to the present day, certifies its magnitude and the afflictions and sensibilities of 'being' in human history.<sup>2</sup> Identifying, naming, and belonging lend a sense of rational order, a feeling of rootedness within specific societies and eras. That sense of rootedness, however, may devolve into a turbulence that threatens the way individuals understand themselves and their surroundings, thereby robbing them of the predictability that ensures stability. The subject of identity remains a perpetual concern in one way or another and, unhappily, no definition is permanently anchored. Instead, perceptions change, and then they change again. The premise of the sometimes contentious, desperate, or futile search for the various manifestations and/or ontologies of identity is central to the purpose of this book.

Zygmunt Bauman's unique imagery addresses the inability to enjoy or live a fixed identity:

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<sup>1</sup> Ample records of the destruction of cave and rock art serve as sad evidence of the general indifference to history, identity, and culture in their earliest forms. These early records of the human consciousness of existence and the destruction of this documentation in the present day points to a rupture in the history, identity, and the fluid continuum of our life on this planet. See Mónica Arrizabalaga's report on an incident of vandalism of a four-thousand-year-old cave painting in Jaén, Spain in December of 2021.

<sup>2</sup> Anything approaching a comprehensive discussion of identity is beyond our intention here. Research in the fields of psychology, sociology, psychiatry, anthropology, gender studies, and multiple other disciplines is extensive and well beyond the scope of this book. We confine our study to the distinctiveness of Spain in the twenty-first century.

That work of art which we want to mould out of the friable stuff of life is called 'identity.' Whenever we speak of identity, there is at the back of our minds a faint image of harmony, logic, consistency: all those things which the flow of our experience seems—to our perpetual despair—so grossly and abominably to lack. The search for identity is the ongoing struggle to arrest or slow down the flow, to solidify the fluid, to give form to the formless. We struggle to deny or at least to cover up the awesome fluidity just below the thin wrapping of the form; we try to avert our eyes from sights which they cannot pierce or take in. Yet far from slowing the flow, let alone stopping it, identities are more like the spots of crust hardening time and again on the top of volcanic lava which melt and dissolve again before they have time to cool and set. (*Liquid Modernity* 82-83)

Throughout modern history, identity alters with ease, as if it were no more than that particle of lava which, only slightly cooled, reconfigures itself. Perhaps the reasons that identity is perpetually emergent are more readily detected or classified in the highly mobile and analytically prone world of the twenty-first century, yet the much coveted sense of stability remains 'fluid.'

In fact, the twenty-first century pulsates with transitions and stubbornly resists an immutable taxonomy. While author Pankaj Mishra believes that people suffer from "the fact that the old truths of the world, including their sense of 'I' and their self-esteem, have been lost along with their ties to traditional communities" (13), Bauman explains that he is

increasingly inclined to surmise that we presently find ourselves in a time of 'interregnum'—when the old ways of doing things no longer work, the old learned or inherited modes of life are no longer suitable for the current *conditio humana*, but when the new ways of tackling the challenges and new modes of life better suited to the new conditions have not as yet been invented, put in place and set in operation. ("Foreword" vii)

It is this dreadful, lengthy constant state of evolution between a seemingly steadfast past and what has yet, optimistically speaking, to be our future that produces the unrest both in individuals and societies at large.

Due to the relentless wait for a future that may promise constancy, and in the midst of multiple destructive events in Western Europe—more categorically for the purposes of this book, in Spain during the first two decades of the twenty-first century—it is irrefutable that identity is complex and inconstant. It is, in fact, "a subject that is by its very nature elusive and ambivalent" (Vecchi 2). We



persist, however, in trying to make sense of what is mercurial but at the same time recognizable and familiar. It is a work in progress with multiple concepts regarding what identity can include: multiracial (Brunsma), Narotzky;<sup>3</sup> global (Preobrazhenskaya); transnational: “[t]he assumption that people will live their lives in one place, according to one set of national and cultural norms, in countries with impermeable national borders, no longer holds” (Levitt), (Belford and Lahiri-Roy);<sup>4</sup> populist (Blühdorn and Butzlaff);<sup>5</sup> political: “interwoven with dissent,” (Hunter 1); fluid (Bauman, *Liquid Modernity* 82); gender (Jenkins); and nostalgia: “a longing for continuity in a fragmented world” (Boym xiv).<sup>6</sup> These are but a few within an increasingly broad range of ever-unfolding possibilities, some yet to be named.

On a national level in Spain, conflicting political identities are cause for concern. When the current president of Spain, Pedro Sánchez of the Partido Socialista Obrero Española (PSOE), did not secure an investiture vote in July of

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<sup>3</sup> Susana Narotzky focuses specifically on Andalusian identity.

<sup>4</sup> Nish Belford and Reshmi Lahiri-Roy articulate the realities of living long distances from their respective nuclear families: “For instance, I (Nish) feel that my connections with a place called ‘home’ will be ongoing while my mother exists as a ‘bridge’ connecting her children across distances. However, for me, home is not just ‘there,’ but being remade from my symbolic contribution as a woman to reproduce and make sense of ‘home’ in my transnational space. This experience is fuelled by nostalgia, memories, socio-cultural encrustations, a bridging of emotional transnational ties, belonging and communion with families left behind and far away” (68). While there is a sense of nostalgia, there is also a sense of reality in how these two authors live after having migrated from their native lands.

<sup>5</sup> In their political analysis of identity in its populist form, Blühdorn and Butzlaff note that “the transformation of prevalent notions of subjectivity and identity plunges democracy, as traditionally understood, into a profound legitimation crisis.... Egalitarian and redistributive forms of politics (and notions of democracy) are therefore, unsurprisingly, turning into a serious problem—not just for some social groups, but for anybody concerned about the defence of their emancipatory achievements and the further realization of their aspirations” (201).

<sup>6</sup> For Boym, nostalgia is “a sentiment of loss and displacement” (xiii), and on a global level, “in counterpoint to our fascination with cyberspace and the virtual global village, there is a no less global epidemic of nostalgia, an affective yearning for a community with a collective memory....” (xiv). At such times, then, nostalgia becomes a “defense mechanism” during “accelerated rhythms of life and historical upheavals” (xiv). The danger lies in what Boym calls “restorative” nostalgia that gives rise to “national and nationalist revivals all over the world” hence a type of national identity that perpetuates “antimodern mythmaking of history by means of a return to national symbols and myths and, occasionally, through swapping conspiracy theories” (41). This is a very brief rendering of Boym’s intriguing analysis of nostalgia and how it can negatively shape human behavior and political identity.

2019,<sup>7</sup> months passed without any resolution. After intervention by King Felipe VI as well as another election in November of 2019, still no majority prevailed; meanwhile, political loyalties and options shifted. By January of 2020, Sánchez of the PSOE and Pablo Iglesias of the left-of-center Unidas Podemos formed a coalition government with Sánchez as Prime Minister and Iglesias in a leading role.<sup>8</sup> Both Parties, however, had suffered a loss of voters, and this lack of traditional party loyalty had a significant impact on the Spanish political system as it created opportunities for other parties to gain traction. Victoria Rodríguez-Blanco<sup>9</sup> analyzed the November 10, 2019 elections which served as yet another attempt for securing a majority vote. Rather than obtain a majority, however, the elections resulted in a loss of 700,000 votes for the PSOE while the conservative Partido Popular recovered twenty-two seats. The liberal party Ciudadanos (founded in Catalonia in 2006) also suffered a considerable loss, but the ultra-right party, Vox (founded in 2014), enjoyed a comfortable increase in votes.<sup>10</sup> Justo Martín wrote in 2018 that Santiago Abascal, the leader of Vox, had adopted the slogan “hacer España grande otra vez” (Make Spain Great Again) and released a video around election time in 2016 with additional nationalist slogans such as “Si amas a tu patria como amas a tus padres” which demonstrates Vox’s rise in power and its political leanings.<sup>11</sup> After healthy results at the polls in February of 2022, Abascal demanded that Vox share leadership in the Government of Castilla and León (McCurty). The difficulties surrounding the 2019 elections demonstrate not only a shift in party affiliations, but also a dramatic transition in Spanish politics on the cusp of the COVID pandemic.

Concurrent with the increased visibility and following of the ultra-right Vox Party is the Falange Española, the political party formed by the Francoist regime.<sup>12</sup> Neofascism, under the name of the Falange, is active in the twenty-

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<sup>7</sup> This major development made news throughout Western Europe, at the very least. A few among many newspaper articles about the stalled elections are by: Cortizo, Rodríguez-Blanco, and Barandela and J. Álvarez.

<sup>8</sup> The coalition ended in Feb. 2021 after almost fifteen months of conflict between the two parties. See Junquera for her overview of the tension during the coalition government.

<sup>9</sup> Rodríguez-Blanco is a Professor of Political Science at the University of Miguel Hernández.

<sup>10</sup> Sam Jones also reports on the change in party loyalties: See “Spanish Election.”

<sup>11</sup> For discussion of the intensity of the conflict see Jones, “Spain Likely to Return,” and Díez, et al.

<sup>12</sup> The full name of the party founded in 1934 and dissolved in 1937 was The Falange Española Tradicionalista y de las Juntas de Ofensiva Nacional-Sindicalista. See Ellwood for her research on the topic that she began on site in Spain while writing her doctoral dissertation in 1975.

first century. Rocamora Pérez and Espinar Ruiz propose reasons why people identify with the Falange:

En un contexto marcado por la crisis económica y el sentimiento general de desafección hacia las democracias liberales, las formaciones de extrema derecha europeas están en auge. (1)

Whether the ultra-right and neo fascists bond out of common ideology, a sense of disillusionment or nostalgia,<sup>13</sup> the Falange gathered in Valladolid at the Hotel Felipe IV in 2017. This is how their own newsletter described their celebration:

Durante tres intensos días se han celebrado en Valladolid los actos por el 80 Aniversario del “4 de marzo”, por ser éste el día en que, en 1934, se fusionaron las JONS y FE, naciendo la actual Falange Española de las JONS. (Falange “Crónica”).

Regardless of the crowd size during those three days, the neo-fascist party gathered in a public place, advertised the event, and photographed the celebration. In March of 2022, again in Valladolid, the Falange reunited to commemorate the March 4 anniversary and produced a video titled “Falange: Unificación 4 de marzo, Valladolid 06-03-2022.”

The current political situation in Spain, including the Vox Party and the Falange political organization delivers a striking contrast to Don Quijote's *la mancha*, Antoni Gaudí's modernist architecture, and Spain's long and distinguished tradition of theatre. The fact is that neofascism is also a part of twenty-first century Spain's transitory identity.

## II. Theatre and Identity

The impulse to exhibit identity is evident in sacred rituals, playacting as children, or informal reenactments for our friends of unusual or funny experiences, all of which are theatrical behaviors that constitute a part of even the most ancient of cultures.<sup>14</sup> As a genre, theatre is distinguished for the immediate and intimate contact that it creates between the characters and the audience. In a shared physical space, spectators are either drawn to or repulsed by the characters who embody multiple identities—some vile, some kind, some

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<sup>13</sup> See Note 6.

<sup>14</sup> As Oliver Dietrich, et al. explain, masks have been a part of rituals since Neolithic times: “[d]uring the early Neolithic in the Near East, masks and masking played a significant role in rituals re-enacting mythological narratives closely related to death, taking place at sites with special purpose buildings and rich iconography.”

suffering, or some like an ethereal spectre—via metaphorical or physical masks. Whether audience members believe these characters are ‘real’ or if they recognize that the masking functions at a figurative level, live performances cause spectators to view the crises on stage as possibly resembling their own. By physically illustrating life’s dramas, theatre allows spectators to see problems through a different lens that may enlighten and, possibly, help resolve social and personal dilemmas. At the same time, theatre challenges basic assumptions about conformity vs. diversity, the absolute vs. the conditional, the material vs. the spiritual, the past vs. the present, and the immediate present vs. the inevitable future. Whether to entertain, to reinforce cultural beliefs, or to teach a greater truth about oneself, theatre evokes a sense of the multiple identities, choices, and roles native to the human experience.

Theatre as a public art form has long been a formidable tool of social change. As Ilaria Verde recognizes in her comment to the newsletter *La Nueva España*, when art is used in this way

[e]l objetivo es el de que se interpreten las obras para reflexionar sobre determinados acontecimientos, comprometerse con los problemas sociales, despertar las emociones más profundas y apelar a estas para sensibilizar sobre temáticas delicadas.

Verde’s evaluation is readily applied to a style of theatre, *teatro comprometido*<sup>15</sup> that challenges the status quo. This type of theatre seeks not merely to entertain, but also to provoke and engage its receptor—whether spectator or reader—by raising awareness about pressing social, political, and existential issues. *Teatro comprometido*, then, is an ideal tool to expose and criticize problematic events in the present. Spanish dramatist Gracia Morales (Motril 1973- ) contemplates the goals and end results of her theatre:

Creo que el teatro nos ayuda a ser más lúcidos.... Nos acerca a trozos de vida de otros, pero que nos interpelan, que nos permiten ver con una cierta perspectiva crítica nuestra propia realidad. Hay mucho por mejorar en estas democracias nuestras, porque siguen latentes opresiones de mucho tipo: la violencia machista, la desigualdad social, la situación dramática de los migrantes económicos y los refugiados, los propios miedos, la paranoia y la ceguera de nuestra ‘sociedad del bienestar’.... El teatro que escribo intenta proponer estos temas, no para dar soluciones cerradas, sino para mostrar la urgencia de ese lado

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<sup>15</sup> *Teatro comprometido* is a theatre dedicated to human rights and social and political activism.

incómodo de nuestra realidad, ese lado que otros medios intentan invisibilizar o convertir en puro dato estadístico, sin ahondar en su complejidad y en nuestra responsabilidad colectiva.

In her plays, Morales puts the spotlight on issues of oppression present in everyday life. This type of social activism is manifest not only in the theatre of Morales but also in that of her peers.

History has shown us that truly great theatre transcends temporal and perhaps geographical boundaries by laying bare universal truths about the human condition. Theatre has been performing these important social and political responsibilities since Antiquity as most ancient Greek plays presented universally-relevant themes—including the horrors of war, love, fate, heroism, pride, the abuse of power and the confrontations between man and the gods—that were all firmly rooted in the realities of their lived identities. The fact that ancient Greek masterpieces are still routinely adapted and staged underscores the universality of these themes and the power of theatre to communicate them. Indeed, in May of 2022, the United Nations hosted the Emergency World Voices Congress of Writers where Salman Rushdie spoke<sup>16</sup> regarding the multiple contemporary crises that occasioned the conference: “We are engaged in a global battle of narratives—of incompatible versions of reality—and we need to learn how to fight it.” He continued by placing authors at the center of responsibility and opportunity:

A novel cannot defuse a bomb.... But we are not helpless.... We can sing the truth and name the liars, we can join in solidarity with our fellows on the front lines and magnify their voices by adding our own to them.

Theatre's legitimacy has been to “sing the truth and name the liars,” whether in ancient or contemporary times, from Aeschylus to William Shakespeare to Pedro Calderón de la Barca to each playwright included in this volume. Theatre has long occupied the front lines of social, political and identity change, and continues to do so.

### **III. Identity Crises, Anxieties, and the Social Immediatecies of Twenty-First Century Theatre of Spain**

There has been no shortage of vital subject matter for playwrights during the first two decades of twenty-first century Spain. The lingering angst and unanswered grievances remain exacerbated to the level that even the 2007

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<sup>16</sup> Rushdie published a brief essay online related to his speech at the Congress.

release of a video game "that allowed players to refight the Spanish Civil War" ignited "an unusual amount of controversy" (Cohen), a reminder that the unresolved past is ever present. At the same time, nevertheless, other critical issues that presently challenge both the individual and society at large undermine constructive resolutions. The plays studied in this volume highlight some of the contemporaneous obstacles relative to a robust or even stable future. These themes include nonbinary gender identity, 'fake news' as 'facts' interpreted, withheld, or distorted, female self-agency and authorship, continued violence against women, and the crushing effects of a history of unbridled masculine arrogance and neoliberal capitalism on young, cosmopolitan Spanish women.

All articles in this book, some written in English and others in Spanish, are authored by Spanish theatre specialists from the United States, Spain, Italy, and Germany. This broad geographic scope is evidence not only that the appeal of Iberian theatre extends well beyond its borders, but also that it is an object of scholarly research at the international level. The anxieties of identity expressed in these plays are universal to the human experience yet also form a portrait of twenty-first century Spanish society. The plays analyzed in *The Theatre of Twenty-First Century Spain. Identities, Anxieties, and Social Immediacies* provide a multidimensional view of how Spain is dealing with conflicts of identity as represented in its theatre. The multiple clashes reflect attitudes in present-day Spain, and these divisive social issues disrupt progress both in the present and the immediate future.

To open the volume, Eduardo Pérez-Rasilla's study entitled "La resistencia como identidad en los personajes femeninos de Lucía Carballal" foregrounds the extent to which multiple manifestations of female identity permeate the plays by this prolific young dramatist. Carballal situates her works—the majority of which were written in the second decade of the twenty-first century—in an apparently modern and cosmopolitan world, but one that restricts female advancement. Her characters first appear to enjoy strong, secure identities as they resist dominant narratives but, ultimately, they feel uncertain, confused, as if in a fog, or displaced. Even so, it is their resistance that unites them. As Pérez-Rasilla notes in his conclusion: they are victims of a dominating patriarchal structure, a superficial modernization that restricts their personal and professional advancement, and a devastating neoliberal capitalist system that influences their private and public conduct. Throughout his analysis, Pérez-Rasilla includes theoretical concepts from writers such as Richard Sennet, José Luis Pardo, and Jean Baudrillard to demonstrate how Carballal's characters rise in the face of adversaries to maintain resistance.

Barbara Foley Buedel's paper, "Classical Roots of Comedy and Contemporary Variations of Identity in Teresa Calo's *Entre líneas* (2002) and *Mentiras* (2002),"

also focuses on female identity. What makes this essay unique to the volume is Buedel's study of how Teresa Calo artfully leverages many of the classic constructs of New Comedy, including masked identities and the use of deception and misunderstandings in her plays. *Entre líneas*, for example, is a modern love story that uncovers—through a series of farcical conversations, often via phone calls or online chats where identities are hidden—how miscommunication within a relationship is only exacerbated by the frenetic nature of modern-day life. *Mentiras*, on the other hand, puts its two female protagonists in direct conflict as rivals for the same man. The two characters, wife and mistress, however, defy traditional gender norms that assume women to be compliant and passive: they scheme, role-play, and improvise to undermine the patriarchal authority that placed them in that rivalry. Although comedy is a refreshing antidote to the anxieties of contemporary life, it can also be an effective agent of social change. Buedel's study shows how Calo's plays reject casting women as subordinate partners.

Cerstin Bauer-Funke grounds her paper, “La crisis de identidad femenina en el teatro de Juana Escabias,” in an analytical overview of Escabias's female characters, noting that their identities are often fleeting, unattainable, and/or vague and less than fully developed. The focus of her study is Beti, the fifteen-year-old protagonist of *WhatsApp* (2016), who, in her search for a meaningful romantic relationship, has fallen victim to twenty-six-year-old Rubén. As the play's title indicates, the messaging app *WhatsApp* is markedly central to the plot and projections of Beti's text-message conversations with others are replicated on stage via a large screen. As Bauer-Funke notes, the indistinctness of her identity and the flatness of her character aside, Beti takes on an important universal role as a representative of abused women everywhere: pointing out that Escabias uses Beti's story to expose the subversive nature of the relationship between gender violence and the identity crises suffered by battered women, as she condemns the cultural and social structures in any patriarchal society that fail to denounce and adjudicate this type of violence.

In her article titled “Intertextual Artifice, Female Agency, and Authorship in Irene Mazariegos Vela's *La hija del cuáquero y el bosque*,” Helen Freear-Papio shows how Mazariegos Vela borrows, adapts, consumes, remixes, and rebuilds works of literature by the Brothers Grimm, Federico García Lorca, and William Shakespeare, among others, to produce a new, disconcerting version of *Little Red Riding Hood*. Freear-Papio probes into how Mazariegos Vela not only rejects the traditionally confining narrative of the fairy tale as a story designed to indoctrinate little girls according to patriarchal norms, but how she uses its framework to highlight the anxiety of female authorship. The young protagonist of *La hija del cuáquero y el bosque* strides confidently into the wood, looking for the wolf. Her foray into the dangerous forest creates a new

type of cautionary tale, one that exposes how destabilizing and threatening any deviation from conventional cultural norms can be for the patriarchy when the fairer sex fully actualizes their power as women and their prowess as writers.

Candyce Crew Leonard explores the continued challenges for the non-heteronormative population in Spain in her study titled “Nonbinary Gender Identity, Democracy, and Protest in *La sala de Hermafrodita* (2013) by César López Llera.” The importance of the inclusion of a paper on this topic cannot be overstated. Leonard begins her essay with a selected review of current gender theory, including concepts by theorists Judith Butler, Sheri Thurer and Eve Kosolov Sedgwick. Further, she establishes how López Llera’s innovative use of language, art, and comedy serve as tools for protesting the social dynamics of inequality. The play is fundamentally a love story between Prado Museum employees Diego, a gay man in his forties and Andrea, a transwoman in her sixties. A protest by museum workers against layoffs and wage cuts that takes place off stage complements the protest against gender conformity that Diego and Andrea live onstage. Ultimately, *La sala de Hermafrodita* is a call to activism, and the lives of the characters are the message.

In his study, “All the News that’s Fit to Stunt: Hermeneutics and Epistemology in Virginia Campón Pérez’s *La habitación* (2015),” Albert David Hitchcock shows how Campón Pérez draws from Plato’s classical allegory of the cave and Pedro Calderón de la Barca’s Golden Age masterpiece, *La vida es sueño*, to create her disturbing play about the philosophical issues of developing personal and societal identities in isolation. Thirty-year-old Segismundo has been locked away by his own father for two decades; all he knows about the outside world is through the newspapers that his father surreptitiously brings to him at night along with food and water. The father’s ill-advised decision to abruptly introduce his son to the outside world creates the conflict at the heart of this drama and precipitates Segismundo’s shocking act of vengeance. Hitchcock explores the serious questions raised about how humans interpret phenomena and possess knowledge—what is ‘fake news’ versus what is factual—and to exercise free will when isolated from life experience, and how to gain self-awareness within this semi-fictional, quasi-reality.

Alison Guzmán’s “La fábula política, la posmemoria y la autoficción teatral en *La armonía del silencio* (2016) de Lola Blasco,” focuses on what Guzmán describes as the ambiguous pact between truth and fiction: the lingering effects of the trauma of the Spanish Civil War and their impact on present-day Spain. She works with sources such as Clara Valverde Gefaell, Lorraine Ryan, and Marianne Hirsch to analyze how traumatic events of parents and grandparents filter into the lives of future generations through what Hirsch calls ‘postmemory.’ Blasco mixes the reality of her own search for her grandmother’s piano from ‘memories’ of her grandmother and great grandfather playing



music at the cinema in the 1930s, perhaps a postmemory of her own. As Guzmán explains, the use of autofiction casts Blasco as a character in her play and, as a result, she can highlight the tensions between autobiography and fiction, past and present, politics and private life. The author reconfigures her own identity as she pieces together the horrors of the past as a means of reconciliation in the present.

In “Deciphering Memory through Private and Public Identities in Alfredo Sanzol’s *En la luna* (2012),” Simon Breden also scrutinizes the tense dialogue between personal memories and public history. In this play composed of fifteen vignettes, Sanzol juxtaposes the ramifications of important national events that occurred during his own lifetime—the death of Francisco Franco in 1975, Tejero’s failed coup d’état in 1981, and the GAL’s ‘dirty war’ against ETA<sup>17</sup> in the 1980s. Sanzol interlaces these events with autofictional elements drawn from his own life and memory. Breden’s study underscores the importance of historical memory within families, and, as Breden explains, Sanzol chooses to present the stories from the viewpoint of children and families rather than focusing on the historical events themselves. Thus, Sanzol places the emphasis on the intense human toll that Spain’s unresolved past continues to have on its unsettled present.

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<sup>17</sup> Ubasart-González notes that the *Euskadi Ta Askatasuna* (ETA) carried out its first act of terrorism in 1968 and continued its “armed insurgency” even after the ratification of the Spanish Constitution in 1978 (570). In his 1984 report for Spain’s daily newspaper, *El País*, Javier García notes the onset of the dirty war (*guerra sucia*), antiterrorism against ETA (‘Basque Homeland and Liberty’), as 1975 but it was not yet State sponsored, and Paddy Woodworth views 1975-1981 as the first “dirty war” (46). García cites *Golpe Mortal* (1984), published by *El País* in 1984, that “un grupo de especialistas de la policía” were responsible for the assassination of the Basque militant, Argala, in 1978, a killing with significant ramifications. Under the Partido Socialista Obrero Español (PSOE) government, counterterrorism increased and during the early 1980s, Ubasart-González highlights “that most antiterrorist measures were drawn up within the bounds of legality and constitutionality” (576). In his book-length study of the second dirty war, (1983-87) Woodworth suggests that the idea of a dirty war was initiated by Julián Sancristóbal, named to the post of Civil governor of the Basque province of Vizcaya in 1982 during the time Felipe González of the PSOE was Prime Minister. The dirty war would include “kidnapping, misuse of public funds, torture and murder” (7). Woodworth uses the word “conspiracy” to describe the antiterrorists groups called GAL (Grupos Antiterroristas de Liberación/the Anti-terrorist Liberation Groups) who killed twenty-seven people, nine of whom were unrelated to ETA (7). GAL’s activities made many of Spain’s population uncomfortable and, ultimately, GAL’s attempt to end ETA resulted in their own disgrace (161-69). Their final victim in July of 1987, a refugee and pacifist unrelated to ETA, effectively ended GAL’s operations (170, 194). See also Celaya 9-13 and “ETA Ten Years On.”

The volume closes with Manuela Fox's article, "Identidad nacional y metaliteratura en *La ciudad oscura* (2015) de Antonio Rojano." Fox's study demonstrates Rojano's play to be a carefully constructed meta-literary political thriller—indebted, in part, to the 2008 Director's Cut of the neo-noir film *Dark City*—that depicts how personal and national identities shift as Spain's unsettled past continues to reappear and reassert itself in the present, a present ostensibly built upon a constantly unreliable, and at times misleading and fluctuating, historical memory. Fox analyzes how Rojano's characters struggle to define themselves, confusing fiction and reality as they grapple with the unjustifiability denied resolution regarding Spain's Civil War and post-Civil War eras. As Fox makes clear, Rojano's text leaves many important questions for his audience to ponder: will the past be finally laid to rest? Can Spain recover and move towards a more united and inclusive future? Will neofascism have any measure of success in the present or near future?

The plays analyzed in *The Theatre of Twenty-First Century Spain. Identities, Anxieties, and Social Immediacies*, therefore, provide the reader with a multidimensional view of how Spain confronts the instabilities of identity via theatrical representations, instabilities that reflect Spain's identity, and the divisive social issues disrupting progress both in the present and the immediate future.

EDITORS' NOTE: Upon the death of Francisco Franco in 1975, leading political figures in Spain imposed the *Pacto del Olvido* (Agreement to Forget), an informal plan that everyone 'forget' not only the war crimes relating to the 1936-39 Spanish Civil War itself, but also the crimes against humanity following the war. Legally ratified within the *Ley de Amnistía* (Amnesty Law) that was enacted October 17, 1977 (<https://www.boe.es/buscar/act.php?id=BOE-A-1977-24937>), the *Pacto del Olvido* effectively quashed all adjudication or accountability for the brutalities that still haunt Spanish society. The *Pacto del Olvido* came to mean that even inquiring into the history of Spain between 1936-1975 was taboo, thus giving rise to the epithet *pacto de silencio* that underscores the censorship implicit in the law.

In the papers in this volume that focus on the Spanish Civil War and post-war periods, we have standardized the terms. In both Spanish and English papers, we capitalize *Pacto del Olvido* to indicate its legal status and use lower case for *pacto de silencio* as a term that denotes resistance to the law. In the English paper, the terms also appear in italics.

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