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To cite this article: Esther Fernández & David Rodríguez-Solás (2019) Marginalized practices in Spanish theater, part 2: Introduction, *Romance Quarterly*, 66:1, 1-3, DOI: [10.1080/08831157.2019.1565479](https://doi.org/10.1080/08831157.2019.1565479)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/08831157.2019.1565479>



Published online: 19 Mar 2019.



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Marginalized practices in Spanish theater, part 2: Introduction

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This issue is the second and final installment of “Marginality in Spanish Theater.” The four articles included in the final issue of the previous volume of *Romance Quarterly* (65.4, 2018) and the four articles making up this issue are dedicated to analyzing marginality as a complex framework with various manifestations in Spanish theater, while at the same time reflecting on the place of Spanish theater studies within North American academia. As stated in the introduction to the previous special issue, our work goes beyond the traditional division of the study of theater into historical periods to ask a new set of questions pertinent to theater criticism about circulation, production, adaptation, acting, audience, and censorship. Articles in the first part of these dual special issues explore negotiations of marginal subjectivities in the realms of gender, sexuality, race, and identity. In this second issue, 66.1, articles explore marginality as it functions both in the division of space and in subject positioning within social space.

Exclusion occurs in city and rural planning and in the crossover of imaginary or real boundaries. Antonio Guijarro-Donadiós starts by addressing the former through an exploration of the image of a courtly and cosmopolitan Madrid that enjoyed an intense cultural life, where a great deal of gold was spent on luxurious courtly festivals and where, at the same time, a marginal community of beggars, thieves, soldiers, gamblers, prostitutes, and black people lived and made a living, even by cooking cats to survive. Guijarro-Donadiós inquires into the representation of this underworld in seventeenth-century Spanish short theater as a space of conflict from which new ways of speaking, living, writing, and reinventing urban landscapes arose.

David Rodríguez-Solás proposes a reassessment of the limits of theater historiography, which is traditionally concerned with the preservation of plays as finished products, but also restrains its scope to professional theater in Madrid and Barcelona. His article studies one of the most representative plays of the *teatro independiente*, the alternative theater movement that altered performance practices in Spain in the 1970s: *Oratorio*, a play by Teatro Estudio Lebrijano. This work grew out of the actors’ performances over the course of three years before an audience of Andalusian land workers who inadvertently contributed to the development of the scenes with their spontaneous reactions. Both actors and audiences performed acts of resistance that responded to explicit references to the Spanish Civil War and the incorporation of flamenco singing reassessed as protest music. The third essay takes into consideration spatial and dramatic boundaries that create exclusion—but, ironically, end up becoming inclusive—within the performative event itself. Margot Versteeg inquires into the career of Consuelo Tamayo Hernández, “La Tortajada” (1867–1957), a diva skilled at self-fashioning. Whereas her presence on the Spanish stage was merely marginal, as a “Spanish dancer” she accomplished recognition in the

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music halls of Europe and the United States. Versteeg's article explores how La Tortajada achieved international fame and success because of her abilities to export a certain idea of Spanish "otherness" and "marginality" by staging a series of traditional movements and dances. It was by skillfully embodying a stereotypical construction of "Spanishness" and a certain type of femininity that the artist gained international celebrity.

This second issue ends with an article by Pilar Martínez-Quiroga on the contemporary Galician play *Voaxa e Carmín* (2016) by Esther F. Carrodeguas that reinterprets the local myth of "las dúas Mariás," the Fandiño sisters brought up in a family of anarchist leaders that remained in Santiago de Compostela and strived for their survival during Franco's dictatorship. Martínez-Quiroga not only brings to the center Galician theater, with its double condition of marginality, but also dignifies the journey into madness that these two sisters undertook to openly resist and challenge oppression in the streets of Santiago in the midst of dictatorship.

As we conclude the introduction to this second issue dedicated to theater, we want to take this opportunity to reflect on our position within the discipline and the role we believe we can play in the new directions taken by cultural studies. These four authors understand that theater is a cultural practice that transcends textual practice. In this regard, the essays in this issue of *Romance Quarterly* are not limited to the representation of certain examples that may be historically and culturally specific but are concerned with what these plays and performances produce in terms of our understanding of material culture, the circulation and recording of performing practices, or our reassessment of the past. The issues explored in these four articles resonate in the current debates of Spanish cultural studies, an approach that many of us use in our academic work. With this double issue and with future editorial endeavors we want to participate in those debates, but also aim at having our voices heard. Beside our editorial work we are aware that there is a need to maintain a presence in the main conferences in North America, and at the same time aspire to expand our connections globally. The Iberian Theater and Performance Network (ITPN) will celebrate its first conference overseas. In 2020 our next biennial conference will be held in London at the Institute for Modern Languages Research, University of London.¹ We seek to facilitate these debates in public forums, but they rely on the complicity of other colleagues, and we invite them to exercise an act of inclusiveness reaching out to theater scholars based in Spain and elsewhere, making us all part of the conversation.

If the humanities are set the tasks of making and connecting, as Rita Felski proposes ("Introduction" 223), theater studies is well poised as a discipline that enjoys the support of a community of readers and viewers. The possibilities that open up by including theater in our courses go beyond the analysis of texts or their staging. Students who are exposed to theater reflect on screen and stage adaptations, and how they serve as "incremental literature" (Sanders 12). They have to translate the cultural specificity, tone, style, and nuances of the plays and adapt them to their national performance culture whether they perform these texts or prepare a translation for our courses.

The present double issue is meant to demonstrate two points that are of great importance to us in the field of theater studies. In the first place, theater is a genre that overflows from the written text when read, studied, or taught. At the very least, it is time to accept this fact. In our opinion, doing justice to the dramatic genre implies taking into account the network of social, political, and cultural circumstances that shape the theatrical event as well the community that makes it possible, including the playwright, the director, the actors, and the audience. A specific text or performance is only a small part of a multi-phased art, in continuous development. Restricting a play to its dramatic script is impoverishing a whole genre in close dialogue with literature, the performing arts, sociology, politics, and cultural anthropology.

On the other hand, the mission of the articles featured in this double issue is to demonstrate the possibilities that open up when we study a topic such as marginality overcoming the historical constraints that continue to exist in disciplines like ours that are often concerned with the

preservation of the past. Admittedly, these articles are interested in what happened (the historical significance of their subject matter), but they also point to what might happen (the political implications of these practices). Had we limited the study of marginality to certain periods, it would have overshadowed the development of a topic that resurfaced in different moments in the Spanish theatrical tradition. The reader of this double issue will be able to identify the specificity of each article, and the efficacy of the dramatic and performative practices that are surveyed here.

Note

1. The Third Biennial Conference of the ITPN titled “Theatrical Processes” will be held at the IMLR, School of Advanced Studies of the University of London, on June 25–27, 2020. For more information, visit <http://itpn.mla.hcommons.org>.

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