

# Tracing a female history of the theatre in Spain: from *la nueva mujer moderna* to the Backlash and Beyond

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## Tracing a female history of the theatre in Spain: From *la nueva mujer moderna* to the backlash and beyond

### Introduction

The story of women playwrights and practitioners in Spain from the early twentieth century to today not only reflects the history of the stage, but also charts the social and political transformation of the country. Despite their absence from many anthologies and histories, it is evident that women have played a significant and innovative role in the theatre throughout this period and that our perspective on Spanish drama must be widened to include their multiple contributions.<sup>1</sup> I propose that we can trace continuities in female-authored drama throughout the century, from the works of early feminist writers, through the veiled or muted messages that emerged during the dictatorship and the testimonial works of exiled writers, to the experimental works of the transition and the social commentary of much contemporary drama. The influence of certain actress-managers and writer-directors over the course of the last century is also worthy of consideration as, together with the dramatists, they helped to shape not only a female tradition in the theatre, but Spanish theatre itself. This article offers a panoramic view of the role of women in the theatre over the last century. It establishes certain patterns in theatrical practice and thematic concerns, highlighting the reception of their plays and, in particular, their interactions with the state at the level of censorship and, more recently, their collaborative efforts to be recognised.

In recent years, academics including Alda Blanco, Julio E. Checa Puerta, Maria Delgado, Pilar Nieva de la Paz, Patricia W. O'Connor, María José Ragué-Arias, José Romera Castillo, Virtudes Serrano, María Francisca Vilches de Frutos, and Juan Antonio Hormigón have highlighted the importance, and begun the process, of recovering the work of female dramatists of the early and mid twentieth century.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Their absence is documented by Patricia W. O'Connor in several publications: 'Las dramaturgas españolas y la "otra censura"', in *Diálogos Hispánicos de Amsterdam*, 5: Censura y literaturas peninsulares (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1987), 99-117; 'La difícil dramaturgia femenina española', *Letras Femeninas*, 15:1/2 (1989), pp. 91-99. Online. [Accessed 11/04/2013]; and 'Women Playwrights in Contemporary Spain and the Male-Dominated Canon', *Signs*, 15:2 (1990), 376-90. See also José Luis García Barrientos, 'Dramatología del tiempo y dramaturgias femeninas (Diosdado, Ortiz, Pedrero, Reina, Resino)', in José Romera Castillo (ed.), *Dramaturgias femeninas en la segunda mitad del siglo XX: espacio y tiempo* (Madrid: Visor; UNED, 2005), pp. 43-66.

<sup>2</sup> Alda Blanco, 'María Martínez Sierra y la teorización del género', in *Mujer, literatura y esfera pública: España 1900-1940*, ed by Pilar Nieva de la Paz, Sarah Wright, Catherine Davies, Francisca

The retrieval of these works and their connection to later developments both in Spain and internationally are part of the ongoing revision of the history of the Spanish theatre. The AHRC-funded *Theatre Censorship in Spain* project has also revealed new information about the official reception of female-authored theatre.<sup>3</sup> Yet, as Juan Antonio Hormigón's three-volume history of female dramatists in Spain demonstrates, both by its lengthy listing of authors and by the often scant detail about their theatre, much work remains to be done. The focus on the damage done to a nascent women's literature by the civil war and dictatorship is only part of the story, since the minor or forgotten status of female dramatists has echoes in the cultural history of other nations. Perhaps we should not be too surprised by this status, as a focus on women's writing, and women's studies generally, only entered the international academic mainstream in the 1970s, with the publication of seminal works on feminist literature.<sup>4</sup> It is within this dual context of explorations of Spain's

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Vilches de Frutos (Philadelphia: Society of Spanish and Spanish-American Studies, 2008), pp. 47-59; Julio E. Checa Puerta, 'La mujer protagonista en los éxitos teatrales de los Martínez Sierra', in *Mujer, literatura y esfera pública*, pp.193-204; María Delgado, *Other Spanish Theatres. Erasure and Inscription on the twentieth-century Spanish Stage* (Manchester University Press, 2003); Delgado, 'The Actress and the Playwright: Historiographical Models of Collaboration', *Anales de la literatura española contemporánea*, 32:2 (2007), pp. 365-394. Online. [Accessed 11/04/2013]; Delgado and David T. Gies, *A History of Theatre in Spain* (Cambridge: CUP, 2012); Pilar Nieva de la Paz, 'Tradición y vanguardia en las autoras teatrales de preguerra: Pilar Millán Astray y Halma Angélico', in Dru Dougherty and María Francisca Vilches de Frutos (eds), *El teatro en España entre la tradición y la vanguardia: 1918-1939* (Madrid: CSIC; FFGL; Tabapress, 1992), pp. 429-438; 'Las autoras teatrales españolas frente al público y la crítica (1918-1936)', Proceedings of the Asociación Internacional de Hispanistas (AIH) XI (1992), pp.129-139, Centro Virtual Cervantes, [http://cvc.cervantes.es/literatura/aih/pdf/11/aih\\_11\\_2\\_016.pdf](http://cvc.cervantes.es/literatura/aih/pdf/11/aih_11_2_016.pdf); *Autoras dramáticas españolas entre 1918 y 1936 (Texto y Representación)* (Madrid: CSIC, 1993); 'La memoria del teatro en la narrativa de las escritoras españolas exiliadas', *Anales de la literatura española contemporánea*, 29:2 (2004), pp. 433-461, Online. [Accessed 11/04/2013]; 'Voz autobiográfica y esfera pública: el testimonio de las escritoras de la República', in *Mujer, literatura y esfera pública*, pp. 139-57; and, as editor, *Roles de género y cambio social en la literatura española del siglo XX* (Amsterdam; New York: Rodopi, 2009). Other key texts include: Patricia W. O'Connor, *Dramaturgas españolas de hoy. Una introducción* (Madrid: Fundamentos, 1988); María José Ragué-Arias, 'La mujer como autora teatral en el teatro español contemporáneo', *Estreno*, Cincinnati, XIX (1993), 1, pp. 13-16 and *El teatro de fin de milenio en España (de 1975 hasta hoy)* (Barcelona: Ariel, 1996); Virtudes Serrano, 'Hacia una dramaturgia femenina', *Anales de la literatura española contemporánea*, 19:3 (1994), pp. 343-364, Online. [Accessed 11/04/2013], and 'Dramaturgia femenina fin de siglo. Estado de la cuestión', *Arbor*, 669-700 (2004a), pp. 561-72; María Francisca Vilches de Frutos, 'Representaciones de género en el teatro español contemporáneo. La igualdad en la construcción del espacio cultural europeo', *Aleph*, 24 (2010), pp. 9-28 (p. 13), Online. [Accessed 11/04/2013]; Juan Antonio Hormigón (ed.), *Autoras en la historia del teatro español (1500-1994)*, 3 vols (Madrid: ADE, 1996-2000).

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.dur.ac.uk/mlac/tcs/>. This project was devised by Michael P. Thompson and Catherine O'Leary. The research assistant, Diego Santos Sánchez, gathered the censorship materials referred to in this article for the project, which was supported by the AHRC under Grant AH/E007686/1.

<sup>4</sup> Works such as Elaine Showalter's *A Literature of Their Own*, Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar's *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination*, and Ellen Moers's *Literary Women* were followed in the 1980s by Mary Eagleton's *Feminist Literary Theory: A Reader*, Toril Moi's *Sexual/Textual Politics* and Judith Butler's *Gender Trouble: Feminism*

cultural memory and women's history that national male-dominated canons can be questioned and the important historical roles played by women in the public sphere highlighted.

### **The nueva dramaturga moderna**

NATI.- ... mira, Guillermo, no nos metamos en romances. Tú y yo no podemos tener relaciones, porque el fin no puede ser más que uno, y antes de llegar a él quiero defenderme con todas mis fuerzas.

Pilar Millán Astray, *Los amores de la Nati*, 1931.

The gradual modernization of Spanish society from the early twentieth century brought an increasing number of women into the public sphere and questioned traditional ideas about their role within the home. Old certainties were challenged and the process of introducing radical social change was begun. Women's groups, some conservative and linked to church activity or social and charitable work, and others more radical and focused on the liberalization and feminization of Spanish society began to emerge. Cultural groups, such as the Lyceum Club Femenino, recognized the creativity of women and gave them a public space for their cultural gatherings not unlike the salons and *tertulias* where their male peers had traditionally gathered.<sup>5</sup>

In the early decades of the twentieth century, and in particular during the period of the Second Republic, female dramatists were an exception in the mainstream theatre.<sup>6</sup> Within the commercial theatre the portrayal of female characters

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*and the Subversion of Identity*. The 1980s was also the decade in which the work of French feminist critics entered the wider academic mainstream and the field of women's studies expanded further.

<sup>5</sup> See Rosa María Capel Martínez, 'La mujer en España. De la "Belle Epoque" a la Guerra Civil', in *El voto de las mujeres: 1877-1978*, ed. Rosa María Capel Martínez, Francisco Gutiérrez Contreras (Madrid: Fundación Pablo Iglesias; Complutense, 2003), 51-67 and Mercedes Gómez Blesa, *Modernas y vanguardistas. Mujer y democracia en la II República* (n.p.: Laberinto, 2009).

<sup>6</sup> There are two other groups of women that should be mentioned as important in this period, although restrictions of space prevent me from analyzing their work in any detail here. Alongside men such as Cipriano Rivas Cherif, Federico García Lorca and Ramón del Valle-Inclán, several women were also involved in avant-garde, often private, theatre groups in the 1920s and 1930s. The contribution of women such as Carmen Baroja, Isabel Oyarzábal, Magda Donato (Carmen Eva Nelken), Pura M. de Ucelay and Pilar de Valderrama is yet to be fully explored. See Nieva de la Paz, 'Las autoras teatrales'. María Delgado highlights the importance of three actress-impresarios, María Tubau (1854-1914), María Guerrero (1867-1928) and Rosario Pino (1871-1933), whose influence on the Spanish theatre, in their ability to shape the theatrical scene by promoting certain playwrights and works, is difficult to overstate. See 'The Actress and the Playwright', p. 373.

had moved with the times to some extent, although representations of what was referred to as the *nueva mujer moderna* on stage were usually less flattering than the traditional model woman, who was still portrayed as wife, mother and helpmate. As María del Pilar Oñate wrote in 1938:

En el teatro se exalta el ideal de la mujer hogareña, que aparece como algo amable y acogedor, en violento contraste con las que se dedican a actividades intelectuales, que suelen presentarse en la escena con los rasgos cómicos de la *literata* pedante y ridícula, digna sucesora de las *cultas* del teatro clásico.<sup>7</sup>

The works of many of the female dramatists who emerged at this time are not particularly feminist in their representation of women, a fact that should not surprise us. The feminist movement itself was at a nascent stage in Spain and, in addition, in order to access the world of the theatre, female dramatists often – consciously or unconsciously – adapted to the prevailing norms, which were largely male-focused, if not downright patriarchal. Most female playwrights, as Nieva de la Paz notes, focused on ‘la familia, el amor, el matrimonio y la maternidad, con sus respectivas derivaciones y variantes (celos, infidelidad, separación, esterilidad, adopción, etc.).’<sup>8</sup>

Nonetheless, we can distinguish a group of female dramatists whose writing reflected new social and political structures and emerging strands of feminism. John C. Wilcox identifies several interesting themes in the works of early twentieth-century female authors: the contrast of male degeneration with female vitality; the question of illegitimacy; the theme of adultery; and the portrait of liberated and politicized females.<sup>9</sup>

Some of the more politically engaged works were by women better known for other types of writing, in particular poetry and the novel, genres often perceived to be more feminine than the theatre. These were influential cultural figures who wrote of current social and political concerns from a female and sometimes feminist perspective. When they did write for the theatre, however, their work was rarely staged. Emilia Pardo Bazán (1851-1921) is one such author. A leading novelist,

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<sup>7</sup> Oñate, María del Pilar, *El feminismo en la literatura española* (Madrid: Espasa-Calpe, 1938), p. 230. For further information about the theatre of this period, see Dru Dougherty and Andrew A. Anderson, ‘Continuity and Innovation in Spanish Theatre, 1900-1936’, in *A History of Theatre in Spain*, ed by María M. Delgado and David T. Gies (Cambridge: CUP, 2012), pp. 282-309.

<sup>8</sup> See Nieva de la Paz, ‘Tradición y vanguardia’, p. 431 and Hormigón (ed.), *Autoras*, vols. II and III.

<sup>9</sup> Wilcox, ‘Women Playwrights in Early Twentieth-Century Spain (1898-1936): Gynocentric Perspectives on National Decline and Change’, *Anales de la literatura española contemporánea*, 30:1/2 (2005), 551-567 (p. 553). Online. [Accessed 11/04/2013].

essayist and critic, her drama remains little known. Wilcox suggests that her play, *Cuesta abajo* (1906), ‘focalizes Spain’s inner strength and potential for regeneration in its female characters’.<sup>10</sup> Concha Espina (1869-1955), another important novelist and poet who wrote for the theatre, authored four plays, only one of which, *El jayón* (1918), which was awarded the Premio Real Academia Española, was staged. Her other works, *La tiniebla encendida* (1940), *La otra* (1942) and *Moneda blanca* (1942) are, according to Lee Bretz, thematically and technically tame.<sup>11</sup> A poet and member of the Generation of 1927, Concha Méndez (1898-1986) was the author of several avant-garde and innovative dramatic works, only one of which (a piece for children, *El ángel cartero*, 1926) was staged, and even then only for a single night at the feminist Lyceum Club; *El personaje presentido* (1931), which features a dissatisfied female protagonist, was never premiered.<sup>12</sup> María Zambrano (1904-1991), another great intellectual of twentieth-century Spain, although one who was overlooked there for many years, is best known for her contribution to philosophy. Yet one of her great works is a play, *La tumba de Antígona* (1967), written from exile, which is a reworking of the Greek classic to reflect on Spain’s conflict and its legacy.<sup>13</sup>

More fully engaged in the world of the theatre were writers such as María Martínez Sierra (aka María de la O Lejárraga, 1874-1974) and Pilar Millán Astray (1879-1949). The former was involved in the feminist Lyceum Club of Madrid, was secretary of the *Alianza Internacional del Sufragio de la Mujer*, joined the PSOE in 1931 and was active in politics during the Second Republic.<sup>14</sup> She was also the author of many of the successful plays attributed to her husband, Gregorio Martínez Sierra.<sup>15</sup> According to Consuelo de la Gándara, her decision to use her husband’s name was

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid., p. 553.

<sup>11</sup> ‘The Theater of Emilia Pardo Bazán and Concha Espina’, *Estreno*, 10:2 (1984), 43-45 (p. 45).

<sup>12</sup> Nieva de la Paz, ‘Voz autobiográfica’, p.150.

<sup>13</sup> See Roberta Quance, ‘“La tumba de Antígona” de María Zambrano: política y misterio’, in *Escritoras y compromise: literature Española e hispanoamericana de los siglos XX y XXI*, coordinated by Angeles Encinar and Carmen Valcárcel Rivera, (Madrid: Visor, 2009), pp. 881-96.

<sup>14</sup> See Hormigón, *Autoras*, vol. II, p. 691. The Centre for the Study of Hispanic Exile at the University of Birmingham contains information about Martínez Sierra and several of her contemporaries. <http://www.hispanicexile.bham.ac.uk/people/121>

<sup>15</sup> She revealed this in her memoirs, *Gregorio y yo: Medio siglo de colaboración* (Mexico: Biografías Ganesa, 1953), published while in exile. A collection of her plays, under her own name, was published in 1960: *Fiesta en el Olimpo y otras diversiones menos olímpicas* (Buenos Aires: Aguilar, 1960).

due to the negative reception of work under her own name.<sup>16</sup> Indeed, the fact that the work written by her under his name was critically acclaimed seems to support the notion that there was indeed a prejudice against women writers. These plays have female protagonists and, as Checa Puerta notes, ‘es un teatro de tesis’, with themes that included ‘la construcción de una futura sociedad basada en la igualdad entre hombres y mujeres’.<sup>17</sup>

The prolific Pilar Millán Astray was the most staged female dramatist of the 1920s and 1930s, and her mainstream success continued until the 1950s, although she was later forgotten. She wrote successful melodramatic *sainetes* and *costumbrista* dramas, several of which had lengthy runs.<sup>18</sup> Salvador A. Oropesa notes that her plays ‘frequently feature a strong, self-reliant, hard-working woman as the main character’.<sup>19</sup> Despite remaining resolutely conservative, Millán Astray presented a broader interpretation of women’s roles in society in keeping with a certain brand of Catholic feminism; as Stanley Black argues, she portrays a modernizing society from a conservative perspective: ‘La España de Millán Astray es inclusiva, conservadora y unificada’.<sup>20</sup> As Oropesa suggests, *Los amores de Nati* (1931) illustrates this well: ‘Nati is the archetypal and paradoxical woman Millán Astray wished to represent: fierce and independent while she is fighting to win the love of her life, she is nevertheless humble and servile once she gets her man’.<sup>21</sup> Yet she seems to have been drawn to political commentary also, and the censorship archives held at Alcalá de Henares are illuminating in this respect.<sup>22</sup> For example, the official verdict on *Las andanzas de Ginesillo* from 19 July 1932, was that ‘no contiene nada contrario a la moral y buenas costumbres’, yet a letter sent to the Ministry two days later reveals her

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<sup>16</sup> ‘Encuesta: ¿Por qué no estrenan las mujeres en España?’, *Estreno*, 10:2 (1984), 13-25 (p. 18).

<sup>17</sup> ‘La mujer protagonista’, p. 202.

<sup>18</sup> Nieva de la Paz lists several of them in ‘Las autoras teatrales’, p. 131.

<sup>19</sup> ‘Pilar Millán Astray (1879-1949)’, in *Catholic Women Writers: A Bio-bibliographical Sourcebook*, ed. by Mary R. Reichardt (Westport CT: Greenwood Press, 2001), pp. 254-60 (pp. 254, 256).

<sup>20</sup> ‘Una Cenicienta española: *La tonta del bote* y sus adaptaciones cinematográficas’, *Anagnórisis*, 8 (2013), 114-141 (p. 122). Online [Accessed December 2016]. ISSN: 2013-6986 [www.anagnorisis.es](http://www.anagnorisis.es)

<sup>21</sup> ‘Pilar Millán Astray’, p. 257.

<sup>22</sup> The *Theatre Censorship in Spain* project found that there are censorship files on 23 of her plays. These are held at the Ministerio de Educación, Cultura y Deporte (MECD), Archivo General de la Administración (AGA). All further references to censorship materials are from this archive. In the case of censorship files on specific plays, the full reference will be given when first mentioned. For an account of the censorship of her work, based on materials gathered for the *Theatre Censorship in Spain* project, see Diego Santos Sánchez, ‘Dramaturgas y censura en el primer franquismo: Pilar Millán Astray y Julia Maura’, *Revista canadiense de estudios hispánicos*, 37:2 (2013), 319-38.

use of drama for political purposes. The author of the letter accuses her of attacking the Republican government in an unacceptable way, describing ‘una constante burla de toda la obra de conjunto que realiza la República, llena de insultos’.<sup>23</sup> Her political views and connections (she was the sister of General José Millán Astray, founder of the Spanish Legion) were probably the reason why she was imprisoned by the Republic during the Civil War, and may also help to explain her initial post-War success.<sup>24</sup>

### **Finding a Political Voice**

ROSA.- Hemos nacido – tenemos derecho a la vida.  
(Carlota O’Neill, *Al rojo*, 1933).<sup>25</sup>

It was during the Second Republic and the Civil War that the presence of women in all areas of the public sphere was most pronounced and traditional social structures and hierarchies were overturned. Unsurprisingly, this is also the time when a more politicized group of female dramatists became more visible. Halma Angélico (aka María Francisca Clar Margarit) (1888-1952), María Teresa León (1903-1988), Carlota O’Neill (1905-2000) and Irene Falcón (1908-1999), in particular, deserve to be credited for their role within the evolution of Spanish theatre as women with strong leftist views who identified with an international workers’ revolution to end Capitalism. Their work, although it has largely remained in the shadow of their more famous male counterparts, was part of a wider cultural project related to the identity-building goals of the Second Republic. They envisioned a new Spanish society and their demand for social and cultural equality featured prominently in their theatre and other activities.

A member of the Confederación Nacional del Trabajo (CNT) as well as the Lyceum Club Femenina, Halma Angélico’s feminism and her political stance are reflected in her theatre, which focused on themes such as motherhood, marriage and

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<sup>23</sup> AGA. 21/5849 Expediente 5993.

<sup>24</sup> She wrote her poetic memoir, *Cautivas. 32 meses en las prisiones rojas* (Madrid: Saturnino Calleja, 1940) about her experiences. For information about her brother, see R. Geoffrey Jensen, ‘Jose Millan-Astray and the Nationalist ‘Crusade’ in Spain’, *Journal of Contemporary History*, 27:3 (1992), 425-47.

<sup>25</sup> AGA. 21/05797.

illegitimacy.<sup>26</sup> María Teresa León was one of the key figures in the cultural and intellectual life of the Republic and not only wrote the political drama, *Huelga en el puerto* (1931), but was a member of the Alianza de Intelectuales Antifascistas and co-founded the theatre group, Nueva Escena, with Rafael Alberti and Rafael Dieste. Many of the theatrical initiatives of the Civil War period had her stamp on them and she was vice-president of the Republic's Consejo Central del Teatro, director of both the Teatro de Arte y Propaganda and of the Guerrillas del Teatro group.<sup>27</sup>

Carlota O'Neill was a member of César and Irene Falcón's *Nosotros* Theatre Group (1932-34), who staged what they called 'Teatro Proletario'.<sup>28</sup> Carlota's one-act play, *Al rojo* (1933), which was part of this ambitious attempt to use the theatre to bring about social change, is both a socialist critique of capitalist society and a militantly feminist work, with an independent, working-class heroine.

Some influential women were not dramatists, or not exclusively so. Irene Falcón, co-founder of the *Nosotros* theatre company, was, like María Teresa León, involved in direction and organization, as well as writing plays. Catalan actress and company director Margarita Xirgu (1888 -1969) also emerged in this period as a renovating and political force in the theatre. Her career was marked by artistic innovation from the outset, and in the 1930s she became associated with the left-wing cultural policies of the Republic.<sup>29</sup> With Cipriano Rivas Cherif as Artistic Director, she was at the helm of the Teatro Español in Madrid from 1930 to 1935, and together they brought some of the most ground-breaking new drama to the commercial stage.<sup>30</sup> Indeed, her choice of plays and her associations with figures on the left was

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<sup>26</sup> When Aguilar published a volume of *Teatro de mujeres* in 1934, they chose to include Halma Angélico, along with Matilde Ras and Pilar de Valderrama. All were members of the Lyceum Club. For details of Halma Angélico's political theatre, see Sarah Wright, 'Eugenesia, maternidad y teatro revolucionario: *Ak y la humanidad* (1938), de Halma Angélico', in *Mujer, literatura y esfera pública*, pp. 217-32. See also Fernando Doménech Rico, 'Un escándalo teatral en tiempos de guerra', pp. 9-58, in Halma Angélico, *Ak y la Humanidad* (Madrid: ADE, 2001).

<sup>27</sup> María Teresa León's memoir, *Memoria de la melancolía* (Madrid: Castalia, 1999), captures the goals of the politicized theatre of the time.

<sup>28</sup> For more information about this group and the activities of Carlota O'Neill and Irene Falcón, see Catherine O'Leary, 'Carlota O'Neill de Lamo: Una Dramaturga Comprometida', in *Mujer, literatura y esfera pública*, pp. 205-16 and 'Staging the Revolution: The *Nosotros* Theatre Group and the *teatro proletario* of the Second Republic', *Modern Language Review*, 112 (2017), 613-46.

<sup>29</sup> For more on Xirgu, see Delgado, *Other Spanish Theatres*, pp. 21-66; María Carmen Gil Fombellida, *Rivas Cherif, Margarita Xirgu y el teatro de la II República* (Madrid: Fundamentos, 2003).

<sup>30</sup> José Monleón, *Rafael Alberti y Nuria Espert. Poesía y voz de la escena española* (Caracas: Ateneo de Caracas, 1979), p. 115. In his interview with Monleón, Alberti is clear that Xirgu's influence was paramount in the making of several dramatists' reputations (*Ibid.*, pp. 113-15). Her collaboration with

to cause Xirgu trouble later, and political interference put an end to her role at the Teatro Español. On tour in Mexico when the Civil War broke out, she chose to remain in exile. Thus ended an exciting theatrical era in Spain, while it heralded the beginning of one in Latin America. Xirgu came to be seen as ‘símbolo de la España desterrada y la pura tradición de su teatro’.<sup>31</sup> Her influence was particularly felt in Argentina, Chile, and in Uruguay, where she made her home. Not only did she perform in these countries, but she went on to train generations of actors there.<sup>32</sup> Her importance as a figure in the history of Spanish theatre is, therefore, not only in what she achieved in Spain but also her activities while in exile.<sup>33</sup>

Given that most of the female dramatists and practitioners to emerge in the 1920s and 1930s were not only engaged in gender politics, but in left-wing political movements, it is not surprising that most went into exile following the Civil War.<sup>34</sup> While their direct contribution to the development of the theatre in Spain had ended, a muted legacy remained, while the countries that took them in reaped the benefits of their progressive intellectual outlook.

### **The Backlash: 1940s and 1950s**

ELISA.- [...] ¡Juro... juro por la memoria de mi madre, que esté en Gloria, que yo no soy ninguna mujer perdida!

Julia Maura, *La riada*, 1956

The establishment of the Franco dictatorship had a dramatic impact on the lives of women. The rights won during the Second Republic were rescinded, and the ideal of womanhood put forward by the regime stressed passivity and purity; feminism, as a social and political movement in Spain, was finished.<sup>35</sup> In the early years of the

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Lorca in particular included many performances that focused on gender and freedom; See also Delgado, ‘The Actress and the Playwright’, p. 382.

<sup>31</sup> Antonina Rodrigo, *Margarita Xirgu: Una biografía* (Barcelona: Flor del Viento, 2005), p. 330.

<sup>32</sup> See Cecilia Pérez Mondino, ‘Margarita Xirgu en Montevideo durante la Guerra civil española’, Montevideo: CIDDAE, 2005, 6ff.

<sup>33</sup> See Helena Buffery, ‘Theatre, Colonialism, Exile and the Americas’, in *A History of Theatre in Spain*, ed by Maria M. Delgado and David T. Gies, pp. 323-40.

<sup>34</sup> Espina, Falcón, León, Martínez Sierra, Méndez, O’Neill and Zambrano, for example, all left.

<sup>35</sup> See Victoria Lorée Enders, ‘Problematic Portraits: The Ambiguous Historical Role of the Sección Femenina of the Falange’, in *Constructing Spanish Womanhood: Female Identity in Modern Spain*, ed. by Victoria Lorée Enders and Pamela Beth Radcliff (New York: SUNY, 1999), pp. 375-97; Carme

regime, the influence of the Roman Catholic Church on social policy and values also had a significant impact on how women were publicly portrayed.

During the early decades of the dictatorship, the Spanish stage continued to be dominated by male dramatists, and feminist themes all but disappear. The work of female authors, like that of their male counterparts, was subject to strict state censorship although, as Patricia W. O'Connor highlights, female dramatists faced additional restrictions.<sup>36</sup> Indeed, the AGA censorship files show that they were relegated to minority status, and their works often dismissed as frivolous and sentimental, unworthy of being taken seriously. The few female dramatists to have a career during this period were all from comfortable middle-class backgrounds, and tended to have links with the theatre world.<sup>37</sup> They generally produced apolitical drama, or children's theatre, or nationalist theatre. As O'Connor notes:

in the 1940s and 1950s, women dramatists encoded male power by creating positive portraits of virtuous, feminine submission and negative images of women who failed to conform to masculine standards of femininity. Imitating male playwrights' constructs and stereotypes of women, they obligingly segregated themselves, writing romantic comedies or domestic dramas about women that appealed to women.<sup>38</sup>

In fact, children's theatre was perhaps the most politicized of the time, and involved many female authors, such as Carola Soler (?-1974), whose main concern was the political and religious education of Spain's children.<sup>39</sup>

One of the most successful female dramatists of the early dictatorship was the aforementioned Pilar Millán Astray, who was ideologically identified with the regime. The censorship files show that her plays were staged frequently in the 1940s and 1950s, albeit sometimes with minor cuts. The censors' reports demonstrate a very

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Molinero, 'Silencio e invisibilidad: la mujer durante el primer franquismo', *Revista de Occidente*, 223 (1999), 63-82; Aurora Morcillo Gómez, 'Feminismo y lucha política durante la II República y la Guerra Civil', in *El feminismo en España: dos siglos de historia*, ed. by Pilar Folguera (Madrid: Editorial Pablo Iglesias, 1988), pp. 56-83; Morcillo Gómez, *True Catholic Womanhood: Gender Ideology in Franco's Spain* (DeKalb, Illinois: Northern Illinois University Press, 1999); and Mary Nash, *Rojas. Las mujeres republicanas en la Guerra Civil* (Madrid: Taurus, 2006).

<sup>36</sup> 'Las dramaturgas españolas y la 'otra censura'', in *Diálogos Hispánicos de Amsterdam*, no. 5, *Censura y literaturas peninsulares*, ed. by Manuel Abellán (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1987) pp. 99-117 (p. 104).

<sup>37</sup> Patricia W. O'Connor, 'Las dramaturgas españolas', pp. 111-14.

<sup>38</sup> 'Women Playwrights', p. 377.

<sup>39</sup> She was a prolific author of children's literature and worked with the theatre group of the Sección Femenina. See Juan Cervera, 'Historia crítica del teatro infantil español', published on the *Biblioteca Virtual Cervantes*. Online. [Accessed 11/04/2014]. See also Hormigón, who lists in vol 2 of *Autoras* a total of 83 works written by Soler between the 1940s and 1957 (pp. 1179-1221).

lenient attitude towards this dramatist and her work. Nonetheless, in keeping with the regime's negative attitude towards female creativity, the reports also tend to dismiss her work as being of little literary value. Her greatest difficulty with the censors arose when she breached gendered limits and turned to politics, even though her work is clearly in praise of the new regime. The report on *Regina, la bien plantá* from 1940, for example, approved the play's ideology: 'Matiz político: Exaltación del Movimiento Nacional'; yet another censor was less positive about both its literary worth and its treatment of the war. Indeed, the latter's report highlights the general attitude towards female authors and their creative and political capacities:

No tiene nada destacable. Sería conveniente que se aconsejara a los autores que se alejaran lo más posible de estos temas de nuestra guerra; es una cosa muy sagrada para tratarla con el desenfado y tranquilidad con que la tratan, la mayoría de las veces con buena fé [sic] y sana intención, pero no siempre con la habilidad necesaria para que sirva de lección y con la agravante de que siempre hay en el fondo un fin lucrativo.<sup>40</sup>

Further examples of Millán Astray's engagement with politics and the censors' negative responses relate to *La galena* and *Nana*, both from 1942.<sup>41</sup> In the case of the former, the censor took issue with the justification of the killing of a military man by his inferior, but resolved that the play could be staged with cuts. The latter also suffered cuts, including reference to crime in society and a family pet called Unamuno.<sup>42</sup> Overall, however, Millán Astray's work, as a reflection of her moral and political stance, was positively received.

Other dramatists, like Dora Sedano (Heliadora Sedano Muro de Bedriñana, 1902-1987), although not as overtly political, wrote conservative theatre and had some success on the commercial stage in the 1940s and 1950s.<sup>43</sup> Sedano made an interesting point about gender politics in the theatre in the survey of female dramatists carried out by the journal, *Estreno*, in 1984, stating that the lack of female dramatists

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<sup>40</sup> AGA. 73/8265 Expediente 1489/40.

<sup>41</sup> AGA. 73/8444 Expediente 3422/42; 73/8402 Expediente 3001/42.

<sup>42</sup> This reference to the Spanish philosopher and author was not only a deliberate slur, but also had a very personal resonance. As Oropesa reminds us, her brother, General Millán Astray, had 'yelled "Death to intelligence!" and threatened to kill the philosopher', during an homage to him in Salamanca. See 'Pilar Millán Astray', p. 259.

<sup>43</sup> The censorship archives contain files on thirteen of her works, which were considered unproblematic. See Hormigón, *Autoras*, II, pp. 1157-73, who lists twenty works. See also Patricia W. O'Connor, '¿Quiénes son las dramaturgas españolas contemporáneas, y qué han escrito?', *Estreno*, 10:2 (1984), 9-11.

on the stage was due to the fact that ‘los varones, hasta hace poco, han podido moverse con más libertad que las hembras’.<sup>44</sup>

Another important, but largely forgotten, figure was Carmen Troitiño (1918-), a member of the influential Teatro de Cámara de Madrid and later *Arte Nuevo* group with Alfonso Sastre, and one of most interesting female practitioners to emerge in the 1950s. Hormigón refers to the plays she authored as bourgeois and even Catholic, but her primary interest was in directing and in theatre management and she was undoubtedly one of the few very powerful women in such a role in Spain in the 1950s.<sup>45</sup> Indeed, José María García Escudero mentions her in his memoirs as co-director with Modesto Higuera of the Teatro Nacional de Cámara y Ensayo.<sup>46</sup> Josefina Sánchez Pedreño, too, although little known now, was an important figure in the early independent theatre scene of the 1950s and 1960s with Dido, Pequeño Teatro in Madrid, a company responsible for staging many significant non-mainstream and foreign works.<sup>47</sup>

While in this period there was no female-authored theatre that could be described as openly oppositional, there were dramatists who began, albeit timidly at first, to question the prevailing social and political climate and to represent female characters either not wholly fulfilled by traditional roles, or yearning for a freedom that was not on offer. Lost opportunities, crushed hopes and resignation often feature in their work, and their protagonists are frustrated both by the unrealistic expectations and the social and economic limitations that are placed on them. The challenges that these authors faced included not only censorship by state bureaucrats, but also the more insidious, but pervasive official views of women and their capacities.<sup>48</sup> Ironically, the regime’s dismissive attitude towards female dramatists and their work provided an opportunity, seized by some, to present positive portraits of non-conforming women. As their work was taken less seriously than that of their male peers, the overburdened censors did not always take the time to read them carefully.

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<sup>44</sup> ‘Encuesta’, p. 24.

<sup>45</sup> Hormigón, *Autoras*, II, pp. 1271-78. See CDT online. <http://teatro.es/profesionales/carmen-troitiño-6526/estrenos>.

<sup>46</sup> *La primera apertura. Diario de un Director General. La larga batalla de la censura en cine y teatro* (Barcelona: Planeta, 1978), p. 118.

<sup>47</sup> See Barbara Bloin, ‘Dido Pequeño Teatro de Madrid, i la seva directora Josefina Sánchez Pedreño’, *Assaig de teatre. Revista de l’Associació d’Investigació i Experimentació Teatral*, 57 (2007). Online. <https://www.raco.cat/index.php/AssaigTeatre/article/view/146301/249687>.

<sup>48</sup> O’Connor, ‘Las dramaturgas españolas’, p. 99.

So, while not explicitly political, the works of dramatists such as Mercedes Ballesteros Gaibrois (1913-1995) and Julia Maura y Herrera (1910-1970), and even Carmen Martín Gaité (1925-2000), who was better known as a novelist, sometimes offered an alternative view of Spanish womanhood.

Although she made her theatrical debut during the period of the Second Republic, Mercedes Ballesteros is better known for the theatre that she wrote during the 1940s and 1950s.<sup>49</sup> She co-authored *Quiero ver al doctor* and *El tren de las seis y cuarto* with her husband, Claudio de la Torre, and both plays were authorized without cuts and staged in 1940.<sup>50</sup> She generally steered clear of obviously feminist and political themes, and her work was clearly perceived as unchallenging and conforming to what was expected of a female dramatist, as the report on her play, *Tío Jorge viene de la India*, demonstrates. It was described by the censor as ‘Muy corriente. Trucos y efectos vulgares. Todo muy “novela rosa escenificada”’ and ‘sin problemas morales’, and was authorized for under 16s in 1949.<sup>51</sup> For Inmaculada Plaza-Agudo, however, the theatre of Ballesteros can be read as subversive of the limited female roles advocated by the Franco regime.<sup>52</sup> So while it would be difficult to argue that her work was openly political, Ballesteros did present positive images of women prepared to defy social expectations.

Undoubtedly one of the most interesting female playwrights of the period, now little remembered, is Julia Maura y Herrera (1910-1970). She was the granddaughter of politician and former Prime Minister, Antonio Maura, and was the most commercially-successful female dramatist of the 1940s-1960s.<sup>53</sup> It helped that she depicted traditional female characters positively and, as O’Connor notes, ‘generally accepted the angel-monster stereotypes of women’ but at least ‘humanized rather than ridiculed the unattractive spinster of male tradition’.<sup>54</sup> For her part, Pilar Nieva de la Paz views Maura as a much more feminist figure and argues for her work

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<sup>49</sup> Of interest also is her work, written under the pseudonym, ‘La Baronesa Alberta’, for Miguel Mihura’s satirical magazine, *La Codorniz*, which suggests a certain engagement with social satire. She also wrote comic dramas and translated foreign drama by authors such as Chekov and Ibsen.

<sup>50</sup> AGA. 73/8204 Expediente 756/40; 73/8209 Expediente 800/40.

<sup>51</sup> AGA. 73/8872 Expediente 205/49. It was authorized again, following minor changes, in 1951 and 1965.

<sup>52</sup> Inmaculada Plaza Agudo, ‘Modelos de identidad femenina en la España de posguerra: El teatro de Mercedes Ballesteros’, *Hispania*, 95:1 (2012), 24-36.

<sup>53</sup> The AGA contains 18 files on her work.

<sup>54</sup> O’Connor, ‘Women Playwrights’, p. 379. See also Santos Sánchez, ‘Dramaturgas y censura’.

to be read as ‘comprometida con la denuncia de la injusta condición social de la mujer española en la pos-guerra’.<sup>55</sup> A consideration of both her plays and the censorship files supports this view. The censors’ reports generally show that they consider her socially-engaged work of little value, yet they also express serious concerns about her portrayal of sexuality, the family and the Church. It is true that her works were generally authorized by the censors, but several were cut and one – *Nueve meses y un día* – a heady thematic mix of infertility, superstition and adultery, seems to have genuinely shocked the censors and was prohibited in 1949 (although it was later authorized in 1952). They were horrified by its bawdiness, particularly from a lady as well-connected and of such good breeding as the author.<sup>56</sup>

### **Late Dictatorship: *Apertura* and Beyond**

Siento que está naciendo un tiempo nuevo para los que vivimos en silencio. Siento  
que está naciendo un tiempo nuevo en donde viviremos sin miedo  
Ana Diosdado, *Olvida los tambores*, 1970.

Other authors managed to challenge traditional female roles and stereotypes more directly, presenting alternative views of women and condemning the differential power relations between men and women in society. A new and emboldened generation of female dramatists and practitioners made their mark in the 1960s, following the liberalization of the regime’s cultural policies during the so-called ‘apertura’ period (1962-1969) and into the late dictatorship. The most important of these were Carmen Resino (1941-), Ana Diosdado (1938-2015), and Nuria Espert (1935-).

Resino began her theatrical career in 1968 with *El Presidente*, and wrote other plays that dealt with the inequality of the sexes and the damage to women and to society in general, of patriarchy.<sup>57</sup> She remained an influential figure in the democratic period, when she returned to prominence as one of the founding members of the *Asociación de Dramaturgas Españolas* in 1986. Like many earlier dramatists,

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<sup>55</sup> ‘La escenificación de los roles sexuales y la censura de género durante el franquismo: el caso de Julia Maura’, *Iberoamericana*, 1:2 (2001), 165-178 (p. 166). Online. [Accessed 11/04/2013].

<sup>56</sup> AGA. 73/8897 Expediente 470/49. Censors’ comments include: ‘Ni puede ni debe representarse’; ‘Por ser tema escabroso, bordea constantemente la inmoralidad en la que cae en definitiva’.

<sup>57</sup> See Candyce Leonard and Iride Lamartina-Lens, *Testimonios del teatro español: 1950-2000*, I (Ottawa: Girol, 2002), p. 141.

Resino rejected the label 'feminist', although John P. Gabriele is correct in his assertion that 'las obras dramáticas de Resino no están del todo desprovistas de una cierta orientación feminista'.<sup>58</sup> *Ulises no vuelve* (1974), for example, one of her best-known pieces, shows a cowardly Ulysses, dependent on the protagonist, Pen, to uphold the myth of his heroism.<sup>59</sup> The patriarchal model is not only damaging to Pen, but to the family and society as a whole, yet, as Candyce Leonard has shown, each of the characters 'seeks personal freedom from prescribed role expectations'.<sup>60</sup>

In the milder political landscape of the late dictatorship, Resino's plays *Colisión* (1970), *La sed* (1972) and *¡Dinero, dinero!...* (1975) were authorized by the censors, albeit with the stipulation that the dress rehearsals be closely monitored. This demonstrated the often contradictory view of female-authored work, which was considered of little concern on the one hand, yet on the other, potentially corrupting in terms of sexual morality.<sup>61</sup> Most of her plays, like those of her female contemporaries, were not staged in mainstream theatres.<sup>62</sup> Nonetheless, Resino seems to be the first female dramatist to be taken seriously by Spanish critics who discussed her works in terms of its theatricality, rather than her gender. Mariano de Paco, for example, places her work in the wider context of the theatre of dramatists such as Buero and Sastre, while also arguing that it deals with female identity and the struggle for independence.<sup>63</sup>

The most acclaimed female dramatist of the period was Ana Diosdado, daughter of the actor and director Enrique Diosdado, who started her dramatic career with Margarita Xirgu in Argentina and began writing for the theatre in 1970 with *Olvida los tambores*. The play was an immediate success and was the subject of 19 applications to stage it between 1970 and 1978. Described by one of the censors as 'comedia de ambiente juvenil y discográfico, entre inconformista y romántica', it nonetheless presented a problem in terms of a song to be included in the performance,

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<sup>58</sup> 'Estrategias feministas en el teatro breve de Carmen Resino', *Letras Femeninas*, 21:1/2 (1995), 85-95. Online. [Accessed 11/04/2013].

<sup>59</sup> *Ulises no vuelve* (Madrid: Centro español del instituto internacional del teatro, 1983).

<sup>60</sup> 'Women Writers and Their Characters in Spanish Drama in the 1980s', *Anales de la literatura española contemporánea*, 17:1/3 (1992), 243-256 (p. 246). Online. [Accessed 11/04/2013].

<sup>61</sup> AGA. 73/9794 Expediente 337/70; AGA. 73/9950 Expediente 347/72; AGA. 73/10125. Expediente 429/75. The AGA contains files on six of her plays.

<sup>62</sup> See O'Connor, '¿Quiénes son las dramaturgas españolas contemporáneas...?', p. 11.

<sup>63</sup> 'El teatro histórico de Carmen Resino', *Anales de la literatura española contemporánea*, 20:3 (1995), 303-14 (p. 307). Online. [Accessed 11/04/2013].

particularly the lines, ‘Siento que está naciendo un tiempo nuevo para los que vivimos en silencio. Siento que está naciendo un tiempo nuevo en donde viviremos sin miedo’, which were seen as a criticism too far.<sup>64</sup>

Engaging with social themes, Diosdado’s work is nonetheless quite conservative stylistically and her plays, unusually for a female dramatist of her generation, were successfully staged in commercial theatres, although this has been attributed to her decision not to challenge the middle class audience’s sense of security.<sup>65</sup> Yet there is no question that her works engage with society and, in particular, its treatment of women. *El okapi*, from 1971, described in a censor’s report as ‘comedia dura, a veces amarga y en otros pasajes, tierna’ suffered a single cut, which was a negative reference to the Guardia Civil.<sup>66</sup> *Usted también puede disfrutar de ella* (1973), perhaps her most interesting work, focuses on the exploitation of women by the cosmetics industry and as sex objects, echoing the characters of Carlota O’Neill’s radical feminist play, *Al rojo*. Yet Diosdado, unlike O’Neill, rejected the label ‘feminist’ and, like many of her peers, considered the term a negative one.<sup>67</sup> While the censors who read it were positive about its literary quality, they expressed some concerns about the sexual content, some criticism of society, and a reference to ETA. Despite this, it was authorized with cuts.<sup>68</sup>

Just as Resino focused on myth to comment on contemporary society, Diosdado turned to history in plays such as *Los comuneros* (1972) and *Y de cachemira, chales* (1976). Although not particularly well received at the time, this turn to the past echoes a strategy employed by social and political dramatists of the Realist Generation and anticipates a strong trend in later female-authored works. It is interesting to note that the censors who read *Los comuneros*, based on the Comuneros Revolt against King Charles V, stipulated that it be staged in a way that emphasized historical distance, lest it be read as a call for action in the political situation of the day.<sup>69</sup> Overall, it can be argued that her work and the official reception of it were a

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<sup>64</sup> AGA. 73/9779 Expediente 216/70. Censor’s underlining.

<sup>65</sup> Oliva, César, *La última escena: teatro español de 1975 a nuestros días* (Madrid: Catedra, 2004), p. 56.

<sup>66</sup> AGA. 73/9899 Expediente 638/71.

<sup>67</sup> Zatlín, Phyllis, ‘Ana Diosdado and the Contemporary Spanish Theatre’, *Estreno* 10:2 (1984), 37-40 (p. 39).

<sup>68</sup> AGA. 73/10036 Expediente 342/73.

<sup>69</sup> The file is dated 1972, but the play was published in 1974. AGA. 73/9949 Expediente 335/72.

reflection of the changing times; while more political than that of a previous generation, the play was authorized by the censors, albeit occasionally with cuts.<sup>70</sup>

Outside the realm of authorship, a hugely influential figure in the Spanish theatre of the late dictatorship and beyond was actress, director and theatre manager Nuria Espert. She played a crucial role in the renewal of the Spanish stage in the 1960s and 1970s, just as Margarita Xirgu had in the 1920s and 1930s. Like the latter, Espert took risks and engaged with gender and politics. She established her own theatre company in 1959 and her determination to stage experimental and challenging works meant that she too regularly had to contend with the censorship authorities. Again, like Margarita Xirgu, she staged innovative foreign drama and collaborated with influential directors in productions that were seen as a challenge to the status quo.<sup>71</sup> She also worked with the regime's least-favoured playwrights, such as Alfonso Sastre and Fernando Arrabal. Her influence on the Spanish theatre is indisputable, and it continued after the end of the regime, both as an actress and as co-director of the Centro Dramático Nacional (CDN) with José Luis Gómez and Ramón Tamayo (1979-1981).<sup>72</sup>

### **Beyond Francoism: The Transition**

LUISA.- Nosotros hemos de luchar por nuestra propia vida.

Lidia Falcón, *Siempre busqué el amor*, 1983

The backlash against the conservative sexual morality of the dictatorship that took place during the Transition and the so-called *destape* resulted in the staging of some works that were more focused on nudity and sex than on any considered exploration of gender politics. O'Connor argues that this 'clearly was the culmination of the materialistic, secular trends subtly initiated thirty years ago as well as a logical

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<sup>70</sup> AGA. 73/10174 Expediente 1129/76. The AGA contains only 6 files on her work.

<sup>71</sup> She worked with the Argentine-born, Paris-based Victor García to stage *Las criadas* in 1969, *Yerma* in 1970 and *Divinas palabras* in 1975. She acted under Ricard Salvat's direction in Brecht's *La bona persona de Sezuán*, in 1966, and then, in 1967, her own company staged a Spanish version of the play in Madrid, a decision that was correctly seen as a political statement. See Ignacio Amestoy, 'Los escenarios de Nuria Espert. Una conversación', *Minerva revista*, 10:2, 62-66. Online. [Accessed 11/04/2013]; Nuria Espert and Marcos Ordóñez, *De aire y fuego. Memorias* (Madrid: Aguilar, 2002); and Juan Cruz, *Nuria*, Serie Mujeres Creadores (Madrid: Fundación Autor, 2007).

<sup>72</sup> See Delgado, *Other Spanish Theatres*, pp. 132-81.

response to almost four decades of sexual repression.<sup>73</sup> Although the censorship legislation was rescinded in 1977 and a constitution that protected the right to freedom of expression was passed in 1978, female dramatists remained marginalized. The dictatorship had ended, but many paternalistic structures remained in place.

Despite this, or perhaps because of it, a feminist theatre emerged at this time. This is best reflected in the 1970s and 1980s plays of Lidia Falcón (1935-) and María-José Ragué-Arias (1941-). The former picked up the politicized theatrical thread of her father (César Falcón) and aunt (Carlota O'Neill), who were involved with the theatre of the Second Republic. Like that earlier drama, hers was theatre with a mission. It both re-engaged with the nascent feminism of the Second Republic, and drew on a contemporary international feminist perspective. Her proudly feminist work, dealing with themes such as sexual politics and domestic abuse, remained a minority interest in Spain and was unwelcome on the commercial stage. Indeed, Falcón argued that women faced many of the same problems in the post-Franco period as they did during the dictatorship.<sup>74</sup>

In one of her most important works, *No moleste, calle y pague, señora* (1984), she takes on the law and shows how women continue to be repressed by patriarchal structures in society.<sup>75</sup> As John P. Gabriele wrote, 'there is no mistaking that Falcón's primary concern is to legitimize the female voice, defend a female ideal, and elaborate a feminist consciousness'.<sup>76</sup> Falcón herself claimed that 'lo cierto es que en cada uno de mis personajes femeninos existe un drama de mujer, de mujer real'.<sup>77</sup>

An academic and playwright, María-José Ragué-Arias echoed Falcón's concerns, commenting in 1984 on the lack of a feminist theatre in Spain, and arguing that society would have to change for this type of theatre to find a public space. She also claimed that the exclusion of women from the Spanish theatre was due to 'sus prácticamente nulas posibilidades de estrenar', highlighting the longer term impact of

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<sup>73</sup> 'The Sexual Revolution in Post-Franco Theatre', *Cuadernos de Aldeu*, 1, Monograph (no. 1, 1983), 57-65 (p. 64).

<sup>74</sup> 'Encuesta', p. 17.

<sup>75</sup> 'No moleste, calle y pague, señora', *Estreno*, 10:2 (1984), pp. 28-31.

<sup>76</sup> 'Masculinity Unmasked in Lidia Falcón's *Tu único amor*', *Neophilologus* 84 (2000), 399-409 (p. 399). Online. [Accessed 11/04/2013]. See also Ragué Arias, María-José, 'Introducción a la obra de Lidia Falcón', *Estreno*, 10:2 (1984), 26-27.

<sup>77</sup> *El teatro breve de Lidia Falcón*, ed by John P. Gabriele, (Madrid: Fundamentos, 1997), p. 19.

the regime's patriarchal policies.<sup>78</sup> Her own work often focused on a contemporary revision of female characters from classical tragedy, thus following a clear trend in female-authored drama of looking to the past to discuss the present.

Despite the fact that their own theatre did not reach wide audiences, Falcón and Ragué-Arias helped to raise the profile of female dramatists, demanded a space for their work, and supported many who emerged in their wake. Both were involved in a series of feminist theatrical initiatives – many of them short-lived – in the 1980s, such as the Lisistrata Prize, 'Dones i Catalunya', la Associació Teatre-Dona and I Muestra Internacional de Teatro Feminista.<sup>79</sup>

### **Finding a Space of their Own**

CAMILO.- Ana, ¿estás bien?

ANA. - Como nunca. Jamás había visto las cosas tan claras.

Paloma Pedrero, *Besos de lobo*, 1987

By the mid 1980s, more female dramatists were beginning to make their presence felt in the Spanish theatre, although their work was still absent from the commercial stage. Reflecting new times and hope for a more inclusive and pluralistic society, the work of a new generation of female dramatists frequently confronted or 'worked through' the legacy of nearly forty years of patriarchal dictatorship. In addition, the proliferation of small and 'alternative' theatre groups that emerged during the transition period and the decade that followed allowed emerging writers excluded from the established venues to stage their work and to explore various aspects of theatre practice. Not only did they often write and stage theatre that showed women moving out of their traditional place and challenging the established gender boundaries, but they also participated in direction and management. As dramatist Paloma Pedrero put it, the 1980s saw a real shift in attitude towards and opportunities for female dramatists: 'Los años 80 fueron el despertar de la dramaturgia femenina.

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<sup>78</sup> Ibid., p. 20. See also Ragué-Arias, *El teatro de fin de milenio en España (de 1975 hasta hoy)* (Barcelona: Ariel, 1996) and 'La mujer como autora teatral en el teatro español contemporáneo', *Estreno*, Cincinatti, XIX (1993), 1, 13-16.

<sup>79</sup> See Isabel-Clara Simó, 'Dones I Catalunya, un camino abierto para el teatro feminista', *Estreno*, 10:2 (1984), 3-5, Marisa Hajar, 'Premio Lisistrata de Teatro: la historia de un premio feminista', *Estreno*, 10:2 (1984), 48-49 and Ragué-Arias, 'El teatro feminista, o el no-teatro no-feminista', *Estreno*, 10:2 (1984), p. 47.

Antes había habido autoras, por supuesto, pero les resultaba casi imposible estrenar sus obras. A partir de los ochenta, las dramaturgas empezamos a codearnos con los dramaturgos', although she acknowledged that 'todavía queda mucho camino que recorrer'.<sup>80</sup>

In 1986, the same year that the Instituto Nacional de las Artes Escénicas y la Música (INAEM) was established, the Asociación de Dramaturgas Españolas was created in Madrid.<sup>81</sup> Carmen Resino was its first President, and other members, all of whom were to become familiar names in the Spanish theatre, included Lourdes Ortiz (1943-), Concha Romero (1945-), Pilar Pombo (1953-1999) and Paloma Pedrero (1957-). Its goal was to promote Spanish theatre and female-authored theatre in particular.<sup>82</sup> Although short-lived, Carmen Resino argued that

su fundación resultó fructífera, pues además de dar a conocer y potenciar la autoría de la mujer española en el teatro, constituyó sin duda el referente para que se creara poco después la actual Asociación de Autores de Teatro, que, afortunadamente, goza de excelente salud.<sup>83</sup>

In terms of access to the commercial stage, however, María Francisca Vilches de Frutos argued that few of the women to emerge in this period achieved substantial commercial success and she names Ana Diosdado and María Manuela Reina (1958-) as the exceptions to the rule.<sup>84</sup> Diosdado continued to be the best known and most commercially successful female dramatist of the 1980s.<sup>85</sup> Reina, whose work is less political and feminist than that of her contemporaries, also had mainstream success in this period. Her first play, *Lutero o la libertad esclava*, won the Premio Calderón de

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<sup>80</sup> José Luis Campal Fernández, 'Paloma Pedrero repasa su obra', *La ratonera*, 19 (2007), 108-113 (p. 110). Online. [Accessed 10/12/2016].

<sup>81</sup> In October 2014, Montserrat Iglesias was named the new Director of the INAEM. She is the second female to be named director of this important institute. The first was Elena Posa Farrás in 1995.

<sup>82</sup> See Pedrero, quoted in Virtudes Serrano, 'Introducción', in *En Juego de noches. Nueve obras en un acto* (Madrid: Cátedra, 2005), pp. 11-73 (p. 14).

<sup>83</sup> 'Reflexiones sobre mi creación teatral', *Anales de la Literatura Española Contemporánea*, 32:2 (2007), 161-180 (p. 163). Online. [Accessed 11/04/2013]. See also O'Connor, 'Solidarity and Revision in the Plays of Two Spanish "dramaturgas": Maribel Lázaro and Pilar Pombo', *Revista Canadiense de Estudios Hispánicos*, 14:3 (1990), 573-578 (p. 573). Online. [Accessed 11/04/2013].

<sup>84</sup> 'Panorámica de la escena española en la década de los ochenta: Algunas reflexiones', *Anales de la literatura española contemporánea*, 17:1/3 (1992), 207-220 (p. 213). Online. [Accessed 11/04/2013]. At the time of her article, names such as Marisa Ares and Paloma Pedrero were 'todavía circunscritos, en general, a la programación de los teatros públicos de apoyo a los jóvenes, a los circuitos alternativos y a la labor de grupos independientes' (p. 214).

<sup>85</sup> See O'Connor, 'Women Playwrights', p. 383, and Catherine Davies, *Spanish Women's Writing 1849-1996* (London: Athlone, 1998), p. 278.

la Barca in 1984, and she went on to write several more commercially successful plays. O'Connor suggests that her work is quite traditional and does not break new ground in its representation of women.<sup>86</sup> Janet Pérez sees her in similar terms, and describes works such as *La cinta dorada* (1988) and *Reflejos con cenizas* (1991), as 'conventional bourgeois dramas with dysfunctional families and taboo sexual relationships'.<sup>87</sup> Yet, one could argue that the very portrayal of these things is a challenge to longstanding taboos and that Reina's success, like Diosdado's, can be read more positively as the normalization of female playwrights within the commercial sector.

For the other up-and-coming dramatists, gaining access to the commercial stage was still a struggle and few achieved it. Echoing the view that patriarchal structures and traditional morality in Spain have had an impact on the presence of women in the theatre, Lourdes Ortiz, a playwright and teacher in the Real Escuela de Arte Dramático de Madrid, stated in 1984 that, 'desde el momento en que ha habido menos mujeres directoras o vinculadas directamente al montaje y a los problemas que implica, es normal que haya habido también menos escritoras de teatro'.<sup>88</sup> Over a decade later, when interviewed by Fermín Cabal, Paloma Pedrero commented on the battle to stage her works and stated: 'el machismo ha sido y es, como en todo, muy fuerte en el teatro'.<sup>89</sup>

Despite such obstacles, this generation of female dramatists brought a new awareness and reflection of gender politics to the Spanish theatre and wrote challenging female-centred theatre with a social message. Concha Romero's *Un olor a ámbar* (1983), for example, focuses on the female body and female agency, and *Un maldito beso* (1989) treats infidelity and gender roles. Another example is Pilar Pombo, who wrote a theatre centred on female experiences and, in particular, on marginalized women.<sup>90</sup> Paloma Pedrero too, now one of the most recognizable names on the post-Franco stage, stirred up the theatrical establishment in 1985 with *La*

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<sup>86</sup> See 'Women Playwrights', p. 388.

<sup>87</sup> Janet Pérez and Maureen Ihrie (eds), *The Feminist Encyclopedia of Spanish Literature (A-M)*, vol I (Westport CT: Greenwood, 2002), p. 195.

<sup>88</sup> 'Encuesta', p. 20.

<sup>89</sup> Cabal, Fermín, *Dramaturgia española de hoy* (Madrid: Ediciones Autor, 2009), p. 282.

<sup>90</sup> See Lilit Zekulin Thwaites, 'Limpiaculos, cucarachas and marujas: Pilar Pombo's monólogos and the Older Spanish Woman', in *The Space of Culture: Critical Readings in Hispanic Studies*, edited by Stewart King and Jeff Browitt (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2004), pp. 29-38.

*llamada de Lauren*, and she has continued to write and stage provocative works that deal with themes such as urban alienation, relationships, marriage, female friendships, gender identity, sexual agency, prostitution, and the legacy of a patriarchal society. She has said that, ‘la mayoría de las mujeres de mis obras, ya no son “la mujer de, ni la novia de, ni la madre de...”. Son ellas. Y el conflicto es el de ellas’.<sup>91</sup> Despite this, like so many women educated under the dictatorship, she has been reluctant to identify herself as a feminist, although in 1987 she claimed, ‘si se crea una asociación de dramaturgas, donde hay mujeres que dedican su vida a hacer lo mismo que yo hago, yo quiero estar entonces con mis compañeras’.<sup>92</sup> In sum, César Oliva’s judgement, that her works reflect ‘una perspectiva feminista fácil de reconocer’, is difficult to refute.<sup>93</sup>

Another striking feature of the work of this generation is the stress that they place on myth, history and memory, and how these relate to gender and power.<sup>94</sup> Their protagonists expose the gendered gaps in stories of the past and are empowered by the act of remembering and recounting their own stories. Indeed, such historical revisionism with a focus on a female collective memory continues into the next generation of female dramatists and situates their work in a wider cultural exploration of Spain’s silenced voices through memory texts. Lourdes Ortiz, for example, writes theatre inspired by the classics, but with a contemporary twist. One of her most interesting works, for its subversion of a modern Spanish classic in order to comment on contemporary issues and to demystify the world of prostitution, is *El local de Bernardeta A.* (1995). Concha Romero too, in her appropriation of the historical figures of St Teresa of Avila and the Catholic Monarch, Queen Isabella, employs the past to comment on contemporary gender politics.<sup>95</sup>

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<sup>91</sup> Ibid., p. 284.

<sup>92</sup> See Lourdes Ortiz, ‘Los horizontes del teatro español (4). Nuevas autoras. Un coloquio moderado por Lourdes Ortiz’, *Primer Acto* 220 (1987), 10-21 (p. 13) and Eduardo Galán, ‘Paloma Pedrero, una joven dramaturga que necesita expresar sus vivencias’, *Estreno*, 16:1 (1990), 11-13 (p. 12)

<sup>93</sup> *La última escena*, p. 170. See also Susana Báez Ayala, ‘La noche en el teatro de Paloma Pedrero’, in José Romera Castillo (ed.), *Dramaturgias femeninas en la segunda mitad del siglo XX: espacio y tiempo* (Madrid: Visor; UNED, 2004), pp. 259-70 (p. 269) and Ortiz, ‘Los horizontes’, p. 14.

<sup>94</sup> See, for example, *Los eróticos sueños de Isabel Tudor* and *Ulises no vuelve* (Resino); *La libertad esclava* (Reina); *Cenicienta* (Ortiz); *Un olor a ámbar* (Romero); *Humo de beleño* (Maribel Lázaro); and Antonia Bueno’s *Trilogía de mujeres medievales*.

<sup>95</sup> See Denise M. DiPuccio, ‘The Bodies’ Politic of Concha Romero’s “Un olor a ámbar” and “Las bodas de una princesa”’, *Revista Hispánica Moderna*, 47:1 (1994), 225-34 (p. 233). See also Karn K. Sweetland, ‘The Female Body as Symbol of Oppression and Means of Subversion in Concha Romero’s *Un olor a ámbar*’, in Halsey, Martha T., and Phyllis Zatlin (eds), *Entre Actos: diálogos sobre teatro*

In addition to monologues that give a voice to everyday women and their ordinary concerns, Pilar Pombo also drew on the recent past to write an extraordinary play about women in the Civil War: *En igualdad de condiciones* (1999).<sup>96</sup> In the prologue she refers to her own earlier ignorance of the history of Spanish women and indeed of the nuances of Spain's recent traumatic past. In what was to be her last work, she focused on the friendship of two women, Hortensia and Matilde, over several years of the war and post-war period, and the play serves as both an homage and a memory text that gives the public space of the theatre to the silenced women of the past and anticipates a thematic trend that continues to today.

Finally, this very productive period also saw the emergence of the theatre activist Elena Cánovas, dramatist, director and founder of the Yeses Theatre Company (1985-). As prison director at Alcalá-Meco prison, she could be said to continue the work of pioneering Republican politician, Victoria Kent, in the importance that she places on the development and rehabilitation of women prisoners.<sup>97</sup> As a theatre practitioner, she follows a female tradition of harnessing the transformative social role of drama that we have traced from the early decades of the twentieth century, and she asserts: 'el teatro es una tarea mágica, que logra milagros entre las reclusas'.<sup>98</sup>

## The 1990s and Beyond

MUJER Y MUJER SIN BANDO.- No rencor, sino justicia.

Itziar Pascual, *Las hijas del viento*, 2005

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*español entre siglos* (Pennsylvania: Estreno, 1999), pp. 87-93 and Helen Roberts, 'Female Power and Solidarity in *Un olor a ámbar* by Concha Romero, and *Humo de beleño* by Maribel Lázaro', in Halsey and Zatlin (eds) *Entre Actos*, pp. 95-100.

<sup>96</sup> Murcia: Universidad, 1999.

<sup>97</sup> The name comes from the original name of the prison where the group was founded: Yaserías Prison. The group later transferred to Carabanchal with the closure of Yaserías, before moving to Alcalá-Meco. See <http://teatroyeses.com>; Lucía Cortina, 'El teatro es un gran mecanismo de reinserción social', *La ratonera*, 25 (2009) [http://www.la-ratonera.net/numero25/n25\\_yeses.html](http://www.la-ratonera.net/numero25/n25_yeses.html); Polly J. Hodge, 'Entrevista con Elena Cánovas: el teatro carcelario y la cárcel teatral', *Estreno* 28:1 (2002), 3-4; Elena Cánovas Vacas, 'Teatro de presas', *la ratonera*, 7 (2003) [http://www.la-ratonera.net/numero7/n7\\_poncanovas.html](http://www.la-ratonera.net/numero7/n7_poncanovas.html);

<sup>98</sup> Muñoz-Rojas, Ritama, 'Actrices bajo custodia', *El País*, 9 March 1999. Online. [Accessed 11/04/2013]. See also Luis Araujo, '“Fuera de quicio” de Alonso de Santos, por Yeses', *Primer Acto*, 267 (1997), p. 40.

Echoing the increased visibility of women in political and public life generally, one can identify a mini-boom in female-authored drama in the 1990s, much of which focuses on the social concerns of women, the body, and relationships, and could be said to interrogate established ideas about female identity.<sup>99</sup> Serrano argues that female dramatists ‘han conseguido, al fin, romper la barrera de los sexos’, albeit, she suggests, without engaging in ‘feminist’ work.<sup>100</sup> She goes on to note, however, the difficulties that even established female playwrights, such as Resino, Romero, Pombo and Pedrero, still faced to stage or publish their works. Despite increased prominence, therefore, in 1990 O’Connor could still make the claim that, ‘women dramatists, virtually non-existent in Spain until the late nineteenth century, continue to be an anomaly in the theatrical community’, particularly in the commercial theatre.<sup>101</sup>

Work done by John P. Gabriele and Candyce Leonard in the 1990s also highlights the continuing difficulties faced by female dramatists to stage and publish their works, despite some positive changes. Yet Leonard, in 1992, was optimistic about the future of female-authored drama. Her optimism may not have been misplaced.<sup>102</sup> From 1994-2008, the *Premios María Teresa León para Autoras Dramáticas*, sponsored by the *Instituto de la Mujer* and the Sociedad General de Autores y Editores (SGAE), helped to promote female-authored theatre, and although the argument could also be made that this, in effect, maintained its minority status, it is certainly the case that more female playwrights have come to be known in recent years.

A new cohort of female dramatists, more at ease with the term ‘feminist’, has emerged, and developed interesting takes on old themes, such as maternity (Ana Istarú’s *Baby boom en el paraíso*, 1996), relationships, lack of communication and fertility (Yolanda Pallín’s *Los restos de la noche*, 1996), and showed that while the same concerns exist now as before, the treatment of these radically differ. Myth, history and memory feature prominently in the works of dramatists such as Yolanda

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<sup>99</sup> See Virtudes Serrano, ‘Dramaturgia femenina de los noventa en España’, in Halsey and Zatin (eds), *Entre Actos*, pp. 101-112 (p. 102).

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 101.

<sup>101</sup> ‘Solidarity and Re-vision in the Plays of Two Spanish “dramaturgas”’: Maribel Lázaro and Pilar Pombo’, *Revista canadiense de estudios hispánicos*, 14:3 (1990), 573-78 (p. 573).

<sup>102</sup> John P. Gabriele and Candyce Leonard, ‘Perspectivas sobre el teatro español a los quince años de la democracia’, *Anales de la literatura española contemporánea*, 15:1/3 (1990), 253-73 (pp. 258-59; 267). Online. [Accessed 11/04/2013]. See also Leonard, ‘Women Writers’, pp. 252-53.

Pallín (1965-), Itziar Pascual (1967-) and Laila Ripoll (1964-), but what has changed is how they are received in a society more open to the recuperation of previously-silenced voices. Their theatre is critically acclaimed, although it is still much more likely to be found in the *salas alternativas* than in the mainstream theatres and is still largely absent from anthologies, literary histories of Spanish theatre, and university courses.<sup>103</sup>

In plays such as *Los restos de la noche* (1995), *DNI* (1996) and *Luna de miel* (1998), Pallín consistently explores gender identity and the roles and options available to a new generation of women, yet her works are not limited to what might be seen as female concerns. *Las manos* (1999), *Imagina* (2001) and *24/7* (2003) – the *Trilogía de la juventud*, written with José Ramón Fernández and Javier Yagüe – focus on social change and collective memory, and were all successful on the non-mainstream scene. For her part, Itziar Pascual, a dramatist with a clearly feminist outlook, has written that ‘el espacio y el tiempo de las mujeres es una acción, dinámica y prolongada, de esfuerzo constitutivo’.<sup>104</sup> Her 1998 play, *Las voces de Penélope*, is a reworking of the Odyssey myth from a female perspective, and serves as a call for female agency and an end to passivity and advocating: ‘Menos mitos, menos pedestales, menos héroes. Y también menos princesas de cuento’ (*Las voces*, 2004: 88).<sup>105</sup> Pascual herself has subsequently written of the shift in her focus from myth to everywoman: ‘Al principio me interesaron los mitos, el origen, Grecia. Todas las griegas. Ahora me inspiran las mujeres de carne y hueso, célebres y anónimas, cuya experiencia atraviesa el siglo XX y el XXI’, but one might argue in fact, that the words and experiences of her mythical women resonate across the ages.<sup>106</sup>

In the twenty-first century theatre, Laila Ripoll (1964-), stands out as a dramatist who captures the dual focus of acknowledging history and looking to the future. Her *Trilogía de la memoria* (*Atra Bilis* [2002], *Los niños perdidos* [2005] and *Santa Perpetua* [2010]) connects her to other female dramatists who look towards the

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<sup>103</sup> See Itziar De Francisco, ‘Paloma Pedrero: “Algunos autores tenemos al poder en contra”’, *El cultural*, 05 December 2001. Online. <http://www.elcultural.com/revista/teatro/Paloma-Pedrero/3691> [Accessed 20/01/2017].

<sup>104</sup> ‘Arquitecturas del sueño, paisajes de la memoria’ in Romera Castillo (ed.), *Dramaturgias femeninas*, pp. 77-82 (p. 81).

<sup>105</sup> See Carolyn J. Harris, ‘Myth, Role and Resistance in Itziar Pascual's *Las voces de Penélope*, 1-16 (p. 3) <http://parnaseo.uv.es/Ars/Autores/Pascual/voces/vocesHarris.pdf>. Online [Accessed 10/12/2016] First published in *Gestos* 18:36 (2003).

<sup>106</sup> ‘Itziar Pascual’, <http://www.contextoteatral.es/itziarpascual.html>

past to explain the present and to highlight lost voices.<sup>107</sup> The last two were staged by her company, Micomicón (founded with Mariano Llorente, José Luis Patiño and Juanjo Artero in 1991), not in the *salas alternativas*, but in the main space of the Teatro María Guerrero. In 2015, with Mariano Llorente, she was awarded the Premio Nacional de Literatura for her 2014 play, *El triángulo azul*, which represents on stage the experiences of Spanish prisoners in a Nazi camp.<sup>108</sup> Earlier, she had also explored the uncomfortable truth about domestic violence in *Unos cuantos piquetitos* (AAT, 2000). This topic, like that of memory, connects her to a long line of female dramatists, from the beginning of the twentieth century until now.

## Conclusion

It is clear that, while not yet on an equal footing with their male counterparts in the commercial theatre, there are many more female dramatists finding a public space for their work, and issues of gender, identity and agency are being explored in new ways. In addition, the longstanding antipathy to the term, ‘feminist’, which O’Connor noted in 1990, seems to be less in evidence among younger generations of playwrights.<sup>109</sup> Indeed, a feminist collective, the Asociación de Mujeres de las Artes Escénicas en Madrid: Marías Guerreras (AMAEM) emerged in 2001 as an ‘asociación cultural sin ánimo de lucro que engloba a las mujeres profesionales de los distintos oficios escénicos en la Comunidad de Madrid’.<sup>110</sup> These ‘Riot Girls’ of the contemporary stage know their history too, acknowledging with their name the inspiring role of María Guerrero in the Spanish theatre. Their focus on the battle that they face echoes both the political theatre of the 1930s and the militant feminism of Lidia Falcón in the 1970s and 1980s. Taking up a recurrent theme in the work of female dramatists, one of their most interesting projects has involved a feminist rewriting of classical theatre (both Greek and Spanish) for a contemporary audience and, while they still face the

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<sup>107</sup> Another interesting figure in this respect is Antonia Bueno, who made her name as an actress in the independent theatre of the 1970s, but went on to write feminist, historical dramas in the 2000s. See Serrano, ‘Descubrir al personaje. Dos monólogos de Antonia Bueno’, *Estreno* 30:1 (2004), 10-14 (p. 13); Bueno, Antonia, ‘Testimonio de Antonia Bueno’, *Anagnórisis*, 1 (2010), pp. 1-46 (p. 7). Online. [Accessed 10/12/2016] [http://www.anagnorisis.es/pdfs/Testimonio\\_de\\_Antonia\\_Bueno.pdf](http://www.anagnorisis.es/pdfs/Testimonio_de_Antonia_Bueno.pdf)

<sup>108</sup> ‘Ripoll y Llorente, galardonados por su obra sobre españoles en Mauthausen’, *El país*, 26 October 2015. Online. [Accessed 12/12/ 2016].

<sup>109</sup> ‘Women Playwrights’, p. 386.

<sup>110</sup> Itziar Pascual, ‘Las Marías Guerreras: una experiencia dramtúrgica’, in José Romera Castillo (ed.), *Dramaturgias femeninas*, pp. 153-58 (p. 153).

challenge of finding a public space for a female voice, their very existence inspires hope.<sup>111</sup> While the dramatist and member of the ANAEM, Itziar Pascual, wrote in 2004, ‘son muchos los espacios, reales y simbólicos, donde la actividad de la ANAEM *Mariás Guerreras* resulta todavía invisible’, it is clear that they are increasingly active and visible more than a decade later.<sup>112</sup> In addition to staging plays, they have published books, participated in conferences, contributed to the specialist press and engaged in collaborative work with other theatrical and non-theatrical groups.<sup>113</sup>

As we have seen, increased academic recognition of female dramatists and practitioners has also taken place.<sup>114</sup> Several previously forgotten works have been recovered, including by the Asociación de Directores de Escena de España, which has republished the works of exiled dramatists such as María Martínez Sierra, Carlota O’Neill, Isabel Oyarzábal de Palencia, Halma Angélico and Concha Méndez.<sup>115</sup> The important work done by the North American academic journal, *Estreno*, and in particular Patricia W. O’Connor, in publishing translated versions of texts by Spanish female dramatists over the years should not go unmentioned. This work of translation and transmission is also part of a wider movement in cultural memory. Indeed, the so-called memory boom in Spain has been good for the theatre as it has increased the interest in remembering and recovering the works and reputations of earlier dramatists, allowing us to trace a specifically female tradition in the Spanish theatre.

Nonetheless, it is evident that gender equality within the theatre has not yet been achieved. Writing in 2010, Vilches de Frutos lamented the fact that ‘la presencia de las mujeres creadoras es minoritaria, a pesar del elevado número de autoras, directoras escénicas y escenógrafas que han finalizado sus estudios en los últimos años en las Escuelas de Arte Dramático’.<sup>116</sup> This is borne out in the fact that of the fourteen names to watch in the Spanish theatre identified by John P. Gabriele in 2010,

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<sup>111</sup> Ibid., pp. 153-58.

<sup>112</sup> Ibid., p. 153.

<sup>113</sup> For details of these, see <http://www.mariasguerreras.com/>

<sup>114</sup> See, for example, Raquel García-Pascual’s *Dramaturgas españolas en la escena actual* (Madrid: Castalia, 2011) and Serrano, ‘El espacio y el tiempo de la mujer en la dramaturgia femenina finisecular’, in Romera Castillo (ed.), *Dramaturgias femeninas*, pp. 95-108 (p. 96).

<sup>115</sup> See a list of their publications: <http://www.adeteatro.com/publicaciones>

<sup>116</sup> ‘Representaciones de género’, p. 13. en el teatro español contemporáneo. La igualdad en la construcción del espacio cultural europeo’, *Aleph*, 24 (2010), pp. 9-28 (p. 13). Online. [Accessed 11/04/2013].

only two are women: Aurora Mateos Rodríguez and Irene Mazariegos Vela.<sup>117</sup> Sadly, they are largely absent from stage and page in the subsequent decade, yet there is some hope and female dramatists are today more visible than before. Raquel Vidales, in an article in *El País* in 2016, mentions the positive fact that the Centro Dramático Nacional created a programme of seven living female dramatists in the 2015-16 season, yet also points to the fact that female dramatists are still judged for their gender in a way their male counterparts are not.<sup>118</sup> David Rodríguez-Solás too, suggests that things have improved in the first two decades of the twenty-first century, noting that four women have been awarded the Premio Nacional de Literatura Dramática, all of them since 2010: Lluïsa Cunillé (2010), Angélica Liddell (2012), Laila Ripoll (with Mariano Llorente, 2015) and Lola Blasco (2016).<sup>119</sup>

In sum, some work remains to be done to acknowledge fully the contribution of women to Spanish theatre history and to offer women equal opportunities to access the stage, but there is no doubt that our perspective on the history and the future of the Spanish theatre has begun to alter. No longer considered a male-only sphere, a varied cast of non-passive and joyfully unruly female dramatists and practitioners have claimed a share of the credit for the evolution of theatre in Spain and have assumed their rightful place in the history of the Spanish stage.

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<sup>117</sup> ‘Catorce voces emergentes del teatro español actual’, *ALEC*, 35:2 (2010), 235-261. While there are many other female dramatists working in Spain, few have the visibility of their male peers.

<sup>118</sup> ‘El año en que estallaron las dramaturgas’, *El País*, 30 de abril. Online. [https://elpais.com/cultura/2016/04/27/actualidad/1461740645\\_037119.html?rel=mas#comentarios](https://elpais.com/cultura/2016/04/27/actualidad/1461740645_037119.html?rel=mas#comentarios).

<sup>119</sup> ‘Dramaturgas del Siglo XXI’, *Don Galán. Revista de Investigación Teatral*, 8 (2018). Online. [http://teatro.es/contenidos/donGalan/donGalanNum8/pagina.php?vol=8&doc=1\\_3&pag=2](http://teatro.es/contenidos/donGalan/donGalanNum8/pagina.php?vol=8&doc=1_3&pag=2). He also mentions initiatives aimed at young dramatists, such as *Escritos en escena*, which have benefitted a new generation of female playwrights. See also <http://cdn.mcu.es/laboratorio-rivas-cherif/escritos-en-la-escena/>.