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Cruz, Anne J., and María Cristina Quintero. Beyond Spain's Borders: Women Players in Early Modern National Theaters

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Cruz, Anne J., and María Cristina Quintero.

Beyond Spain's Borders: Women Players in Early Modern National Theaters.

New York: Routledge, 2017. Pp. 220 + 7 b/w ill. ISBN 978-1-1382-1799-7 (hardcover) US\$140.

This “recovery” project is a welcome addition to our often painfully inadequate knowledge of the roles women played in the circulation of dramatic texts and performance practices in early modern Europe. Although these essays are connected by two threads (Spain and women), in point of fact the territory covered includes England, Austria, France, and Italy. There has been a trend within the last decade in Hispanic Studies, perhaps initiated by William Childers’s *Transnational Cervantes* (University of Toronto Press, 2006), toward laying bare the transnational networks—the messy back side of the tapestry, if you will—which supported, sustained, and gave rise to literary monuments like *Don Quijote* which for centuries had been assumed to represent emblematically only one nation’s particular interests. This volume, which began with papers first presented at the Renaissance Society of America conference in 2014 and has now become part of Routledge’s book series titled *Transculturalisms, 1400–1700*, takes that venture two steps further by combining literary masterpieces such as *Celestina* with nearly unknown works by obscure dramatists, and emphasizing the centrality of women to the transnational enterprise. These multiple “crossings” of borders and boundaries between genres, states, and languages by queens, actresses, and production managers, as well as literary characters, make for a dizzying chase.

The essay collection is divided evenly into two parts, “From Spain to the Transnational Stage” and “*Commedia* and Court Crosscurrents,” each containing five essays. The first half includes “The Domestication of Melibea: Recasting Spanish Characters in Early English Drama” (José María Pérez Fernández); “Transnational Transformations of Zayas’s *El castigo de la miseria* in France and England” (Susan Paun de García); “To Conquer Paris: Spanish Actresses at the Court of Louis XIV (1660–1674)” (Carmen Sanz Ayán); “Spanish Plots and Spanish Stereotypes by Restoration Women Playwrights” (Anne J. Cruz); and “‘It’s a Spanish comedia, and therefore it’s better than any other fête’: Empress Margarita María and Spanish Cultural Influence on the Imperial Court” (Luis Tercero Casado). The second half is comprised of the following studies: “Influencing Gender Roles: The *Commedia dell’Arte* in

Spain” (Ana Fernández Valbuena); “Royal Players: Habsburg Women, Border Crossings, and the Performance of Queenship” (María Cristina Quintero); “A Stage for Isabel of Borbón: From Paris to Aranjuez” (Carmela V. Mattza); “Spain, Italy, and France: Marie Louise of Savoy, the Princess of Ursins, and the Crosscurrents of Court Theater during the Spanish War of Succession (1701–1714)” (José A. López Anguita); and “Isabel Farnese and the Sexual Politics of the Spanish Court Theater” (Ignacio López Alemany).

The editors point out in their introduction that part of the novelty of their approach lies in transgressing temporal as well as spatial borders, namely in the inclusion of material spanning the Middle Ages to the eighteenth century. While this breadth of range is to be lauded, they may err in critiquing traditional notions of periodization (which they call “arbitrary”) based upon dynastic continuity or discontinuity. It can be entirely legitimate to consider Habsburg Spain a different era from that occupied by the subsequent Bourbon dynasty. However, part of the advantage to their approach lies in the transnational connections cultivated by both of the aforementioned dynasties to other areas of Europe, particularly Austria and France. For the focus of their volume and the goals of their project, it makes sense to extend the time span beyond what we are used to seeing. A different question, though, is whether placing “early modern” in the book’s title might consequently be seen as a stretch.

One of the strengths of this volume lies in its combination of fictive female protagonists with actual flesh-and-blood women. It is unfortunately reflective of early modern experience and the historical record to find that a disproportionate number of these women were queens or other cultural elites. Indeed, the last four chapters of this book are devoted to the queen consorts Isabel of Valois, Margarita of Austria, Isabel of Borbón, Mariana of Austria, Marie Louise of Savoy, and Isabel Farnese. This is probably only the tip of the iceberg in terms of the total picture of women’s involvement in theatrical rituals, broadly defined; but the “common” women who left their mark have all too frequently gone unrecorded. This book contains some refreshing exceptions to this rule, such as the actress / director / producer Francisca de Bezón and the actress Barbara Flaminio. But even there we must assume that only the movements of the most successful actresses are known to us in such detail. The heavy weighting of the volume in the direction of queens does, however, bring with it a hidden benefit: the focus on court ceremony as a form of theatre is utterly convincing and needs to be taken into greater account as previously

rigid generic distinctions give way to more flexible definitions of what counts as literature versus what counts as life. The narrative of young queens being groomed to play their part on the world stage through an actual travelling itinerary of dramatic pieces performed at stops along the way—not to mention the tragic eventuality of their later death in childbirth, only to be replaced with shocking rapidity by newly eligible child brides—forces us to rethink many received notions of theatre as limited by a proscenium arch.

Perhaps the book's most effective "rescue" operation is conducted by Susan Paun de García to rehabilitate another part of María de Zayas's legacy. As the author notes, several memorable literary characters crafted by Zayas, such as her particular take on the miser or the *pícaro*, were translated, adapted, and absorbed into mainstream European literature without so much as a nod in the direction of their creator. It is time to give this early modern female writer credit where it is due.

A few minor errors mar this otherwise praiseworthy essay collection, notably the reference in the introduction to the *Celestina* as an early Renaissance novel. As the book's first printed title pages announce explicitly, it is a *tragicomedia*. Nonetheless, this is a valuable book and one which deserves to be taken seriously, as do the theatrical foremothers whose contributions it honours.

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D'Elia, Una Roman.

Raphael's Ostrich.

University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2015. Pp. xvii, 251 + 70 colour, 130 b/w ill. ISBN 978-0-271-06640-0 (hardcover) US\$74.95.

The purpose of this book is to describe the multiform ramifications of Renaissance culture through the diffusion and reception of an image: the ostrich. Divided into eight chapters, the work retraces the many appearances of this animal in artistic, literary, and erudite contexts, mostly focusing on the continuous exchange between verbal dimension and visual outcome.