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The Would-Be Author: Molière and the Comedy of Print
Michael Call

Michael Call’s The Would-Be Author is the first full-length study to examine Molière’s evolving—and at times contradictory—auteurial strategies as evidenced both by his portrayal of authors and publication within the plays and by his own interactions with the seventeenth-century Parisian publishing industry. Historians of the book have described the time period that coincides with Molière’s theatrical activity as centrally important to the development of authors’ rights and to the professionalization of the literary field. A seventeenth-century author, however, was not so much born as negotiated through often-acrimonious relations in a world of new and dizzying possibilities.

The learning curve was at times steep and unpleasant, as Molière discovered when his first Parisian play was stolen by a rogue publisher. Nevertheless, the dramatist proved to be a quick learner: from his first published play in 1660 until his death in 1673, Molière changed from a reluctant and victimized author to an innovator (or, according to his enemies, even a swindler) who aggressively secured the rights to his plays—stealing them back when necessary—and acquired for himself publication privileges and conditions relatively unknown in an era before copyright.

As Molière himself wrote, making people laugh was “une étrange entreprise” (La Critique de L’École des femmes, 1663). To an even greater degree, comedic authorship for “une étrange entreprise” (La critica, Martin Ferro, Facundo) are being rewritten in different artistic fields. Foundational nineteenth-century genres (travel narratives, gauchesque poems, and national romances) are being transformed and recycled. Controversial nineteenth-century events (the civil wars, the massacre of indigenous communities) are being revisited. Through a combination of close textual analysis and a broader perspective rooted in cultural theory, this book answers two interrelated questions: Why did the nineteenth-century resurface so strongly in the last decades? What are the ideological implications of this re-emergence?

Based on a transnational comparison of Argentina, Chile, and Uruguay and a survey of narratives that were mostly produced by well-known figures (political activists, public intellectuals, and canonical authors), Crisis y reemergencia shows how the Southern Cone’s cultural field has changed since the 1990s: how intellectual ethics, national identities, and discursive strategies that were functional to the consolidation of liberalism in the nineteenth century have been challenged, transformed, and re-thought in the last decades. Borrowing from cultural Marxism, discourse analysis, and post-colonial theory, the book defines the discursive and ideological components at the core of the nineteenth century, shows their continuity up to the 1990s (and thus clarifies the connections between liberalism and neo-liberalism), and exposes their recent transformation; a transformation that paved the way for the “return of the political” to the region.

Verónica Garibotto, University of Kansas, researches culture, history, and politics in nineteenth- to twenty-first-century Latin America, especially in Argentina, Chile, and Uruguay. She has published articles in Revista Iberoamericana, Revista de Estudios Hispánicos, and Studies in Hispanic Cinemas. Her latest project aims at reformulating the dominant theoretical frameworks for interpreting contemporary testimonial cinema and literature.

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Crisis y reemergencia: El siglo XIX en la ficción contemporánea de Argentina, Chile y Uruguay (1980–2001)
Verónica Garibotto

In the last decades—and especially since the 1990s—there has been a re-emergence of the nineteenth century in Southern Cone culture. Popular nineteenth-century figures (indios, gauchos, letrados, and cautivos) have re-entered the national literary scene in Argentina, Chile, and Uruguay. Heroes such as San Martín and Artigas are again the main protagonists of Southern Cone theater, film, and literature. Canonical texts (La cautiva, Martín Fierro, Facundo) are being rewritten in different artistic fields. Foundational nineteenth-century genres (travel narratives, gauchesque poems, and national romances) are being transformed and recycled. Controversial nineteenth-century events (the civil wars, the massacre of indigenous communities) are being revisited. Through a combination of close textual analysis and a broader perspective rooted in cultural theory, this book answers two interrelated questions: Why did the nineteenth-century resurface so strongly in the last decades? What are the ideological implications of this re-emergence?

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Striking Their Modern Pose: Fashion, Gender, and Modernity in Galdós, Pardo Bazán, and Picón
Dorota Heneghan

The importance of fashion in the construction and representation of gender and the formation of modern society in nineteenth-century Spanish narrative is the focus of Dorota Heneghan’s Striking Their Modern Pose. The study moves beyond traditional interpretations that equate female passion for finery with symptoms of social ambition and the decline of the Spanish nation, and brings to light the manners in which nineteenth-century Spanish novelists drew attention to the connection between the complexities of fashionable female protagonists and the shifting limits of conventional womanhood to address the need to reformulate customary ideals of gender as a necessary condition for Spain to advance in the process of modernization.

The project also sheds light on an area largely unexplored by previous studies: men’s pursuit of fashion. Through the analysis of the richness of sartorial subcultures in Benito Pérez Galdós’s and Emilia Pardo Bazán’s portraits of their male characters, this book brings forward these writers’ exposure of the much-denied bourgeois men’s love for self-adornment and the incoherencies and contradictions in the allegedly monolithic, stable concept of nineteenth-century Spanish masculinity. While highlighting the ways in which the art of dressing smartly provided nineteenth-century Spanish novelists with effective means to voice their critique of conventional gender order, the book also lends insight into these authors’ methods of manipulating sartorial signs to explore and to envision (as in the case of Pardo Bazán and Jacinto Octavio Picón) alternative models of masculinity and femininity. Threading through all chapters of the study is the idea propagated by all three of these writers that Spain’s full integration into modernity required not only the redefinition of the feminine role, but the reconfiguration of the masculine one as well.

Dorota Heneghan, Louisiana State University, received her PhD from Yale University and specializes in nineteenth- and twentieth-century Spanish peninsular literature and culture, gender studies, and comparative literature. She has published articles in Anales Galdosianos, Hispanic Review, and Bulletin of Hispanic Studies. Her current research focuses on gender relations and nation in the works of Sofía Casanova.