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Review of Nerea Aresti, Karin Peters and Julia Brühne, eds. ¿La España Invertebrada? Masculinidad y nación a comienzos del siglo xx

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**Aresti, Nerea and Karin Peters and Julia Brühne, eds. *¿La España Invertebrada? Masculinidad y nación a comienzos del siglo xx*. Granada: Editorial Comares, S.L., 2016. 280 pp.**

*¿La España Invertebrada? Masculinidad y nación a comienzos del siglo xx* initiates an examination of Spanish manhood in the context of the crisis of national identity at the beginning of the twentieth century by placing question marks around José Ortega y Gasset's famous work of 1922, *La España invertebrada*. In an era of heightened nationalism conditioned by imperial greatness, Spain lost most of the remnants of its colonial empire in the Spanish-American War of 1898. This loss sparked a crisis in Spanish national identity and the Generation of '98—a group of intellectuals including Ortega y Gasset—sought to diagnose the reasons for Spain's fall from greatness. As the title of Ortega y Gasset's book alludes, an important current of thought held that Spain had lost its backbone, and many thinkers posited that the weakening of Spanish masculinity was the primary contributing factor.

In the book's introduction, Nerea Aresti, Julia Brühne, and Karin Peters foreground the literature and historical context in which the national mythologization of masculinity occurred. At the same time, they propose questions and methodologies that inform all of the chapters including: how normative masculinity affects its recipients cognitively and affectively; how alternative versions of masculinity might exist within homogenizations of normativity; and how masculine constructions of the nation and the Second Republic influenced the Spanish Civil War and the Franco dictatorship.

The volume is divided into five sections, the first of which examines the intellectual roots of the notion of an invertebrate Spain. José Javier Díaz Freire offers an insightful contribution to scholarly understandings of the role that *donjuanismo* played in conceptions of Spanish manhood. Díaz Freire demonstrates how Miguel de Unamuno, as part of his efforts to remediate Spanish masculinity, denied Don Juan's sexual content by changing the character into one based on monogamous marriage rather than the sexual conquest of multiple women. Resting on solid methodological foundations, Aurora G. Morcillo's chapter analyzes how Ortega y Gasset conceptualized the relationship between history and masculinity, women, and heterosexuality. She points out that for Ortega y Gasset women were invisible in historical progression, but argues that using his maxim "Yo soy yo y mi circunstancia" allows for investigations into women's self-determination and agency in history. The *Revista de Occidente*, a journal founded by Ortega y Gasset in 1923, provides the primary source evidence for Carl Antonius Lemke Duque's analysis of how the sociological theory of Georg Simmel in particular served as a moderate Europeanizing force in Spain in terms of traditional Catholic conceptions of family and gender. At the same time, however, he argues that the journal contained the potential for social change because it focused on the role of women in modern societies. In the final chapter of this section, Zaida Godoy Navarros studies Ortega y Gasset's construction of a hegemonic masculinity, contending that this masculinity was geographically located in Andalusia and symbolized by the physiognomy of the campesino. She then places her findings in the context of Mexican history and literature of the 1910s and 1920s.

"Bodies—Emotions—Images" is the title of the book's second section. The impact of nineteenth century Catholic discourse on masculinity in twentieth century Spain frames Natalia Nuñez Bargueño's chapter. She finds that a reassertion of Catholic

masculinity was affirmed within the broader context of national regeneration at the *Congreso Eucarístico Internacional de Madrid* in 1911 in an attempt to rescue and reformulate a Catholic model of masculinity more in accord with the times. Mónica Moreno Seco and Alicia Mira Abad contribute a compelling chapter investigating the masculinity of Alfonso XIII, Spain's king from 1901 to 1931. At the same time that Alfonso XIII was lauded as the symbol of hegemonic Spanish masculinity, he was critiqued by anti-monarchists as emasculated and representative of Spain's masculine crisis. As the authors indicate, these contradictions became "fissures that not only affected the [king's] image but also the institution [of the monarchy] and the very idea of the nation" (117). The final chapter of this section by Nerea Aresti traces the development of a Basque normative masculinity from its first iteration as a warrior monk who was, above all, religious and moral, through its diversification in the 1920s and 1930s with the integration of working-class notions of masculine respectability. This detailed chapter offers an important regional component to the volume.

The third section deals with imaginaries of republicanism in Spanish literature and film. Lisa Zeller focuses on Ramón Pérez de Ayala's *Tigre Juan* to discuss the symbolic link between adultery and republicanism. Karin Peters examines how the work of Ramón del Valle-Inclán transforms the themes and images of masculinity in crisis—a caricaturized masculinity and a deformed masculinity—into a fundamental paradigm of historiographical imagination and political vision. Julia Brühne argues that the surrealist film *L'Âge d'Or* by Luis Buñuel, like Ortega y Gasset's *La España invertebrada*, focuses on three aspects of Spain's problems as they related to masculinity: pleasure, sexual aggression, and failure. In the final chapter of this section, Dieter Ingenschay analyzes Miguel de Molina's book *Botín de guerra* and Eduardo Zamacois' novela *La antorcha apagada* in search of alternatives to the hegemonic masculinity of 1920s Spain.

A rightist virile culture of masculinity forms the basis for the volume's fourth section. In its last bastion of empire, the Moroccan Protectorate, Spain suffered a humiliating defeat at the Battle of Annual in 1921 during the Moroccan War of 1919–1927. Christian von Tschilschke's chapter studies the repercussions of the disastrous war and battle in literature. He argues that the literature reveals the political nature of oppositional constructions of masculinity and that specific texts related to the war constituted the origins of fascist literature in Spain. The second and final chapter in this section, written by Zira Box, offers a fascinating analysis of how Spain's fascist party, the Falange, used language to establish a dichotomy between the masculine and feminine in imaginings of itself, the nation, and its enemies.

The fifth and final section of the volume is entitled "Continuations." Elena Díaz Silva's chapter provides an insightful examination of how exiled republicans in Mexico re-conceptualized masculinity in the face of their loss in the Spanish Civil War. The volume's final chapter, written by Claudio Castro Filho, discusses the role of Spanish theatre in the construction of different models of masculinity and femininity at the end of the Franco regime.

The wide-ranging nature of the volume's fifteen chapters makes the work as a whole less focused on particular topics, and disjointed in some respects. The intradisciplinarity of the volume is to be commended, but it does not always work, especially in the book's third section, which drifts afield from specific analysis of masculinity as it relates to history. The book's major contribution to historical

temporality is its scholarship about the years 1898–1931, but it mostly lacks historical perspective about the Second Republic (excluding sections of Díaz Silva’s chapter). The volume also does not explicitly offer much insight into how the masculinities it discusses impacted the Spanish Civil War or the Franco dictatorship, but the work does provide foundational material for such investigations.

*¿La España Invertebrada?* is a welcome and much-needed addition to the burgeoning field of masculinity studies in modern Spain. Its larger methodological and theoretical perspectives make it useful for placing Spain in transnational comparisons. The volume as a whole contributes to larger theoretical conversations in gender and sexuality studies. Several of the chapters do an excellent job of combining analysis of women and men and femininity and masculinity, helping bridge the gap in gender studies between studying either women or men. With this book as a basis, the field could now use similar edited volumes dealing specifically with the Second Republic, Spanish Civil War, and the Franco regime.

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