

Section A		
Institution: Durham University		
Unit of Assessment: 26 - Modern Languages and Linguistics		
Title of case study: Lorca and Theatre Censorship		
Period when the underpinning research was undertaken: Between 2007 and 2019		
Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:		
Name(s): Dr Michael Thompson	Role(s) (e.g. job title): Associate Professor	Period(s) employed by submitting HEI: Since 1984
Period when the claimed impact occurred: Between November 2017 and October 2020		
Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014? No		
Section B		
1. Summary of the impact <p>An innovative collaboration with theatre-makers drawing on research on theatre censorship in Spain, with a specific focus on the most frequently staged and studied modern Spanish play, Lorca's <i>La casa de Bernarda Alba</i> (<i>The House of Bernarda Alba</i>, a set text for Spanish A-level). The focus on censorship influenced the way in which the Spanish Theatre Company's London production of the play was conceived and marketed, and expanded its impact on audiences by informing the educational materials made available to approximately 180 schools and shaping the post-show discussions for school groups. Lorca's masterpiece was also the subject of workshops involving 81 A-level Spanish students, created in collaboration with Théâtre Sans Frontières. Research findings were turned into drama-based activities integrating language learning, textual interpretation and contextual knowledge, transforming students' and teachers' approaches to the work. The project has changed partner organisations' working methods and modified the way teachers work on <i>The House of Bernarda Alba</i> with A-level students, helping them to develop a wider range of interpretations of the text and understand its relevance to the historical topics on the syllabus.</p>		
2. Underpinning research <p>This case study grew out of a collaborative research project funded by the AHRC between 2008 and 2011: Theatre Censorship in Spain, 1931-1985 (TCS). Thompson was Principal Investigator, working with Catherine O'Leary of NUI Maynooth as Project Partner and Diego Santos Sánchez as Research Associate. Project website: www.dur.ac.uk/mlac/tcs.</p> <p>The team's outputs are making a significant and original contribution to understanding theatre censorship in the 20th century, reframing the field by comparing the Franco period to the Republic and civil war periods, by covering an unusually wide range of theatrical genres, and by paying close attention to Catalan theatre (especially in output R1). Since 2008, Thompson has given seven public lectures at schools, universities and theatres focusing on the censorship of Lorca and <i>La casa de Bernarda Alba</i>. Written in 1936 shortly before the start of the Spanish civil war and the murder of its author, the play was banned in Spain until 1963,</p>		

because of the Franco regime's hostility to the author and because of the intensity of the passions evoked in the work.

The *Hispanic Research Journal* article (R4 below) offers a survey of the field covered by the project, sets out the research questions, and anticipates some preliminary findings. Two of the key points it makes refer to Federico García Lorca, showing that he was an exception in being completely blacklisted by the Franco dictatorship, and that the case of *The House of Bernarda Alba* exemplifies a significant shift of power within the regime in the early 1960s. The story of the play's prohibition from 1939 to 1963, including new evidence of the regime's enduring unease about Lorca's influence and censors' arguments over the threat posed by the play, yields illuminating insights into the cultural history of the period, as well as opening up new ways of reading the text and understanding the political and cultural significance of Lorca's work as a whole.

The project's largest output to date is the edited volume *Global Insights on Theatre Censorship* (R2) based on contributions to the conference TCS ran as part of the Dublin Theatre Festival in 2010. The conference and the book expanded the scope and academic impact of TCS's investigations, creating an opportunity to compare Spanish censorship with systems of cultural control in other countries. The keynote contributors were prominent theatre practitioners, whose accounts of combatting censorship in various forms were complemented by academic papers on historical and current examples from various countries. Output R3 broadens the scope of the research in a different way, using examples of censorship to reframe semiotic concepts of dramatic character.

The culminating output of the project will be a co-authored monograph to be published in 2021, the first on this topic in English. The book will provide a comprehensive account of how the censorship apparatus functioned and how it changed in response to social, political and cultural change between the Republic in the 1930s and the transition to democracy in the late 1970s. It will gauge the effects of censorship on authors, groups and genres, comparing different responses to the constraints, and offer an overall assessment of the wider effects on theatrical activity. The book will make an important contribution not only to understanding of Spanish culture and politics in the 20th century but also to theorisation of the nature of censorship and the politics of aesthetics (building on ideas from Foucault, Bourdieu, Rancière and Butler). *La casa de Bernarda Alba* is one of the primary case studies in the monograph.

3. References to the research

R1. Thompson, Michael, "La totalidad de la obra se representará en perfecto castellano": Censorship of theatre in Catalonia after the civil war' in Lloyd Hughes Davies, John B. Hall & David Gareth Walters (eds), *Catalan Culture: Experimentation, Creative Imagination and the Relationship with Spain* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2018), pp. 35-59.

Volume reviewed in *Bulletin of Spanish Studies* 2019: 25-27. 'The volume displays a high level of expertise. [...] It is essential reading to anyone interested in understanding the ways in which Catalan production interacts with Spain, through a wide range of theoretical approaches which places it at the forefront of the most stimulating current intellectual debates.'

R2. O'Leary, Catherine, Diego Santos Sánchez & Michael Thompson (eds). *Global Insights on Theatre Censorship* (New York/Abingdon: Routledge, 2016). Thompson lead editor. Includes: 'Theatre Censorship Apparatuses' by Thompson & Santos Sánchez (pp. 24-31). 'Conclusion: The Power of Theatre' by Michael Thompson (pp. 259-67).

Reviewed in *Represura* 2 (2017): 231-35. 'Thanks to the first-hand testimonies it contains and the dynamism with which it examines the manipulation of theatre, O'Leary, Santos and Thompson's volume enriches and diversifies the growing field of theatre censorship studies, making it an essential point of reference for analyses of the complexities of any system of censorship – past or present' (www.represura.es/represura_2_nueva_epoca_2017.pdf)

R3. Thompson, Michael, 'The Effect of Censorship on the Construction of Character in Spanish Theatre during the Franco Dictatorship', *Estreno* 38.2 (2012): 70-86.

R4. Thompson, Michael, 'The Order of the Visible and the Sayable: Theatre Censorship in 20th-Century Spain', *Hispanic Research Journal* 13.2 (2012): 93-110.
[<https://doi.org/10.1179/174582012X13257549228534>]

O'Leary and Santos Sánchez have also published journal articles and book chapters arising from the project.

Further indicators of 2* Quality

Research Project Grant: *Theatre Censorship in Spain (1931-1985)*, PI: Michael Thompson. Funding body: Arts & Humanities Research Council. Period of grant: 2008-2011. Value: GBP234,821. Project Partner: Catherine O'Leary (NUI Maynooth).

4. Details of the impact

There were two strands of activity, both focusing on Federico García Lorca's *La casa de Bernarda Alba* (*The House of Bernarda Alba*), a set text in all English exam boards' syllabuses for A-level Spanish, and the Spanish play most frequently performed in the UK. The first strand comprised collaboration with the Spanish Theatre Company (STC) in London around their successful production of the play, while the second involved development of workshops for A-level students with the Hexham-based multilingual theatre company Théâtre Sans Frontières (TSF). Encouraging theatre-makers, audiences, schoolteachers and their students to look at the play through the lens of censors' reports between the 1940s and the 1960s has expanded their understanding of this iconic tragedy in relation to multiple contexts, and has influenced perceptions of how it can be performed in a way that brings out its social significance. In addition to the educational benefits for A-level students and teachers, both strands have provided benefits to the partner organisations (STC and TSF) by changing the ways they target audiences and integrate their performance work with educational activities.

(a) Support for performances (November 2017 to March 2018, February 2019 and February 2020)

STC's production at the Cervantes Theatre in London was developed in consultation with Thompson and financially supported by a grant he obtained from the Spanish Ministry of Culture (GBP12,790). Performances were complemented by workshops developed with input from Thompson and post-show Q & A sessions involving Thompson and members of the company. Schools bringing groups of students to the play were sent in advance an education pack produced by the company's education officer in consultation with Thompson, informed by his research on censorship, for work in class before seeing the performance. The play was performed in both Spanish (Monday-Wednesday) and English (Thursday-Saturday), attracting general audiences in large numbers as well as school groups, and the link with censorship was highlighted in the promotional material for the production. An additional week of 9 performances in Spanish for schools, including a post-show discussion led by Thompson, was run in February 2019 at Channing School in London. In February 2020, there were 31 performances in Spanish at the Cervantes Theatre, the Crescent Theatre in Birmingham and the Phoenix Theatre in Castleford (bringing the total number of performances between 2017 and 2020 to 112). The material in the education packs has been expanded and made available on the Cervantes Theatre website: schools.cervantestheatre.com/la-casa-de-bernarda-alba [E4]. In addition to enriching the experience of those who attended performances, the collaboration benefited the company by providing a distinctive focus for its first full season in its new venue and helping it to develop its educational role, making a significant and timely contribution to its mission of establishing itself as 'a reference point in London for Spanish-speaking culture'.

Thompson's research on censorship influenced the way in which the production was conceived and marketed, emphasising the play's political significance and its reception in Spain [E1 and E2]. The total number of spectators who saw the English or Spanish version of the production between November 2017 and February 2019 was 5,823, of whom 2,642 were secondary school students or teachers; approximately 70 of them attended the Q&A sessions led by Thompson, and education packs were sent out to 182 schools [E2]. Questionnaires completed by those who attended Q&A sessions showed that 92% of respondents found the information about censorship 'very useful' or 'fairly useful' for 'understanding the importance of the play and/or Lorca's work in general' [E3]. One student confirmed that it 'improves my understanding of the play, provides more depth', while a teacher commented: 'Excellent way to further understanding of the play. Makes the experience more valuable for A-level students.' The Spanish Theatre Company's production reached a significant proportion (approximately 16%) of the cohorts of students taking A-level Spanish in the school years between 2017 and 2018 (7,591 entries in total) and between 2018 and 2019 (7,932 entries), resulting in widespread influence on those students' understanding of the play and on teachers' approaches to teaching it. A further 168 school groups saw the production in early 2020. The company confirms that the collaboration with Thompson made a valuable contribution to the company's progress towards fulfilling its unique mission of promoting Spanish-language theatre in the UK: 'Thompson's initiative furthered the educational aspect of our mission [...], adding immense value to our artistic programme' [E2].

(b) Workshops for A-level students (January 2018)

Drama-based workshops for schools developed in collaboration with Théâtre Sans Frontières (TSF) brought together Thompson's archival research on censorship with TSF's extensive experience of using drama for language learning. Four workshops were held (one in Hexham, one in Durham and two in London), involving a total of 81 students of A-level Spanish and 12 teachers from 10 schools [E6]. The 3.5 hours of activities in each workshop allowed participants to benefit from Thompson's research through role-play facilitated by actors from TSF [E5].

The workshops addressed the risk of over-simplification in students' understanding of the political impact of *La casa de Bernarda Alba*, offering them a more nuanced approach taking account of historical change and staging conditions. Evaluations from teachers and students were enthusiastic, confirming the originality of the approach and the value of integrating textual analysis, contextual knowledge, a focus on performance, and role-play in Spanish. Of the 78 student respondents, 77 (98.7%) found the workshop interesting; 66 (84.6%) found it enjoyable; 59 (75.6%) found it useful; 54 (69.2%) agreed that 'looking at *La casa de Bernarda Alba* in relation to censorship has changed the way I think about the play'; and 73 (93.6%) agreed that 'the focus on performing *La casa de Bernarda Alba* was a good way of learning about censorship and Francoism'. One student commented that 'I liked how engaging the learning was', and another appreciated 'the way you were always involved – not just telling you the context but making you part of it so you could understand/enjoy it better' [E6].

As well as contributing to the learning of the student participants, the workshops prompted productive reflection by the teachers on creative ways of combining cultural study and language learning [E6]. One teacher stated that 'when I teach the play next year, I will definitely spend more time teaching the historical context', while another commented: 'Coupled with the performance at the Cervantes Theatre, your workshop has really made the study of Lorca's play very exciting for [my students] and they are very privileged to have had such a rich introduction to the text.' Another confirmed that 'the workshop was very rewarding for students and teachers alike, and I went away inspired, planning to bring more drama into the classroom and to use role-play involving myself as well as the students. I have taught the play for a number of years [...] and will definitely stand back more and consider new ways into

this important play'. One of the participating teachers disseminated a positive report on the experience to the 120 members of the Independent Schools Modern Languages Association (ISMLA) [E7]. TSF benefited by being enabled to adapt methods created for younger learners to 6th-form-level work with a richer, research-informed content base. The Artistic Director confirms that the collaboration 'deepened our knowledge and understanding of how to marry together fact and fiction to develop something that could go beyond the everyday and become a memorable and valuable learning experience for all involved' and that 'TSF now has a broader offer for future audiences' [E8]. Materials from the workshops are archived on TSF's website and can be downloaded, offering the possibility of further workshops in the future and encouraging re-use of the materials by teachers [E9 and E10]. Detailed plans for a second series of four workshops in April 2020 had to be abandoned as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic.

In order to further the continuing impact on teachers' practice, Thompson and the Artistic Director of TSF spoke about the project at the UK-Lingua conference on language learning in April 2019, which provided an opportunity to spread awareness amongst teachers of this new research-led approach blending drama and learning about language and culture. There were 93 delegates (66 from HE, 10 secondary and 1 primary teachers, 16 others). Further dissemination of information about both parts of the Impact Case Study will come from an interview given by Thompson in October 2020 for an article on Spanish theatre in the UK to be published in the Spanish journal *Artescénicas* (aimed at theatre professionals as well as an academic readership).

5. Sources to corroborate the impact

- E1.** Promotional material for Spanish Theatre Company (STC) production of *La casa de Bernarda Alba* at the Cervantes Theatre (London)
- E2.** Statement from the Artistic Director of STC (Cervantes Theatre), including data on audiences, attendance at Q&A sessions and dispatch of education packs
- E3.** Audience questionnaire data from Q&A sessions following STC performances
- E4.** Educational material portal on Cervantes Theatre website
- E5.** Promotional flyer for Théâtre Sans Frontières (TSF) workshops
- E6.** Data for TSF workshops – attendance, questionnaire results, teacher testimonials
- E7.** Article about workshops in ISMLA Newsletter
- E8.** Statement from Artistic Director of TSF
- E9.** Screenshot of page providing access to workshop materials archived on TSF website
- E10.** E-mail publicity distributed by TSF about availability of workshop materials