

## Toward an Anthology of Spanish American Women Poets, 1880-1930

### Introduction

This thesis presents poems by women who were writing approximately one hundred years ago, including many poems that have not yet been published in English translation. The introduction exposes and critiques how anthologies and literary histories often leave out women's works. The thesis as a whole is a feminist intervention in the ongoing construction of literary value, a reCanonization project that may be of interest to writers, readers of poetry, translators, and scholars of Latin American literature.

The introduction outlines the process I followed to find poems by a wide range of Spanish American women. I then discuss criteria that anthologists and critics apply to the inclusion of a poem in a literary canon, including a woman's proven membership in a literary movement, adherence to technical requirements of poetic form, and the poet's lifestyle, sexuality, conformity or unconformity to societal gender norms.

For this step toward a comprehensive anthology, I have chosen a wide selection of poetry from Spanish America. There are 42 poems by 25 women from 11 countries. My goal is to present a cross-section of women's poetry from this era rather than to focus on a specific country or literary movement. The selection of poems represents the variety of poetry that women were writing and publishing between the years 1880 and 1930 in many Latin American countries.

The criteria for inclusion in the anthology are that the work must be poetry written in Spanish by a female poet identified as Spanish American. I have also considered other qualities, any one of which brought the work to my attention and which made it a strong candidate for inclusion: the work is of high literary quality by my own judgement; the work was important in its time; the work is by a woman who was part of a known community of women writers; the work has a strong feminist message; the work is

representative of a well-known category or type of poetry of its time and place. In some cases, I have chosen to include poems from small country-specific anthologies, even though I only have one or two examples of the poet's work and minimal biographical information.

Many poems in this anthology treat the same themes or subjects, or appear to be intertextual with other poems. While it is not possible for me to prove that María Eugenia Vaz Ferreira wrote “Las ondines” after reading Juana Borrero’s “Hijas de Ran” –both about ondines, or female Nordic wave spirits—it seems probable both poets were reflecting common sources of culture, whether poetry, painting, or myth. Tracing such intertextualities is one way that the importance or interestingness of a poem is constructed.

The poems are arranged by author, in chronological order according to the approximate date that the author first began publishing. This method of juxtaposition shows patterns that would be obscured by arranging the work by its own publication date or by the authors' birthdates. For example, Uruguayan poet María Eugenia Vaz Ferreira was publishing in the late 1890s and early 1900s, and was active in literary communities, but her book was not published until after her death in 1924. If the work were to be placed next to other work from 1924, Vaz Ferreira's context would be shifted away from the time when her impact as a writer and thinker began to be part of public discourse.

The editors of *The Penguin Book of Women Poets* adopt a similar approach to chronological organization, explaining in their preface:

The organization of the book according to chronological development seemed to us the logical way to achieve a comparative perspective and to avoid creating merely inadequate anthologies of the various national literatures. When poets of the same periods are placed side by side, whatever the differences in their respective traditions, suggestive similarities of genre and motif emerge. (Cosman, Keefe,

and Weaver 32)

This principle is especially important for anthologies of women's work because of the barriers to publication and critical consideration that women face.

In my research, I turned to current poetry anthologies from the United States, then moved to current and past anthologies and literary histories published in Spain and Latin America; then to anthologies by country and books by the individual women I found.

Why make an anthology rather than choosing a single poet and exploring her work and biography in depth? My hope is that translators and critics will find new projects in this anthology, which will function as an entry point to encourage interest in many women poets who have been or are being dropped from the literary canon. I would also like to establish a solid body of women's writing to provide context for reading other women's writing that is tentatively included in canons of Latin American writing. In other words, I think readings of Gabriela Mistral or Delmira Agustini change when their work is seen in the context of work by their female contemporaries.

Last but not least, I would like to shift the balance of gender in the practice of defining literary movements and other groupings of poetic styles. By re-presenting a broad range of women's work from a particular time period, I hope to make it possible to refocus current definitions of literary quality. For example, *modernismo* as a movement was defined from men's work, and then, in many cases, quality was determined from whether a poem and a poet's life fit that definition of modernismo. Therefore, I feel it is a useful experiment to begin to define literary categories from a body of women's work, from which it is possible to form other parameters of literary quality. To begin that task, it was first necessary to find the women's poetry.

I began this project with the assumption and belief that there were women poets in Latin America 100 years ago who are worth reading today. My initial questions were: Which women were writing? What were their names? Where and how can I find their work to judge it for myself?

I found these women poets by looking in a broad range of anthologies, literary histories, encyclopedias of Latin American authors, and bibliographies in Spanish and English. None of the pan-Latin American anthologies brought me to a comprehensive picture of what women were writing in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. In fact, most anthologies had a very small proportion of women to men. It would be a natural question for a 21st century United States reader and perhaps even a Latin American one, to ask, "Why were there so few women poets in Latin America?"

María Monvel is one editor who tried to open her anthology across national borders. Monvel began her 1929 anthology, *Poetisas de América*, with the sentence, "¿Por qué hay en América tantas poetisas?" 'Why are there so many women poets in America?' as if it were self-evident there were many excellent Latin American women poets and always had been (9). (All translations are mine unless otherwise noted.) This question of Monvel's and the assumptions behind it would be a surprise to anyone looking through, for example, Cesar Aira's 2001 *Diccionario de autores latinoamericanos*, in which women poets and fiction writers are few and far between.

I read work by many women and gathered more good poetry than I could put into this project. I noticed a common theme in many anthologies, including those which were promoting a feminist view: they hailed women's recent work as if women's poetry were a new phenomenon. As Adrienne Rich said in 1980: "Each feminist work has tended to be received as if it emerged from nowhere; as if each one of us had lived, thought, and worked without any historical past or contextual present. This is one of the ways in which women's work and thinking has been made to seem sporadic, errant, orphaned of any tradition of its own" (11). Joanna Russ also pointed out this problem in *How To Suppress Women's Writing* (1983); she calls it "the myth of the isolated achievement" (62). This isolation was especially apparent in short biographical notes in poetry anthologies, in which male poets were discussed in a context of other men, while women poets were presented as lone examples of excellence.

In general, anthologies focus on a language, a region, a time period, or gender. They try to cover all literature produced in Spanish in any country, or focus on either Spain or Latin America, or sometimes Central America. Anthologies also focus by literary movement, so that there are anthologies of romanticism, modernismo, or the vanguard of the 1920s.

Women-only anthologies were extremely useful, but tended to be particular to one country. While I found anthologies of Colombian, or Cuban, or Guatemalan women poets, there was very little broad-scale attempt to integrate their writing into other literary collections. Anthologies overtly based on gender identity were more rare than anthologies based on national identity or inclusion in a literary movement.

"El sexismo en las antologías," a 1978 essay by Beth Miller, analyzes the composition of numerous anthologies of Mexican and United States poets. Miller goes through a selection of well-known anthologies and notes that the ratio of women to men is almost never more than 1 in 10. It is often much lower.

*The Borzoi Anthology of Latin American Literature From the Time of Columbus to the Twentieth Century* contains almost no women poets or prose writers: from Sor Juana Inez de la Cruz in the late 1600s, the book skips to Delmira Agustini and Gabriela Mistral in the 20th century. I was unwilling to conclude from this general pattern that women's poetry was of low quality in general and that Mistral and Agustini were exceptions. As I continued looking at pan-Latin-American anthologies, I noticed that the ratio of women to men remained nearly the same. Mistral was always present, usually with one or two other women poets and a statement that these women were exceptions. In each new anthology, I found different women chosen as significant and worthy of inclusion.

The woman-only anthologies that matched my ideas most closely were *Open to the Sun* and *Voces Femeninas Del Mundo Hispánico: Antología de Poesía*. Though the focus of both was later in the 20th century, they were extremely useful. *Open to the Sun* notes that the work has been selected in part to refute the claims of patriarchal critics that

women's poetry is overly sentimental, "a doleful, languid expression of no poetic value and which only serves as an offensively intimate confession" (Wieser 1). Ramiro Lagos' *Voces Femininas* anthology was excellent at outlining the women-only anthology as a feminist canonization project, drawing lines to anonymous women poets of the Middle Ages and to fifteenth century poets like Florencia Pinar and Marcia Belisarda (12). Brief notes on the literary history of each country provided lists of names of the precursors to the more modern poets whose work was actually included.

I then began to look for collections of poetry grouped by nation, with country-specific anthologies leading to many more women. I found some of these works from the bibliographies of general anthologies. Anthologies that included even one token woman writer were rare exceptions. A 1:10 ratio started to look radical and progressive to me.

There was no set way to find these books. Subject cataloging was unreliable, and browsing the shelves was crucial. From what I found, I branched out to individual writers or to other anthologies or works referenced in a book's bibliography. While this is of course a normal procedure for scholarly research, I felt that it was more difficult than it should have been to find women writers, to answer the simple question, "What women were writing in Latin America during a particular time period?" and then to find their work to judge it for myself.

National bibliographies are useful; works like Sarah Bollo's *Literatura Uruguaya: 1807-1965*. Other bibliographies group writers by nation or by their perceived inclusion within a literary movement. There is no apparent reason not to index or group writers by gender, yet it is rarely done. It is surprising, and worth exploring further, that anthologies grouping writers by nation often include women poets, while those grouping by literary category, in other words by a literary movement such as romanticism, modernism, or the vanguard, almost completely exclude women. As reference works such as these move online into databases and tagged encyclopedia entries, authors can be identified by qualities other than nation or movement; qualities such as gender.

Often, biographical notes on one woman writer have led me to another. I first learned of the existence of María Eugenia Vaz Ferreira in a paragraph or two about Juana de Ibarbourou. After that, I found mention of Vaz Ferreira's name elsewhere but had difficulty finding examples of her work. In fact, most of the women in my anthology are out of print, and, aside from Mistral, Storni, Agustini, and a few scattered poems from others, their work has not been published in English translation.

The internal structure of literary histories can show how women are marginalized by critics. Women often surface at the ends of chapters, appear in a subheading near the end of a chapter or a section on an era or literary category, or are clustered together in a chapter at the end of a book. For example, in *Historia esencial de la literatura española e hispanoamericana*, published in 2000 and edited by Felipe B. Pedraza and Milagros Rodríguez, two and a half pages of the book's nearly 800 pages are given to "Las Poetisas," put into the category of postmodernismo. More women are mentioned in *Historia esencial* in context than can be found in the index. For example, in fine print at the end of the general entry on 1910-1925, Uruguay, Silvia Valdés is mentioned as a nationalist and nativist poet, yet she isn't in the book's index. Willis Knapp-Jones, in *Spanish American Literature in Translation* (1963), has a single paragraph that mentions women poets in his 18-page introduction, which names 10 women. Only five of them are listed in the index. Thus, by a book's organization, a few token women can be further marginalized and made to appear disconnected from literature as a whole.

*Literatura Mexicana e Hispanoamericana: Manual para uso de las escuelas preparatorias*, edited by María Edmée Álvarez in 1957 but with a 1977 update, covers the whole of literature in Spanish in 500 pages, with Sor Juana Inés as the sole woman. Álvarez's chapter on romanticism, 50 pages long, includes 23 men and 0 women. Modernismo, another 50 pages, consists of 17 men and 0 women and includes "premodernistas." The book's second-to-last chapter, "La Poesía de la postguerra" or Postwar poetry, is organized as follows:

### Capítulo XIII–La Poesía de la posguerra

#### a) Ideas generales de las diversas tendencias

El ultraísmo

El surrealismo–Existencialismo–Neopopularismo–El retorno a los clásicos–La poesía íntimo-afectiva–El intelectualismo

#### b) Las diversas tendencias poéticas en México y en la América del Sur

'11 male poets'

#### d) Voces femeninas en la literatura

Gabriela Mistral, Juana de Ibarbourou, Alfonsina Storni, María

Enriqueta Camarillo de Pereyra, Margarita Michelena (Álvarez 536)

### Chapter XII–Postwar Poetry

#### a) General ideas of diverse types

Ultraism–Existentialism–Neopopularism–The return of the classics–  
Intimate-affective poetry–Intellectualism

#### b) Diverse poetic currents in Mexico and South America

#### d) Female voices in literature

According to *Historia esencial*, the poetesses of postmodernismo are Vaz Ferreira, Agustini, de Ibarbourou, Storni, and Mistral. This pattern is repeated in anthologies across the 20th century in Latin America, Europe, and the United States Vaz Ferreira is most commonly dropped, then Ibarbourou. In contrast, Mistral, who won the Nobel Prize, is nearly always in any anthology of Latin American poetry, while Storni and Agustini go in and out of fashion over time.

Jones, in the introduction to *Spanish American Literature in Translation*, says in the end of a section on poetry:

Mention should also be made of the many excellent women writers of poetry . . . Among the many other poetesses, Delmira Agustini . . .

Vaz Ferreira . . . Claudia Lars . . . María Enriqueta, Stella Corvalán, Amparo Rodríguez Vidal, and Carmen Delmar, may be remembered only because they achieved a high point of excellence more frequently than hundreds of their sister poets who also wrote, and sometimes published verse. (5)

In reaction to this statement, I am torn between gratitude that Jones pointed me toward some excellent poets and annoyance at the condescending tone he takes towards them. He implies that their work is good only in relation to that of other women and that women's work as a whole is not worth considering.

Enrique Anderson-Imbert's *Spanish-American Literature: A History* (1963) not only mentions many women writers but also puts them in the index. From the index, I compiled a list of women poets identified by approximate birth year and by country. The women tend to be listed in sections of the book that were typeset in small print. As with the Jones collection, I learned to appreciate the fact that the women were there at all because many other large anthologies and literary histories, old and new, left out any mention of women's existence.

For example, Pedraza's *Historia esencial* (2000) almost completely omits women in its index. In *Literatura Hispanoamericana*, volume 5 of an enormous reference series, *Historia de la literatura española* (1969), A. Valbuena Briones includes one woman in his 600 page history of five centuries of Spanish-American literature: Gabriela Mistral (415). His history is notable for its egregious omissions and its failure to mention women. Even Sor Juana did not make the cut.

Women poets are also invisible to Gordon Brotherston in *Latin American Poetry* (1975). His chapter "Modernism and Rubén Darío" contains women only as an object of male poets, mentioning a poem "La Duquesa de Job" 'The Duchess of Job' by Gutiérrez Nájera, and Julián Casal's poems to María Cay, a vain, glacial, unapproachable "beauty of Havana society" (60-62). Brotherston discusses a few of Darío's poems that objectify and

exoticise women, quoting "Amame japonesa, japonesa/antigua, que no sepa de naciones/occidentales . . ." 'Love me, japanese girl, japanese girl/antique, unknowing of Western nations . . ." and "O negra, negra como la que canta/en su Jerusalén el rey hermoso . . ." 'O black girl, black girl like she who sings/ of the new king in her Jerusalem . . . ' (67-68). There is no indication that Darío knew many modernista women poets of Cuba and those in exile or that he often praised their work. Darío's engagement with writing women is briefly touched on by Brotherston, who quotes his letter to "Lugones' wife," Juana de Lugones. She is named twice, but does not appear in the index. The index entries for the few women in the book all lead to women poets' neat one-sentence dismissal in the introduction: "We are faced with several major poets, who are both prolific and of international stature, among them a number of women writers of pronounced independence, like the River Plate poets Alfonsina Storni and Juana de Ibarbourou, and the Chilean Gabriela Mistral, who won the Nobel Prize for literature" (5).

When women are present in an anthology, the methodology of tokenism goes beyond invoking them as exceptions. Good women poets are implied to be a recent and unique phenomenon, no matter the time of the anthology's publication. I call this the Athena fallacy; its mythological model is that of Athena who sprang full grown and armored from the head of Zeus. Anderson-Imbert remarked that it is marvellous that women writers were recently empowered, in 1946. Daisy Zamora later spoke of the flowering of women's poetry since the 1960s (15). Rubén Darío, in his preface to Delmira Agustini's 1913 book of poetry, says, "Y es la primera vez quen en lengua castellana aparece un alma femenina en el orgullo de la verdad de su inocencia y de su amor, a no ser Santa Teresa en su exaltación divina" 'This is the first time in the Castilian language that a woman's soul appears in the pride of innocence and love, unless it be Saint Theresa in her divine exaltation' (Agustini 223).

In *Literatura Mexicana e Hispanoamericana*, at the beginning of the section on

women, Chapter XIII-d-1: Antecedentes, Álvarez states, "Uno de los acontecimientos más interesantes del período post-modernista, es la aparición de la mujer en la literatura" 'One of the most interesting happenings of the post-modernista period is the appearance of women in literature' (480). There are many statements similar to this in the prefaces to anthologies and in books that review Latin American poetry. The time changes, but the pattern remains the same; not just in Latin American poetry, but poetry in general. And not just in poetry, but any genre of writing. A distant foremother is invoked, perhaps Sappho or Sor Juana. The lack of (significant) women is pointed out. Then a comparatively recent "appearance" of women is celebrated. The women appear, as if by magic or spontaneous generation. Álvarez continues:

Habían estado anteriormente ausentes en la vida intelectual sin desempeñar ningún papel de importancia; pero, con un cambio sorprendente, se incorporan a la vida del pensamiento en Hispanoamérica. Nombres femeninos aparecieron en el periodismo, en la enseñanza y particularmente en la poesía [en el siglo XX]. (480)

They had been previously absent in intellectual life, without carrying out any role of importance, but, with a surprising change, were incorporated in the life of the mind in Spanish America. Female names appeared in journalism, in essay-writing, and particularly in poetry [in the 20th century.]

Here, all the key elements of patriarchal erasure are laid out explicitly. Women only recently became important; before "now," they were absent in public discourse; this development happened automatically or unconsciously (implied by the use of the passive voice); and their sudden appearance is a surprise. These claims are particularly insidious as part of a high school literature textbook used for many years, from 1957 until at least 1977, so that several generations of people were educated to believe that women's work had only recently existed and only recently had become important.

Monvel claimed in 1929 that recent conditions and the women's liberation movement in Latin America made it at long last possible for women to be unrepressed enough to be good poets; in Spain, however, she found only one or two women poets worth mentioning, and one of them was Saint Theresa:

La mujer española no es menos culta, ni menos sensible, ni menos inteligente. Pero sus sentimientos, embudidos siempre en el zapato chino del prejuicio, no pueden producir prácticamente obra de ningún género que salga hacia el exterior . . . Todavía no puede la española como la americana vencer los prejuicios . . . (9-10).

The Spanish woman is not less cultured, nor less sensitive, nor less intelligent. But her feelings, crammed into the Chinese footbindings of prejudice, cannot in practice produce work of any genre that leaps out of its bounds . . . Even today the Spanish woman can't overcome prejudice as the Spanish American can.

So while Monvel celebrates the excellence of Latin American women poets, she does so at the expense of women writers in Spain, concluding (wrongly) that there were none of good quality. She falls into the Athena fallacy by denying the existence of women elsewhere and in other times. Yet there is one distant, goddess-like, ancestral exception, in some cases Sor Juana, in some Sappho—but in Monvel's case, Saint Theresa.

In the latter half of the 20th century, United States critics and editors, even feminist ones, talk about Latin American women poets rather like Monvel talked about women poets from Spain: as if sexism were obviously so bad in all of Latin America that it's rare for women to write and very surprising when they do. Angel Flores and Kate Flores, in *The Defiant Muse* (1986), declare that women poets in Latin America had the "almost insuperable task" of writing themselves outside of "male imposed definitions of their innate inferiority" (Flores xxi). According to *The Defiant Muse's* introduction, "Spanish American women flooded the presses with their verse, but most could only echo their

male exemplars, who tended towards hermetic, dehumanized art. There were, however, exceptions" (xxi). The exceptions listed by the anthology for the late 19th and early 20th centuries are Mistral, Storni, Agustini, Ibarbourou, and Concha Michel. Other anthologies spoke of women as being inferior poets because they didn't follow the poetic standards established by men; the arguments in *The Defiant Muse* imply that women who did follow those standards are merely imitative and not creative—a contradictory argument.

The editors of *Pleasure in the Word* (1993) fall into an evolutionary paradigm as they outline a growing feminist consciousness that began with a few scattered precursors like Agustini and Clementina Suárez, who existed in isolation, "singular and lonely," "without the support of their society or of the women's consciousness movement that would emerge in later years" 25). Clementina Suárez is a good example to focus on for a moment. I found Suárez and her work in Mario Antonio Barraza's 1999 *Antología de Escritores del Istmo Centroamericano*, but she appeared in no other anthology or history out of the dozens I studied. This Central American anthology describes Suárez as the center of a vibrant circle of male and female bohemians, writers and artists, while she was in political exile in Mexico and El Salvador. Her house was called "El Rancho del Artista" and contained an art gallery open to the public. Suárez's work was also discussed in the context of other five other Central American women writers with whom she shared her "voz rebelde" 'rebel voice' and her lifestyle (Barraza 230-31). Further research led me to a 1995 biography by Janet N. Gold, *Clementina Suárez: Her Life and Poetry*, which describes her notoriety and literary reputation. According to Gold, Suárez was incredibly notorious in Honduras and other countries in Central America around 1925, as the first woman to wear lipstick, the first woman to wear shorts, and the first to give communist revolutionary poetry readings naked in the National Theatre (34). Suárez's invisibility or partial erasure, according to Fernández Olmos and Paravasini-Gerbert, "prefigures" the "increased social consciousness" of the 1950s, culminating in the 1970s which are

described as the moment when women finally made it. The crest of the wave is always new.

Miller points out that United States English or bilingual anthologies in the 1920s, 1930s, and 1940s are more inclusive of women poets than any anthology she found published in Mexico. Yet Miller falls into the error of thinking that her "now" (of 1978) is the exception to the rule of patriarchy. Her explanation of particular surges in feminist writings or in women remembered or known, is that they are due to women publishers and magazine editors:

Yo creo que el surgimiento de tantas mujeres en las escena literaria mexicana a mitad de los años sesenta se debe en parte a las publicaciones literarias de esos años que, aunque no feministas, fueron dirigidas total o parcialmente por mujeres. Estas importantes revistas literarias (*El Rehilete, Pájaro Cascabel, El Corno Emplumado*) ofrecieron a muchas mujeres un comienzo y una oportunidad para publicar regularmente su obra y también una manera para comunicarse con otros escritores. (37)

I believe that the appearance of so many women on the Mexican literary scene in the sixties is due in considerable part to the literary journals of those years which, although not feminist, were run partly or entirely by women. These important literary magazines (*El Rehilete, Pájaro Cascabel, El Corno Emplumado*) offered many women writers a start and a chance to publish their works regularly as well as a channel for communication with other writers.

I can't disagree with Miller that having more women publishers and editors will help combat patriarchal erasure of women's writing, and yet I have doubts that it is the only or most effective strategy. Past times and other countries had women's magazines, channels for communication, and literary journals run by women, but the ratio of women to men in

anthologies very rarely approached anything over 1:10.

Susan Bassnett, in her introduction to *Knives and Angels* (1990) describes anthologizing and research as "rediscovering," "unearthing," and "excavating" writers presumably unexplored, dead, unknown, or buried:

The process of rediscovering lost or neglected women writers owes a debt to developments in feminist literary history which have had an impact throughout the world. Gradually, certain names have begun to surface: Gabriela Mistral, the first Latin American writer to win the Nobel Prize for Literature; Victoria Ocampo, founder of the literary magazine *Sur* that changed the face of Latin American culture in the twentieth century (described here by John King as the great precursor); her sister Silvina Ocampo, friend and member of the circle of writers that include Borges, whose name has eclipsed hers completely until recently; María Luisa Bombal, the Chilean writer whose career is compared by Marjorie Agosin to that of Jean Rhys, the Caribbean writer whose work was ignored for decades; or Alejandra Pizarnik, the poet who died tragically young and whom Octavio Paz held to be one of the greatest writers in Latin America. In some cases, the process of rediscovery is due to chance, or to changes in fashion . . . or to the dedicated enthusiasm of an individual translator . . . But regardless of how or why the cultural excavation takes place what is clear is that now it has begun it is unstoppable. Latin American readers are finding out about their own cultural history and readers in other parts of the world are discovering a little of that neglected heritage through the medium of translation. The mothers, daughters, and sisters are no longer confined to the kitchen or bedroom: they have come out into the light. (2)

These rousing words about unstoppableity would be more convincing if I hadn't just been reading the same words from 1801 or 1836 from French feminists, from Cuban feminists in the early twentieth century, or in the 1920s from all over the world, and particularly from María Monvel, in 1930, in *Poetisas de América*. Calling this process “unearthing” carries with it the assumption that the women were buried, erased, and suppressed during earlier, less enlightened times. Now in modern times they have been brought to light and will be recognized hereafter. However, this is often not the case. A woman poet may be recognized in her time and still fall into obscurity again later as anthologies cease to cite her. Some poets may have been “unearthed” several times only to be “buried” again by editors who prefer to focus on men.

*Placer de la palabra* editors Fernández Olmos and Paravisini-Gebert include work by Agustini and by Suárez as "early writers" in their collection. In a passage not included in the book's English edition, they "rediscover" writers like Mercedes Matamoros:

El interés reciente (y creciente) en el estudio de la literatura femenina ha revelado la existencia de escritoras poco conocidas hasta ahora, como la poeta cubana Mercedes Matamoros (1851-1906) quien experimentó con la temática erótica en su poesía pre-modernista . . . En su colección 'El ultimo amor de Safo' en *Sonetos* (1902), Matamoros asume una voz activa y desafiante que se proyecta más allá de los parámetros aceptados para la expresión femenina de la época. (Fernández Olmos, *Placer*, xiii).

The recent (and growing) interest in the study of women's literature has revealed the existence of writers little-known until now, like the Cuban poet Mercedes Matamoros (1851-1906) who experimented with erotic themes in her pre-modernista poetry . . . In her poem-cycle 'Sappho's last love' in *Sonnets* (1902) Matamoros assumes an active and defiant voice that transgresses the accepted boundaries of

feminine expression of her time.

Here, I note that Fernández and Paravisini-Gebert feel that they are rediscovering, unearthing, excavating, and revealing an unknown woman poet; yet Matamoros was extremely famous during her lifetime, and, as I show in this anthology, was part of a vibrant circle of male and female writers in Cuba. Matamoros was certainly transgressing boundaries, but she had plenty of company.

Rather than to believe that I myself, as a representative of “objective knowledge,” have “rediscovered” a lost or forgotten writer, I hope to show that all women writers are particularly at risk in the process of historical loss and forgetting; and to show my process of discovery as an individual consciousness-raising that can be shared and re-experienced. In other words, just because I publish a book of Matamoros' poems, or a translation, or a critical work, does not mean she is now known. Known by whom? By some objective knower?

Stephen Tapscott's *Twentieth-Century Latin American Poetry: A Bilingual Anthology* was an exception to Miller's 1:10 rule, as it includes 18 women out of 81 poets: 22% women. Tapscott notes in his introduction,

I regret not being able to include more works by writers in exile or in the "Hispanic diaspora" (e.g., Chicano and Chicana poems, migrant worker songs, and poems by Hispanic writers living in the United States), more poems by politically engaged Nicaraguan and Salvadoan women, poems in indigenous languages (representing therefore different ethnic and class groups), more experimental poems and more poems in multisemic language combinations, more poems that challenge the hegemony of traditional Latin American gender roles—to cite only a few examples. I hope the biographical notes will indicate the clusters of association that surround and underlie those poems in this anthology which do represent the

foregoing tendencies. (xxi)

Tapscott's work is valuable for canon reconstruction and gives an excellent baseline to understand 20th century Latin American poetry. There was some information on what was left out, what was, in some way, "other." But I was left wishing for a way to access those "clusters of association" for the other-ed poets and poems. For example, if I were looking for the politically engaged Nicaraguan and Salvadoran women poets Tapscott mentions, how to find them?

Tapscott mentions Salvadoran women writers, yet in the biographical notes on Roque Dalton, I find no clusters of association that included women. Nancy Morejón's biographical notes do not contain any connections or clustering with other Cuban women writers. Juana de Ibarbourou's biographical notes do not mention even the other women writers from Uruguay who appear in the anthology—much less Uruguayan poets left out like Vaz Ferreira. Delmira Agustini's biography notes that Ibarbourou once called her "the lay saint" of Latin America, which is at least evidence that Ibarbourou was aware of her existence (Tapscott 63). It is exactly the other-ed poets, and their connections, that I am interested in, and I think an examination of the othering process can lead readers to re-evaluate literary quality and a poet's importance. The clustering of writers—how they related and associated with each other—is crucial to forming a generalized view of the region and period. Through the isolation of other-ed writers and the failure to mention their connections, they are left out of cultural and artistic trends.

Definitions of poetic styles and poetic movements often function to exclude women writers. Russ calls the refusal to place women into a literary category "false categorizing" but does not address the creation of the categories (48-61). A style or literary movement, such as "modernismo," is defined with highly flexible criteria, but its main definition seems to be that men write it and women do not. In anthologies and criticism, the tendency is first to define who the poets of the movement were, especially those who knew each other, then to define the movement's criteria; then to mention as if an

afterthought that there might be a lone woman who almost fits those criteria. For example, in a discussion of modernismo in the *Pleasure in the Word*, a single woman is designated as fitting the criteria of modernismo. Delmira Agustini is “frequently mentioned as the sole female author whose poetry and way of life reflected modernism's challenge to literary and social conventions” (Fernández Olmos 23). It is worth taking a closer look at how the definitions of literary movements are formed, with modernismo as an example.

The definition shifted over time and from author to author. Critics frequently seemed to confuse or blend Latin American modernismo—a poetic movement inspired by Rubén Darío's 1888 book *Azul* . . .—with a later vision of European modernism whose definition is confusing, vague, and contradictory.

In an introduction to Mildred Johnson's 1956 book *Swan, Cygnets, and Owl: An Anthology of Modernist Poetry in Spanish America*, J. S. Brushwood says that modernismo is not only a continuation of French symbolist poetry but also has nationalist characteristics difficult to define:

As a matter of fact, it is much more difficult to state a series of characteristics common to Spanish-American Modernist poets than it is to do so for French Symbolism or for French Parnassianism . . . Rather than regard the Modernists as a school, it is better to regard them as poets motivated to seek a new way of expression by the same progress toward intellectual independence. (Brushwood 4)

Modernismo, according to Brushwood, means “understanding the creative act.” Its three qualities are: it refines romanticism; it reacts against realism; it's a “coming of age in Spanish-American poetry” (5). Brushwood denies that modernismo lies in formalism—but instead outlines a strand of formalist/symbolist modernismo and another, parallel or intertwined, of Parnassian modernismo that is not concerned with the poetic forms such as terza rima and alexandrine meter, which were introduced to the Spanish language by

Darío. Modernismo, thus, was not a style of writing or a form, but an “attitude toward writing poetry” (6). According to the classification scheme of Brushwood and Johnson, no women are modernists, but many are included in the anthology as post-modernists. The differences are elusive and seem to rest on being “intensely personal” in subject matter, which distances and alienates the [male] reader. For example, Agustini’s poems are said to fit the technical and formal requirements of the poetics of modernismo, but they “have the disadvantage of losing identification with the reader, who is inclined to interest himself in what the poems reveal of Agustini’s life, rather than allow his own poetic being to communicate with her” (28). This reveals that the classification of Agustini as modernista or post-modernista depends on the critic’s assumption of a male reader.

Jones defines modernismo as beginning with Rubén Darío in 1888 or 1890, but he calls the Parnassians of the 1860s and 1870s part of Spanish American modernismo. He describes the Parnassians as a revolt against romanticism: "A consciousness of the sensuous beauty in nature, a longing for escape, for death, melancholic dreams, along with a refinement of expression in musical lines, sometimes carried to incomprehensible extremes" (2). Jones then claims that the modernista movement, with its "aristocratic and aesthetic tendencies," ended in 1910 (5). At the very end of his section on modernismo, Jones includes a single paragraph on women, containing the names of ten women. They are not identified as modernistas or as part of any other literary movement.

José Olivo Jiménez says, defining by negation, that modernismo is not "superficial escapismo exotista, de tendencia excluyentemente afrancesada o extranjerizante . . ." 'superficial, exoticizing escapism, of a tendency exclusively frenchified or foreign-loving' and goes on to define the genre by naming its main poets: Darío, José Martí, Manuel Gutiérrez Nájera, and Julián del Casal (9). According to this definition, modernismo ends in about 1930 (13). No women are mentioned, and, in fact, Gabriela Mistral is the only woman to appear in his anthology.

Jean Franco mentions the "cosmopolitan outlook and the cult of the exotic" of Spanish-American modernism; it's poetry that attempts to be atemporal and universal (125). It avoids the local and particular, and places a high moral value on the aestheticization of experience. Franco's modernismo includes eleven male writers plus Delmira Agustini, whose work is not discussed in detail. Franco points out:

Generalisations about Modernism are particularly dangerous because the poets did not form a coherent movement with a definite poetic creed. The characteristics mentioned above are common to most of them, but further than that we cannot go. There is no way of studying Modernism except by reading the poems of each individual poet.

(Franco 125-26)

This creates a circular definition of modernismo, one which defines modernismo to be the work of particular men who do not fit any specific criteria and yet who have been declared by some critics to be the most important writers of their generation.

In her book on four women poets, Sidonia Rosenbaum made it clear that she felt none of the women she studied belonged in the first ranks of the defining literary movement of their generation:

During Modernismo proper—the most original, fecund, and brilliant period in the literary annals of Spanish America—there was not a single woman among the many great poets who then appeared . . . It is not that women ceased to write during that time, but those that did "attempt the pen" were in a secondary place in relation to the men, because they were either too conservative, and limited themselves to the continuing of the preceding, established, literary modes, or if they did essay the new manner—essentially innovative and revolutionary—they did so somewhat timidly, assimilating merely its most superficial and cursory notes. (Rosenbaum 41)

Rosenbaum stakes out a claim for the unusual brilliance of male poets of modernismo and laments that in her judgement none of the women writing during the period of modernismo were great poets. According to Rosenbaum, Agustini, Mistral, Ibarbourou, and Storni were successful at being modernistas but were inherently inferior poets. Throughout her book, she emphasizes her views that women poets are timid, immature, and superficial and—paradoxically—that their work is at its best when based on weakness and instinct, since those are the “true essence of femininity” (256).

Alfred Coester's survey of Spanish American literature devotes two chapters to modernismo. According to Coester, the publication of Darío's book *Azul . . .* in 1888 was the beginning of modernismo, which was a Spanish-American adaptation of French Parnassian and Symbolist influences, "beginning with translation and imitation" (450). Darío and Julian de Casal, in Cuba, collaborated and influenced each other in their work and personally. No mention is made of Julian de Casal's modernista, translator, women poet friends such as Juana Borrero and Aurelia Castillo. In a chapter titled "Darío's Followers," Coester devotes several pages to descriptions of the work of "the continuers of modernista poetry," who kept on being modernista after the men had moved on, work which has "the unity of sex" though the poetesses are from different countries. Agustini, Storni, Ibarbourou, and Mistral, "representatives of the cloistered women of Latin America," he considers to "voice the suppressed feelings of sex" though "their main themes are themselves and their vague longings" (481). When a woman demonstrates mastery of technical form or perfectly meets the criteria of a school of poetry, critics say she's not innovative or important. When she innovates, critics classify her as a failure or as marginal to a literary movement, and this marginalization leads to her being dropped from the literary canon.

The editors of *El placer de la palabra* set forth the definition of modernismo as a masculine endeavor, with Agustini as the lone exception:

La mayoría de los estudios críticos sobre el Modernismo, el cual

Ricardo Grullón describe como "la nueva y duradera fraternidad de la invención literaria" tratan casi exclusivamente la literatura masculina. La poeta uruguaya Delmira Agustini (1886-1914), sin embargo, se menciona con frecuencia como la única mujer cuya obra y estilo de vida reflejan el reto modernista a las convenciones sociales y literarias. . . . Agustini, como Matamoros, expresa un sentimiento muy moderno en su poesía: la necesidad de definir su identidad social y personal dentro del medio ambiente represivo de su sociedad. . . . (Fernández Olmos, xiv)

The majority of critical studies on modernism, which Ricardo Grullón describes as 'the new and lasting fraternity of literary invention' almost exclusively study masculine literature. The Uruguayan poet Delmira Agustini, without doubt, is mentioned frequently as the only woman whose work and lifestyle reflect the modernista struggle against social and literary convention. . . . Agustini, like Matamoros, expresses a very modern sentiment in her poetry: the necessity of defining her social and personal identity against the surrounding repressive norms of her society, and the desire to unleash the full potential of her passions . . .

This statement explains something of the double bind that women poets face. To be considered part of modernismo, or many other literary movements, their lives must conform to particular standards that are difficult to maintain. The importance and relevance of their work is determined by critics to be dependent on poetic and aesthetic qualities that further depend on the women proving their allegiance to a radical and bohemian lifestyle, yet one that also is properly feminine.

In the 1920s, Peruvian critic José Carlos Mariátegui said about women poets:

Los versos de las poetisas generalmente no son versos de mujer. No

se siente en ellos sentimiento de hembra. Las poetisas no hablan como mujeres. Son, en su poesía, seres neutros. Son artistas sin sexo. La poesía de la mujer está dominada por un pudor estúpido. Y carece por esta razón de humanidad y de fuerza. Mientras el poeta muestra su "yo," la poetisa esconde y mistifica el suyo. Envuelve su alma, su vida, su verdad, en las grotescas túnicas de lo convencional. (qtd. in Zamora 22)

The verses of poetesses generally aren't women's verses. One doesn't sense in them any female feeling. The women poets don't talk like women. They are, in their poetry, neuter beings. They're artists without sex. The poetry of women is dominated by an idiotic modesty. And that's why they lack in humanity and power. While the male poet displays his "I," the poetess hides and mystifies herself. She wraps up her soul, her life, her truth, in the grotesque tunics of the conventional.

Mariátegui's barb is multipronged and multipurpose. First, he genders literature, claiming that to be good literature, to express true humanity, writing must be linked to gender and sexuality. Male writers, at least some of them, adequately express their masculinity; female writers, through their own personal fault at being sexually inhibited, neuter themselves, which makes their writing bad. But something else is happening in Mariátegui's rhetoric. Being wrapped in convention was hardly limited to women writers; and in fact Mariátegui creates a trope that feminizes particular movements, in this case, modernismo and romanticism. So a particular style of "bad writing" that he wishes to criticize is here associated with femininity, femaleness, and in particular a failed femininity, one that fails to be essentially feminine enough. It is strongly implied that bad writing, even if done by men, is *feminine*. What is passé is whatever women have become good at.

In all the ways outlined above, women are defined out of a literary movement and thus out of many positions of literary influence or the perception of importance.

For Monvel, editor of *Poetisas de América*, good poetry breaks out of literary category; for many other critics, good poetry represents its movement as a perfect exemplar. Definitions of literary movements, and critical declarations about "influence," are often made into patterns reflecting patriarchal ideas of geneological descent. People writing in many different countries simultaneously are influenced by many factors. It is common to have a narrative focus on a "father" who is a great man and a genius and who passes on traits to followers, as Darío seems to be the placeholder for a myth of transmission of culture from France to Latin America. Instead, we can view literary and cultural inheritance in a non-linear way, as clouds or clusters of influence.

Categories and movements are invented for various trends in poetry, but women, in much of Spanish American literary criticism, don't fit into those categories and are not chosen to represent them. No women are romanticists, pre-romanticists, post-romanticists, pre-modernists, or modernists. No movements are invented to include their work. Their work is central to no category of its own, other than being not-by-men. They are excluded from critical taxonomy. Lillian Robinson, in "Treason Our Text" (1983), points out that arguing case by case to include particular women in a canon can co-exist with other strategies to fight sexist exclusion, such as redefining an existing canon's parameters (215). In particular, arguing case by case that a woman writer is or should be in the first ranks of writers does not address issues of timelessness or universality. In this case, changing the definition of modernismo and creating new poetic categories will be helpful to increase the visibility of poetry by women.

Ramiro Lagos, in his introduction to his excellent 1991 anthology *Voces Femeninas del Mundo Hispánico*, explains the traditional and passive object-role of the muse as imposed upon women, and how women poets not only defy and transcend that object-role but also establish a literary category of "feminismo lírico," lyrical feminism, beyond

modernismo, post-modernismo, or the vanguard (14). This is an interesting attempt to define a school of writing, a literary category such as modernismo.

One can imagine—and this might be a good tactic for criticism—a book on the international maenidismo movement, which discusses only women's work; with a subheading of a chapter at the end of the book titled "masculine voices of post-maenidismo" about Darío's sex life, number of children, his love of housework and teaching, his unhappiness under patriarchy, how well he expresses a masculine erotic sensibility, and then mentions that a few of his poems approach real maenidismo.

Rather than being grouped by critics into a movement, the most famous and successful women poets of the late 19th- and early 20-centuries are left out of the next major literary movement to be defined: the vanguard of the late 20s. In Vicky Unruh's book from 1991 on the Latin American vanguard, there are only a few sentences on women, and this was the one with the most information: "Although women infrequently participated actively or visibly in vanguardist activities, Flórida 'a vanguardist literary group in Argentina' included the poet and prose fiction writer Norah Lange, who was married to Girondo" (12). Sentences like this were crucial to my research. This sentence can be read as meaning "There weren't any important women associated with the vanguard." But I had to learn to read with a suspicious eye, to read this sentence as also carrying the positive meaning "There *were* women associated with the vanguard, across all of Latin America." With this as a hypothesis, it is possible to go out and look for the women in order to reevaluate their importance.

Unruh's knowledge base of women's writing of the 1920s, and thus her critical stance, has changed. In her 2006 book *Performing Women and Modern Literary Culture in Latin America*, she discusses women's work and roles in complex terms. Unruh describes how women writers escape from the silent "inspirational muse" role and transition into an active, writerly role in the 1920s by their focus on public performance, readings, plays, and "witty display and journalistic self-portraiture" (2).

Poets of modernism, postmodernism, and the vanguard are often praised for their unconventional lives and morality. And yet much of the political feminist movement of the late 19th and early 20th century in Spanish America and other areas depended on the idea of women as moral superior; the struggle for the vote in many countries leaned heavily on this idea.

Poems that might seem conventional now were radical and political in 1900. For example, Luz Rubio of Cuba's Feminist Party published an argument in 1914 that poets and intellectuals, led by José Martí, had led the way to freedom for everyone but women. She claimed that the laws of Cuba made women into slaves and that real Cuban nationalism included a struggle for women's emancipation because women were the brain and conscience of the country. According to Catherine Davies, early 20th century Cuban feminist thought promoted the idea that "Without women, men's actions are morally unsound" (37). With this activist feminist political dimension in mind, gendered political readings of women's poems become more apparent. Davies explains further that ". . . what feminist writers did was to 'feminize' Cuban nationalist ideology by appropriating nationalist symbols of purity and integrity" (38).

Davies quotes Iris Zavala on the paradox facing modernista women writers: "they sought as individuals to oppose autonomously the authoritarianism of the social order, but the only way in which this was done was through the internalization of patriarchal authority" (39). Poetry, especially the lyric poetry by women, writes Davies, was "the rebellion of subjectivity and desire against all forms of institutionalized life" (38). Davies begins an outline of what might be seen by looking at late 19th- and early 20th-century women's poetry as a literary category:

Women's poetry, for example, repeatedly subverted traditional myths of femininity, including the Mother and Domestic Bliss, by means of several discursive strategies: by refocusing the female body and sexuality from a feminine perspective; by emphasizing the specific

experiences of women's lives, and by deflating dominant myths of masculinity through irony, ridicule, and humor. This kind of women's writing is perhaps the most radical as it involves the writer turning private subjectivity into the source of a collective, liberating discourse; it involves socializing the unconscious and the inner self" (40)

Davies draws clear connections between the artist-poet's project of the Self and political consciousness. She points out radical readings of poems by women who imagine Cuba personified as Woman, especially in poems by Luisa Pérez de Zambrana, Nieves Xenes, and Dulce María Borrero.

The male poet's intensely patriarchal answer to this feminine discourse is typified by the poem "Feminismo" published in 1917 by an Argentinian, Alfredo Arteaga (see Appendix 2). Arteaga, addressing women, lists qualities that make women superior to men, and then reminds us: that is why we should be content to stay at home in our proper roles as embodiments of passive virtues, of beauty, and in our roles as mothers—rather than playing active, public roles like writing or voting in elections.

. . . ¡oh bellos seres  
que derramáis primaveral frescura  
en los tiempos más foscos de la historia  
y que santificáis nuestros placeres,  
contentaos por siempre con la gloria  
y con la suavidad de ser mujeres!  
. . . oh lovely beings  
that spill over with primeval freshness  
in the greatest focal points of history,  
you who sanctify our pleasures,  
content yourselves for always with the glory

and the softness of being women!

The struggle for rhetorical and poetic ground becomes clear when “Feminismo” is read together with, for example, “Manos Femeniles,” a poem that is not devoid of irony. Colombian poet Emma Vargas Flórez de Arguelles calls upon the tropes cited by Arteaga—purity, grace, piety, motherhood; but her “pure womanly hands” unite with those of other women; they weave wreaths of poetic victory; they take up the professional pen:

Mujeres de América, de sueños hermanos:  
para el himno nuevo todas nuestras manos  
tejerán un verde ramo de laurel,  
y—unidas—pondremos de nuestros jardines  
las frescas violetas, los raros jazmines,  
las lilas frondosas, el rojo clavel! (Biblioteca Aldeana de Colombia)

Women of America, sisters of dreams,  
to make new songs, our hands together all  
shall weave a laurel wreath,  
and—united—we'll add from our gardens  
fresh violets, exotic jasmine,  
leafy lilies, red carnation!

“Manos Femeniles,” included in the body of this thesis, demonstrates that it is useful to know something about the internal library of an author. What books were their touchstones? To what do their poems refer? Is this a sentimental, trivial, feminine poem about a swan and lilies, conventional “greeting card” poetry? Out of context, that is what it can seem, but in context with other romanticists, alongside Darío and other modernists, and especially in juxtaposition with work by other women writers, it is clear that women such as Vargas Flórez who wrote about swans and lilies were engaged in public discourse about aesthetics: they wrote about their own poetics. In fact they are often struggling to position themselves as women within that poetics.

Both for translation and for critical evaluation, being able to spot intertextuality is crucial. For example, without knowing about the symbolic language of modernismo, it's not possible to understand the poetics of many of the swan poems written by the women in this anthology.

In Darío's influential 1888 book *Azul . . .*, the swan, a major symbol of modernismo, represented artistic purity with its whiteness and the question mark with its curving neck. The swan exemplifies perfect beauty, made of perfume, ermine, dawn, silk, and dreams. It glides across a blue lake of inspiration, an infinite fountain of Art. It is unearthly, aristocratic, and withdrawn from vulgar reality. Likewise, blue, the blue of the lake that reflects heavenly blue, is the color of perfect aesthetic purity. Other Latin American poets writing about swans must be understood to be reacting to the French Symbolists and to Darío's modernista use of the swan-as-poet: "The color blue became as much a symbol of Modernism as the grace of the swan. Blue was also the unattainable, the artistic, the purely aesthetic" (Brushwood 9).

José Enrique Rodó's 1900 book *Ariel* outlined a Latin American modernista ethics based on the cult of beauty. According to Rodó, social justice would arise only from guidance from individual striving after beauty; beauty must guide reason (31). Later, in 1911, Enrique González Martínez wrote his famous poem announcing the death of modernismo, "Tuércelo el cuello al cisne" 'Wring the swan's neck' (Johnson 114). Carlos Reyles, in an essay on the "death of the swan" in Uruguay, urged Latin American writers to adopt a strenuous life in pursuit of realities and political engagement rather than ideals of aesthetic beauty (qtd. in Coester 481).

Many women poets wrote about the modernista swan. In doing this, they were engaging with a major strand of aesthetic discourse of their time. Elisa Monge, a Guatemalan writer publishing in the 1880s and 1890s, wrote a story in verse about her encounter with a swan. She and other women are described in the poem as watching the swan, appreciating his perfect beauty, but as participants in a constructivist aesthetic

project. Delmira Agustini, in her 1913 poem "El cisne," describes the swan's purity and then transgresses the tenets of modernismo by engaging physically and sensually with its etherealness (Agustini 255). Luisa Pérez de Zambrana, in 1906, wrote an elegy, "¡Ya Duermes!" to the poet Mercedes Matamoros. The elegy describes Matamoros as a dove, a swan, a lily, as everything ethereal and sublime:

. . . miraba sola,  
en las azules medias noches bellas,  
siguiendo su inefable melodía  
la música de luz de las estrellas.  
¡Cisne del cielo sobre alada nube!  
en el imperio azul . . . (Vallejo 291)  
. . . keeping watch alone,  
in the blue midnights, lovely,  
pursuing, with her ineffable melody,  
the music of the light of the stars.  
Swan of the skies on winged mist!  
in the imperial blue . . .

Matamoros, as a poet and artist, is given the modernista attributes of detachment from earthly things, of existing in a realm of pure fantasy and ideals: in blueness, in the stars, in gems and lutes, in art that illuminates Utopia.

Rodó's *Ariel* sets up the statue of Ariel as a mute ideal of beauty. The feminized role of the statue is as object, as inspiration, or as expression of the artist's ideals. Women poets at times invoke their own silence, the "mute statue" of their bodies, breaking the silence through paradox. Luce Irigaray points out women writers' difficulty of breaking silence: "women find it so difficult to speak and to be heard as women. They are excluded and denied by the patriarchal linguistic order. They cannot speak as women in a sensible, coherent manner" (qtd. in Davies, 63). They represent their bodies and their silence, then

through paradox they break silence and break what blocks them from identifying their own bodies as the site of desire: the spoken body as the "object of a female subjectivity experiencing and identifying itself" (59). Statue poems also commonly describe the body in a fragmented way, especially the female body.

Further describing the "speaking statue/muse" paradox addressed by women writers, Davies goes on to say, "Poetry in which women consciously inscribe silence is possibly the most subversive of counter-discursive practices" (63). Many poems I have chosen for the anthology exhibit this quality. For example, Ibarbourou writes about a feminine, anthropomorphized grove of trees as being a speaking statue in "La arboleda inmóvil":

Su clamor es mudo como el de una estatua.  
Yo siento en mis sueños su opaco alarido.  
Oh pampero: tréznate a todos los vientos.  
Sacúdela y dale la inquietud y el ruido! (69)  
Her voice is mute like a statue's voice.  
In my dreams, I hear her enigmatic howl.  
Oh winter gale! Twine your winds in her branches,  
rustle them, give them your restlessness and noise!

Ibarbourou also narrates in a female statue's voice in "La estatua":

Soy campana rota,  
Nardo sin olor,  
Fuente que ha perdido  
Su vivo rumor. (30)  
I'm a broken bell,  
lily without scent,  
fountain that has lost  
its lively clamor.

In the first poem, Ibarbourou pities the muteness of a grove of trees, and compares the

grove to a statue, "mudo como el de una estatua." The wind, another typical symbol in modernismo, the ethereal, invisible, force of nature, moves through the trees to give them a voice. In "La estatua," the statue, speaking, laments her own voicelessness by listing the ways in which she is paralyzed by paradox. And in "Implacable hiedra" Ibarbourou again pities the motionless statue, now covered and smothered by the possessive love of an ivy vine, expressing in the statue's eyes, frustration, rage, and the desire to murder her lover, the ivy (258).

Nydia Lamarque's "Invocación" to the ghost of Sappho, a cold marble statue, describes Sappho's silence and reluctance to speak: "Todo me lo dirías ¡oh hermana! aquí en la noche, / muy bajo, mientras nos envuelve el silencio" "You'll tell me everything—oh sister!—here in the night/very low, while silence wraps us round".

Women's poems about looking at statues of men can be subversive expressions of female desire and critiques of patriarchal thinking. Davies points out the devastating irony of María Luisa Milanés' poem on a statue of Narcissus (60). Milanés mocks masculine modernista poetics; she claims to be too simple and humble to understand Narciso's fascination with his reflection in azul, blue, the color of modernism and the liquid fountain of inspiration. Milanés addresses Narciso, or Narcissus, with heavy sarcasm, claiming not to understand "la ingenua admiración que te arrebató / y te fascina en la onda azul y plata . . ." 'the naive admiration that grips / you bewitched in the blue and silver wave . . .':

Claro, que para ti es un paraíso  
mirar tus ojos bellos y tu boca,  
tu sonrisa, tu frente y tu figura . . .  
¡Quisiera comprender mi alma sencilla  
la perfecta hermosura de tu frente,  
donde jamás el pensamiento brilla! (Lizaso and Fernández de Castro  
301)

Sure, for you it's Paradise  
to gaze at your own beautiful eyes and your mouth,  
your smile, your brow and your figure . . .  
My simple soul longs to understand  
the perfect beauty of your brow,  
where no thought ever sparks!

Nieves Xenes, too, addresses Narcissus with dry wit in an untitled sonnet which I have included in this anthology.

Ibarbourou writes subversively of female desire and male silence in "Las lenguas de diamante" 'Diamond tongues' (3). Describing an idyllic scene with fountain and statue and moonlight, she then silently implores her male companion not to speak, as any words from him would despoil the beauty of the moment; she prays, even, that "el manto de piedra de la muerte" 'death's stone cloak,' should stifle her lover, that he should be turned to stone, in order to keep him silent.

Olga Acevedo writes, "Para ti . . . Luna de mis silencios . . . Luna de mis tristezas" in a plea for the ethereal whiteness of moonlight to ravish her into non-existence, to purify her existential despair (Orozco de Mateos). It is not a statue poem, but it is about desires that are somehow unspeakable. The ideas of whiteness, ghostliness, and unspeakability make this poem part of the discourse of women's silence and struggle to express existence. The statue, the silent, and the dead; when feminized, they become speakers for women's desiring subjectivity.

Perez de Zambrana's poem to "Poesía esclavo," dedicated to the poet Aurelia Castillo, describes Poetry as a white, marble, angelic female statue, hands bound: "her marble hands in chains . . . Immortal captive!" She is presented as a poet imprisoned and enslaved, yet marked on her brow with "the seal of liberty." Further exploring the statue theme, Juana Borrero writes about a statue of Apollo, making the male body the object of her gaze, fragmenting his body parts as is common in male love poetry, and making a a

statement of her own artistic obsessions, and of her frustrations as a poet:

llevada por mi amante desvarío,  
dejé mil besos de ternura ardiente  
allí apagados sobre el mármol frío. (Lizaso and Fernández de Castro  
108)  
carried away by my delirious love,  
I left a thousand kisses, tender, burning,  
there extinguished on your icy stone!

Read in juxtaposition, the statue poems of Pérez de Zambrana, Xenes, Milanés, and Agustini build a collective picture of women's struggle to assert themselves as writers and artists against patriarchal definitions of discourse and the male-dominated world of literary movements.

These instances of women exploring themes of silence and the unspeakable unite their poems in what I see as a common body of work, as poetry that contains important commonalities. When they are read together, many of the poems in my anthology trace intertextual pathways and bring out aesthetic and political concerns of women poets that may not otherwise be apparent from reading their work in isolated instances, in anthologies that are comprised mostly of work by men.

Miriam Díaz-Diocaretz calls for the study of Spanish American women poets and their work in relation to the "alien text" of male-dominated literature by studying their "strategic discursive consciousness" (91). In other words, whether or not a woman poet's work fits neatly into expectations of form or literary movement is not the point from which to judge that work, but rather, from a point of understanding how she is engaging with the existing definitions of woman and writer in Hispanic culture. According to Díaz-Diocaretz, women poets cannot avoid being part of that discourse the way men can avoid it. Women poets lack that privilege. Díaz-Diocaretz outlines the prevailing discourses and claims, I think very rightly, that anything produced by a Hispanic woman poet up to the

early 20th century falls into one of the following categories:

1. Written by a man in favor of men and at the same time against women (for example, medieval misogynous texts).
2. Written by a man in defence of women (in reply to the misogynous texts).
3. Written by a woman, criticizing men (for example, Jor Juana Inés de la Cruz's poem "Agure de inconsecuentes el gusto y la censura de los hombres que en las mujeres acusan lo que causan" 'She demonstrates the inconsistency of men's wishes in blaming women for what they themselves have caused')
4. Written by a woman in defence of herself (as individual and as woman)
5. Written by a woman in favour of women (as a collective) and of women's condition.
6. Written by a woman in favour of women and criticizing men. (89-90)

Diaz-Diocaretz describes this relationship between women writers in Latin America and patriarchal ideologies as an 'alien text' in which women are subject to male-dominated definitions. In other words, women's poetry in the cases she describes should be seen as a conscious engagement with patriarchal ideologies (91).

Unruh, in *Performing Women and Modern Literary Culture in Latin America*, describes women writers of the 1920s as consciously acting in male-dominated discourse in their extra-literary activities as well, and speaks of women's active choices and "the periodic new meanings with which they invested the discourses framing their experience" (8). Women writers were claiming a public identity and had to position themselves in relation to the male-dominated writing world. Unruh locates them "in a web of competing debates about literature, politics, and gender." According to Unruh, women poets were

struggling to transcend a culture and an aesthetics "whose gendered discourse of modernity conceptualized them either outside of the modern or as its muses rather than its agents."

Gloria Bautista Gutiérrez sees Spanish American women poets of the early 20th century as conscious of their "alteridad" or alterity, and as taking a stance against the patriarchal order to write a feminine reality, not biologically or essentially female, but particularly expressive of the other-ness of women in Latin America (xi-xii). She describes how these female poets were particularly targeted for criticism and trivialization because of their success; critics called them "sensiblera," "curisi," and "escandalosa fabricante de versos eróticos" 'oversentimental, pretentious, and scandalous creators of erotic verse'. Her analysis concludes that women in this period were advancing human knowledge by a focus on the psychological, on the exploration of the subconscious, and "la demitificación de estereotipos y tradiciones subyugantes" 'the demysticizing of subjugating stereotypes and traditions' (xiii).

Diaz Diocaretz describes the ways in which women poets subverted claims of universality:

Inscribing this 'women's' register in the structure of the lyrical genre, they articulate the formerly repressed position whose status of non-subject has been concealed by the (pseudo) universality of dominant registers of male lyric tradition, and of modernism and post-modernism. Poetry allows them to subvert the canonized modes of authority (institutional, sexual, political), through a rejection of appropriate and assigned positions, and a refusal to collaborate in the unequal distribution of social and cultural capital.

Viewed through Diaz-Diocaretz's list of types of women's discourse, we can see commonalities in poems that seem otherwise quite different. For example, Juana Borrero's "Hijas de Ran" and Emma Vargas' "Manos Femeniles" both present an idyllic

view of women's collectivity, of women performing and writing with and for each other. "Manos femeniles," though, shares other qualities with "Nacer Hombre," in that it's "in favor of women and criticizing men." Reading "Manos femeniles" and "Nacer hombre," knowing about them, illuminates the possibility that "Hijas de Ran" was meant as an oblique criticism of masculine poetic discourse. Borrero's ondines, made of sea foam, disorderly and in constant motion and interaction, jostling each other, can be read in contrast to the modernista swan or statue, alone, serene, discrete from all the world around it, frozen in time. "Hijas de Ran" is a woman artist's claim to dynamic feminine collectivity in the creation of art.

Knowing about the swans, lilies, and statues as well as the color symbolism of "blue" or "azul" enables us as readers to recognize women poets of the turn of the century as positioning themselves as artists in public discourse. The mention of blueness, of blue water or sky as aesthetic perfection, is like an alert message that signifies what is being talked about is not merely blue sky, but is Art itself and the artists' relation to it.

Turn of the century women poets engage with and position themselves in relation to "whiteness," "blueness" and "redness," often taking on the role of white, claiming it as especially feminine, the location of ethereal paradox; or taking on the role of redness as a physical disruption to blue and white. For example, Agustini's redness in "El Cisne" brings mortality, passion, blood, madness, bodies, and femininity into the realm of aesthetics; "el cisne asusta de rojo,/y yo de blanca doy miedo" 'the swan's terrified of red/and I'm scared of white'; these lines are a deliberate statement of aesthetic gender politics, a rejection of the sexism of male-dominated modernismo. Agustini also opposes her body "como sangrienta hiedra" 'like a blood-filled vine' against the cold, unfeeling statue in "Fiera de amor." In "Nocturno," Agustini describes the blue and white water and sky, and how as a bleeding swan she soars in flight while contaminating the lake of modernism's purity; it's an outrageous poem when considered in this light. Vaz Ferreira's roses, "thyrsus-stemmed"—deliberate mention of the thyrsus, carried by maenids in their

frenzy—are included as desirable alternatives to logic. Emilia Bernal's jewels are blood-colored and rose-colored, as well as alabaster and azure; her physical engagement with the jewels in "Pedrería," seen in the context of modernismo, is a bold statement in favor of a sensual and diverse aesthetics. María Antonieta Le-Quesne, in the title poem of *Recodo azul* writes of following bloody footprints down winding roads, not the formal settings of modernismo, but the lonely blue pathways of the post-modern poet.

More and stronger connections need to be drawn not only among Latin American women poets of maenidism, but between their work and that of women in other countries like the Comtesse de Noailles of France, Edith Sodergran of Finland, Ada Negri, Vittoria Agancor Pompili, Zinaida Hippius, and others. Many of the women in this anthology were translators, including Aurelia Castillo, who translated Negri, Carducci, Lamartine, Byron, and Agancor Pompili; Nydia Lamarque, who translated Baudelaire, Rimbaud, and Racine; Mercedes Matamoros, who translated Byron, Longfellow, the poet Thomas Moore, Goethe, and Schiller; Luz Flórez Fernández de Azcuenaga, who translated the Comtesse de Noailles; and Emilia Bernal, who was a noted translator of Rosalia del Castro from Galician as well as of other writers in Catalan. These connections are an important thread to pursue further because critical geneologies often describe poetic influence as passing from Europe or the United States to Latin America by way of male intermediaries. Women poet-translators provide direct evidence to the contrary and of the ways they established their own literary and cross-cultural connections.

In doing the research for this thesis, I have found that it is especially important in feminist research to consult multiple sources, both primary and secondary, to build a picture of the poet and her work. These sources should also vary as widely as possible in level of authority; in other words, a xeroxed pamphlet or small magazine read alongside a work of critical history from a professor at a major university. It is possible that the more institutional authority an anthology or literary history claims, the more layers of patriarchal judgement and erasure there may be—layers that must be circumvented by

“sideways” research rather than research which respects the purity of institutional authority.

Clearly, it would be useful to look at magazines founded and edited by women, like *Feminiflor* in Bolivia or *La Voz de la Mujer* and *Espigas Sueltas* in Guatemala, or to look at magazines in which women played an active role, such as *Amauta*, from Peru, or *Azul y Gris* and *Orto*, from Cuba.

Many otherwise excellent feminist anthologies rely on poet life-myths that were perhaps constructed in order to make the poets seem marketable or acceptable. But the very qualities that go into a palatable womanly life-myth, that of motherhood and domesticity on the one hand, or neurotic passion on the other, serve to trivialize the woman’s work, so that Pérez de Zambrana is represented only the poet of her grief for her dead husband and sons; Borrero is chaste, virginal, and dead; or Agustini is bold, foolish, passionate, and murdered. I have repeated these life-myths or biographical details hoping not to perpetuate the damage, and whenever possible to supplement or replace them with more information, as in the case of Vaz Ferreira, whose vital and dynamic personality and active life in the world of letters and education—as well as having been the first woman in Uruguay to go up in an airplane at a public exhibition—was so strangely hijacked by the life-myth of her as frail waif and spinster who was retired from the world like Emily Dickinson. In erasing the details of the lives of the poets, their vital connections to other writers are also erased. I have tried to re-draw some of these lines by emphasizing connections between women and men of various literary communities as well as their connections to poets in Europe and America.

Luisa Pérez de Zambrana (1835-1922)

Luisa Pérez de Zambrana was a Cuban poet whose work first appeared in print in 1854. She was strongly associated with romanticist trends in her early career, and for the “freshness” of her sentimental verses, the publication of which led to her marriage to the poet and scientist Ramón Zambrana (Coester 395). Pérez de Zambrana was associated with the Cuban magazines *En el Hogar* and *Cuba Ilustrada* in the 1880s. Later, she often wrote for *El Figaro*. She was still writing and publishing books until at least 1920 (García Ramos).

Her husband died in 1866, and five of their sons shortly afterward (López Lemus 87). She was in the same literary circles as Gertrudis Gómez de Avellaneda, Mercedes Matamoros, Aurelia Castillo, and Rafael María de Mendive (García Ramos). José Martí admired her poetry, glorifying her as the poet of elegy, pearl-like and ethereal compared to Gómez de Avellaneda, the poet of fire and grand patriotism (Martí). Lezama Lima admired her “fundamentally Cuban” way of confronting death in elegiac poems (Chacón y Calvo). Her poetry was considered to be an exemplar of women’s poetics of her time, of “discurso femenino” or feminine discourse (López Lemus 87).

Her poem "Retrato" asks a portrait-painter to see her as she sees herself; young and simple, olive-skinned or suntanned, not falsely pale and beautiful. This pastoral picture of a rural maiden is set in sharp contrast to the last four lines of the poem, which establish that Pérez de Zambrana is thinking of her own death. The seventeenth century Mexican poet Sor Juana Ines de la Cruz, in Soneto CXLV, “A su retrato,” also addressed her own portrait as a manifestation of impermanence. Portrait and poem function as a message to the future, defining how Pérez de Zambrana would like to be seen as a person: reading a book. She presents her engagement with other writers as her defining characteristic. In other poems such as “Contestación” ‘Answer’ and “Sobre el estudio” ‘On Studying’ Zambrana protests women’s position in society and asserts their right to education.

"La poesía esclava" describes the poet Aurelia Castillo as a white marble statue, as poetry personified and enslaved. This could be read as a patriotic poem, as a feminist protest, or as both. Poetry, however, is outlined as containing an inherent path to freedom, perhaps the modernista ideal of art and beauty as a force for political and moral good. Liberty, believing in it and living by it, was Poetry's crime. In form, the poem is an Italianate madrigal with varying 11 and 7 syllable lines.

"Ya duermes!," on the death of Mercedes Matamoros in 1906, shows strong modernista influence in its valuation of the ineffable. Pérez imagines Matamoros surrounded in lilies and gold, pale, a swan surrounded by the muses, disappearing into the modernista "azul" of ideal beauty and art. She describes Matamoros as a modern Sappho, putting her in the context of other women writers. The poem is *de arte mayor*, "greater art," with lines of eleven syllables and even lines ending in consonant rhyme.

In most descriptions of the circles of women writers which included Matamoros, Castillo, the Xenes and Borrero sisters, and (from a distance) Gertrudis Gómez de Avellaneda, Pérez is not included. But her own poetry to other women shows her ties to women's literary communities (Vallejo 290).

## Retrato

No me pintes más blanca ni más bella;  
Píntame como soy; trigueña, joven,  
Modesta, sin belleza, y si te place,  
Puedes vestirme, pero solamente  
De muselina blanca, que es el traje  
Que a la tranquila sencillez del alma  
Y a la escasez de la fortuna mía  
Armoniza más bien. Píntame en torno  
Un horizonte azul, un lago terso,  
Un sol poniente cuyos rayos tibios  
Acaricien mi frente sosegada.  
Los años se hundirán con rauda prisa,  
Y cuando ya esté muerta y olvidada  
A la sombra de un árbol silencioso,  
Siempre leyendo encontrarás a Luisa.

## Portrait

Don't paint me whiter or more lovely;  
paint me like I am; sunbrowned, young,  
modest, without beauty, and if you please,  
put me in clothes, but only  
in white muslin: that's the dress  
that, for the tranquil nature of my soul,  
and the paucity of my fortune,  
suits me best. Paint me, too,  
a blue horizon, a limpid lake,  
a setting sun whose warm rays  
caress my unfurrowed brow.  
The years will pass by quickly,  
and when I'm dead and forgotten  
in the shade of a great silent tree,  
you'll find Luisa—still reading.

La poesía esclava  
*a Aurelia Castillo*

Con túnica de nácar, pasa pura  
una dulce, una espléndida figura  
más blanca que el jazmín.

Es un ángel con alas estrelladas,  
un ángel celestial que lleva atadas  
las manos de marfil.

Tú eres esa beldad tierna y sombría  
¡adorable y celeste Poesía!  
¡prisionera inmortal!

¿Cuál es tu culpa, ¡oh cándida acusada?  
-¡Sobre mi frente pálida y sagrada  
llevar la Libertad!

Poetry Enslaved  
*to Aurelia Castillo*

In her pearl-pale tunic, sweetness  
steps lightly, pure, a splendid figure  
whiter than jasmine.

She's an angel with starry wings,  
a celestial angel, her ivory hands  
in chains.

You are that beauty, tender and grave,  
adored and heavenly Poetry!  
Immortal prisoner!

What is your crime, oh innocent accused?  
"On my pallid, sacred brow I bear  
the mark of Liberty!"

¡Ya Duermes!  
(En la muerte de la ilustre poetisa Mercedes Matamoros)

¡Paloma de alas de águila, ya duermes!  
y anegadas en llanto mis mejillas,  
beso, a la luz de los luceros tristes  
tus divinas estrofas, de rodillas.

Que tu lira ¡oh sublime soñadora!  
lleva en sus cuerdas de zafiro el día,  
y de tu voz, se escuchará en los siglos  
la inmortal, la dulcísima elegía.

¡Ay! que irradiaban en tu mente excelsa,  
mares tornasolados e indecisos,  
lunas de plata, en ignorados cielos,  
soles iluminando paraísos.

Y sollozaron en tu herido pecho  
suaves lamentos de un laúd sin calma,  
y exhalaban celestes armonías  
ruiseñores divinos en tu alma.

¡Dulce sirena griega! como Safo,  
fuiste sueño, pasión, fuego y delirios,  
y fuiste un cáliz de luciente nácar  
sobre un altar de immaculados lirios.

¡Musas, que sobre el féretro inclinados  
las veis dormida con el arpa de oro!  
Cubridla ¡oh musas! con el mar de perlas  
de las acerbos lágrimas que lloro.

Que amé el pesar de su sonrisa triste,  
y el inmenso dolor de su mirada,  
y aquella luz que circundó su frente  
por sueños de otros mundos abrasada.

Y adoré, con la túnica de mártir,  
su imagen blanca, pálida y herida,  
y vengo a ungir con oloroso nardo,  
su inspirada cabeza de elegida.

Que algo que no se ve, miraba sola,  
en las azules medias noches bellas,

siguiendo su inefable melodía  
la música de luz de las estrellas.

¡Cisne del cielo sobre alada nube!  
en el imperio azul recibe en calma,  
el amor infinito de mi seno  
y el incienso sagrado de mi alma,

mientras la patria de azucenas cerca  
tu figura de pálido alabastro,  
y tú amorosamente la bendices,  
pasando dulcemente sobre un astro.

So soon you sleep!

*(on the death of the illustrious poetess Mercedes Matamoros)*

Dove with eagle wings, so soon you sleep!  
and, my cheeks brimming with tears,  
on my knees, under the light of sorrowing stars,  
I kiss your divine verses.

How your lyre—oh sublime dreamer!  
bears daylight in its sapphire strings,  
your voice will be heard for centuries;  
elegy immortal and most sweet.

Ay! how they shine from your lofty mind:  
light-reflecting, ambiguous oceans,  
silver moons in unimagined skies,  
suns illuminating utopias.

And they sob on your wounded breast,  
with the soft laments of a restless lute,  
and they sigh celestial harmonies,  
those divine nightingales of your soul.

Sweet Greek siren! like Sappho,  
you were dream, passion, fire and delirium,  
and you were a calyx of shining nacre  
on an altar of immaculate lilies.

Muses, you who gather round the coffin,  
gaze upon her, sleeping with her golden harp!  
Cover her, oh muses! with an ocean of pearls  
from the bitter tears I weep.

How I loved the weight of her sad smile,  
and the immense sorrow of her gaze,  
and that light that surrounded her brow  
from her burning dreams of other worlds.

And I adored her, her white image,  
pale and wounded with her martyr's shirt,  
and I come to anoint her with perfumed balm,  
her inspired mien, her air of being a chosen one.

How something which can't be seen, gazing alone,  
in the blue midnights, lovely,  
how it follows her ineffable melody—

the music of starlight.

Swan of the skies on winged mist!  
receive in peace, in the imperial blue,  
the infinite love from my breast  
and the sacred incense of my soul,

while your country wreathes  
your pale alabaster form with lilies,  
and you most lovingly give your blessing  
as you step neatly over a star.

Jesusa Laparra (1820-1887)

Jesusa Laparra and her sister Vicenta, originally from Guatemala, founded and edited a women's journal, *La Voz de la Mujer*, in the mid-19th century; started a literary magazine, *El Ideal*; and wrote for other progressive and feminist journals. Jesusa wrote poetry on mystic, romantic, and religious themes. Her books include *Ensayos poéticos* (1854) and *Ensueños de la mente* (1884) (Méndez de la Vega).

Her sister, Vicenta Laparra de la Cerda (1831-1905) was a poet, playwright, and essayist on the rights of women. With Jesusa, she published several journals. A mother of eight children, Vicenta was known as a singer and soloist, collaborating and performing with other artists for benefit of the Teatro Carrera. She is also known as the creator and founder of the Teatro Nacional in Guatemala. Her political essays in *El Ideal* resulted in her being forced into exile from Guatemala to Mexico, where she founded a school for girls. Vicenta published books of poems, including *Poesia* and *Tempestades del alma*; plays such as "La hija maldita," "Los lazos del crimen," and "El ángel caído;" the novel *La Calumnía* (1894); and other works of history and literary criticism.

The Laparra sisters and Vicenta's husband went into exile again, from Mexico to El Salvador and Costa Rica, where they continued their commitment to teaching women "self-improvement." Jesusa and her sister fought not only for the rights of women but for the rights of Native Americans. Though she was partially paralyzed and in a wheelchair for many years, known as "La poetisa cautiva" or 'The Captive Poetess,' she continued her careers of writing, teaching, and public speaking (Laparra de la Cerda).

The Laparra sisters' political and literary circle included María Cruz, Elisa Monge, J. Adelaida Chéves and her sisters, Dolores Montenegro y Méndez, Lola Montenegro, and Carmen P. de Silva. There might be connections between the Laparra sisters and another set of interesting sisters: the Guatemalan poets and editors Jenny, Blanca, and María Granados, who wrote for *El Grito del Pueblo* and who founded the magazine *Espigas*

*Sueltas* in 1929.

Many, in fact most, Latin American anthologies and biographical dictionaries that I consulted did not include information on the Laparra sisters despite their extensive international publishing and editing history. A small selection of their verses can be found in Acuña Hernández's *Antología de poetas guatemaltecos* (1972).

“La risa” (1884) is written in *redondillas*, that is, rhymed quartets of octosyllabic lines *de arte menor*. It describes the emotions behind a laugh of despair and the impossibility of communicating grief and pain in words.

## La Risa

Hay una risa sin nombre,  
sólo de Dios comprendida  
risa sin placer ni vida,  
risa de negro dolor;  
funeraria, envenenada,  
más dolorosa que el llanto,  
porque es engañoso manto  
donde se oculta el dolor.

Risa que, al salir del labio,  
para animar el semblante,  
deja una huella punzante  
de amargura y sinsabor.  
Infeliz desventurado,  
es aquel que así se ría,  
que esa risa es de agonía,  
es de muerte, es de pavor.

Como el esfuerzo supremo  
que estremece al moribundo,  
al desprenderse del mundo  
para nunca más tornar:  
dilatada la pupila,  
ríe con indiferencia,  
despreciando la existencia  
que por siempre va a dejar.

Así es la risa funesta  
de un corazón desdichado  
por un dolor desgarrado  
que no se puede arrancar.  
Lleva la muerte consigo,  
y ríe sin esperanza,  
porque nada, nada alcanza  
su martirio a disipar.

## The laugh

There's a laugh that can't be named,  
that only God understands;  
a laugh without life or joy,  
a laugh of black sorrow;  
funerary, dripping venom,  
more painful than a lament,  
because it's a cloak of deceit  
to hide pain and grief.

Laugh that, as it leaves your lips  
to liven your face,  
leaves a heartrending trail  
of bitterness and discontent.  
Unlucky devil,  
that's why you laugh;  
it's a laugh of agony,  
of death, of terror.

Like the last throes  
that shake the dying  
when they give up this world  
never to return;  
eyes open and staring,  
you laugh with indifference,  
despising an existence  
you're leaving forever.

That's how it is: the fatal laugh  
of a heart undone  
by clawing pain  
that can't be rooted out.  
You endure your own death,  
and you laugh without hope,  
because nothing—nothing could match  
or dispel your martyrdom.

Salomé Ureña de Henríquez (1850-1897)

Salomé Ureña began publishing in 1866 under the name "Herminia." She quickly gained recognition in the Dominican Republic for her patriotic and lyric verses. Her political essays established her as a strong nationalist and advocate of women's rights, and she also started a women's college in the Dominican Republic (Vallejo de Paredes iii).

Her poetry was considered "viril y llena de grandeza, aun cuando no le faltan ni la ternura ni el stintimentalismo hogareño y patriótico" 'virile and full of grandeur, nevertheless not lacking either tenderness or patriotic, home-and-hearth sentimentalism' (Sáinz de Roblez 1145). Short biographies often speak of her masculine language; for example, Joaquín Balaguer's prologue to her *Complete Poems* mentions Ureña's "acento poderosamente varonil" 'extremely powerful masculine tone' (11). Many other biographies of Ureña ignore the political aspect of her work, instead emphasizing her role as wife, mother of four children, and as mother-like educator of children and young women: "Madre, siempre madre . . ." 'A mother, always a mother . . .' (Vallejo de Paredes IV).

A recent biographer, Sherezada Vicioso, emphasizes that Ureña should not be read only for her best-known patriotic poems, but as "la mujer, la madre, la amante; La Salomé de sus horas de angustia triste . . . de los poemas eróticos . . ." 'woman, mother, lover; the Salomé of moments of the sad anguish . . . of her erotic poems' (10). Vicioso argues for a view of Ureña as expressing an "estética femenina," a feminine aesthetic—that celebrates women's identity. Vicioso views Ureña through the filter of *écriture féminine*, which she says demands "una revisión radical de las BASES CONCEPTUALES del estudio literario" 'a radical revision of the CONCEPTUAL BASES of literary study' (Vicioso 22). She argues against basing literary judgement on a hierarchical, authoritative mode with "sacred texts."

Ureña is most often classified by critics as a Romanticist, but has also been called a post-romanticist or Parnassian. She was seen by other intellectuals of her day, such as Eugenio María de Hostos, John Stuart Mill, and José Martí, as a colleague in a literary and philosophical positivist project that set out to prove the rights and capacities of women in a rational society. Her poetry exalts progress, civilization, and human capacity to bring about utopia.

In the following poem, Ureña's line "*los pocos sabios que en el mundo fueron,*" in italics to indicate it is a quotation, is perhaps a misquote from "Vida retirada" by Fray Luis de León (1527-1591):

¡Qué descansada vida  
la del que huye el mundanal ruido  
y sigue la escondida  
senda por donde han ido  
los pocos sabios que en el mundo han sido!  
What a restful life,  
the one that flees from worldly din  
and follows the hidden  
path on which have travelled  
the few wise men who have been on this earth!

But it may also be from a similar poem on the theme of being an intellectual and religious hermit withdrawn from worldly life. In form, this long poem has Italianate lines varying between 11 and 7 syllables, with rhyme in no set pattern, with verses of varying lengths.

Ureña's works include *Poesías de Salomé Ureña de Henríquez* (1880), *Poesías* (1920), and *Poesías completas* (1950) (Marcano).

En defensa de la Sociedad (1)

*Pasad, pasad por las puertas,  
preparad la calle al pueblo;  
allanad el camino,  
y alzad el estandarte a los pueblos. (Isaías, LXII, 10.)*

Espíritu creador, numen fecundo  
que en incansable actividad dilatas  
de tu excelso poder las maravillas,  
tú que perenne brillas  
en las obras del bien, tú que arrebatas  
a regiones sin fin el pensamiento  
y extiendes con tu amor de mundo a mundo  
las leyes del eterno movimiento:

¿será que la preciada  
sublime hechura de tu augusta diestra  
condenes al reposo de la nada?  
¿Será que aletargada,  
de tu activo poder ante la muestra,  
en indolente ociosidad rendida  
admirándote ¡oh Dios! pase la vida?

No: despertad, los que del campo ameno  
en la florida alfombra  
sólo buscáis al ánimo sereno  
horas de paz en ignorada sombra.  
Alzad, los que siguiendo  
de la corriente el agradable giro,  
un anatema al popular estruendo  
lanzáis, soñando más feliz retiro.

No es el orgullo quien levanta al cielo  
pirámide grandiosa  
y alzar pretende a lo infinito el vuelo:  
es la chispa inmortal, que poderosa  
la inmensidad fatiga,  
y en constante anhelar y afán interno  
hace que el hombre en su delirio siga  
algo de grande cual su fin eterno.  
El solo es quien anima  
del yerto mármol la materia dura,  
el que las obras del Creador sublima  
en paisajes de espléndida pintura  
y al fuego fecundante de la idea  
descubre mundos y portentos crea.

No todo es paz y amor, delicia grata,  
allá del campo en el silencio amigo,  
ni en cuanto abarca la inocencia mora:  
también allí la tempestad desata  
su furia destructora,  
el áspid en las flores tiene abrigo,  
y el ave de rapiña, turbulenta,  
la presa entre sus garras atormenta.

No todo es vicio y confusión y horrores  
entre el social tumulto:  
tras ese velo de maldad y errores  
luz halla el genio, y el Eterno culto  
palmas el bien y la virtud loores.  
De un Dios también la majestad potente  
se dilata en espacios sin medida  
allí do el alma pensadora siente  
bullir el mundo y palpar la vida.  
En solitaria calma  
no se alza sólo hasta el Creador el alma,  
ni del campo en la paz siempre vivieron  
*los pocos sabios que en el mundo fueron.*

La sociedad que avanza  
sus destinos altísimos comprende,  
y al ocio opone varonil pujanza,  
y a realizar su perfección asciende.  
Es ella la que, activa,  
los bíblicos asombros hoy renueva,  
Moisés moderno que al desierto lleva  
raudales de agua viva,  
que al pueblo del Señor la senda traza  
y resignado escucha  
las voces de la turba que amenaza;  
nuevo Josué que en gigantesca lucha  
detiene allá en su esfera  
del padre de los astros la carrera.

Por ella en lid de fama  
raros prodigios el ingenio luce  
y del mundo los ámbitos inflama;  
al imperioso empuje de su vuelo,  
vencida la distancia se reduce,  
divídense los istmos,  
descorren los espacios su ancho velo,  
descubren sus secretos los abisomos,

y preso en redes que la industria labra  
lleva atónito el rayo la palabra.

Y esa es del hombre la misión sublime:  
disipar del error la sombra densa,  
y a la ignorancia que en tinieblas gime  
llevar la luz de la verdad que piensa.

¡Oh soñadoras almas  
que en perenne quietud y paz cumplida  
anheláis a la sombra de las palmas  
en ocio estéril enervar la vida!

Volved, no es ese el puesto  
donde el deber, la humanidad que llora,  
y el mismo Dios, a la inacción opuesto,  
os mandan combatir hora tras hora.

Volad a las regiones  
donde en lucha de honor el bien levanta  
glorioso sus pendones  
y a conquistar el orbe se adelanta.

¡El mundo pide luz, dadle ese rayo  
que amortiguáis en criminal desmayo!

Habite ufano el labrador activo  
los campos que fecunda,  
mostrando al ocio esquivo  
la honrada frente que el sudor inunda.  
Corra el audaz minero  
que fatiga la tierra y arrebatada  
espléndido el venero  
que en su senopreciado se dilata.  
Vuele a poblar el campo abandonado,  
abriendo al porvenir dignas contiendas,  
el que de ciencia y de virtud llevado  
domeña la cerviz de altivos montes,  
descubre nuevas sendas,  
ensancha los cerrados horizontes  
y del desierto hasta el confín lejano  
lleva los triunfos del progreso humano.

Mas ¡ah! los que rendidos  
de la arena del mundo en el combate  
lleváis del desencanto los gemidos  
al corazón que de entusiasmo late:  
¡paso a la inteligencia!  
¡Desmayados atletas, apartaos!  
Y vosotros, alumnos de la ciencia,

que fecundáis el caos  
poblándo de espléndidas creaciones,  
no deis tregua al destino:  
alza el estandarte a las naciones,  
abrid a las virtudes el camino.

In defense of Society (1)

*Go through, go through the gates;  
prepare ye the way of the people;  
cast up, cast up the highway; gather out the stones;  
lift up a standard for the people. (Isaiah 62:10)*

Creator spirit, fertile genius  
you who with inexhaustible activity scatter  
miracles from your sublime power,  
you who perennially shine  
in your good works, you who grasp  
regions without end in your thoughts  
and you who, with your love, spread from world to world  
the laws of eternal movement:

Shall it be that the ultimate reward  
offered by your august hand  
is condemnation to inaction's repose?  
Would you have us rest  
before your show of active power,  
to pass our lives—oh Lord!—in indolence,  
spent only in admiring you?

No: wake up, all you who from happy fields  
and blooming bowers  
only seek serenity of spirit,  
and hours of peace in unknowing shade.  
Rise up, all you who follow  
the tides of agreeable fashion;  
be anathema to the popular uproar,  
let out a shout, break the dreams of the supremely complacent.

It's not pride—all you who raise up to heaven  
an enormous pyramid  
and who exalt yourselves, aspiring to infinite flight:  
it's the immortal spark, that most powerful  
immense great work;  
and in constant travail, internal laboring,  
you create, so that man in his delirium will follow  
something of greatness, something to last forever.  
He stands alone, he who animates  
enduring substance from frozen marble,  
he who exalts the works of the Creator  
in splendid painted landscapes,  
who in the burgeoning fire of the Idea  
discovers worlds and sees marvels.

Not everything is peace and love, and grateful delight,  
there in the fields in companionable silence,  
nor in the embrace where innocence dwells:  
There's also the storm letting loose  
its destructive fury;  
the asp takes shelter in flowers,  
and the bird of prey, turbulent,  
torments its captive in its claws.

Not everything is vice and confusion and horrors  
in the social tumult:  
beyond this veil of sin and error  
genius leaves its trace of light, and the Eternal way  
of praising the good and lauding virtue.  
From God, too, potent majesty  
expands in space without measure;  
there striving, the thinking soul feels  
the seething world and throbs with life.  
In solitary calm  
the soul alone can't reach God's lofty heights;  
nor forever could they live in peaceful fields –  
“the few wise men who walked this world.”

The society that aims for progress  
understands its lofty goals;  
and against the idle, vigor stands in opposition,  
and achieves its ideals.  
Society, she who, active,  
refreshes the astonished prophets:  
Modern Moses who in the desert brings  
floods of living water,  
who in the City of the Lord follows the path  
and determined heeds  
the voices of the menacing crowd;  
new Joshua who in the gigantic battle  
lingers there in the heavenly sphere –  
the way of the father of stars.

For her, in the fight for fame  
genius shines its rare miracles  
and excites worldly ambitions;  
for her, the imperious push to flight;  
genius conquers distance;  
divides the isthmus;  
its wide flights reveal all that's hidden;

genius discovers the secrets of the abyss,  
and catches in its nets how laboring industry  
bears astonished the light of the word.

And this is man's sublime mission:  
to put the dense shadows of error to flight,  
to bear the light of reason and truth  
to ignorance that howls in gloom.  
Oh great-souled dreamers  
that meditate in perennial quietude and peace,  
your motivation is the ghost of fame,  
which in idle sterility, would weaken Life!  
Come back, that's not the place  
you should be, because suffering humanity  
and that same God, opposed to inaction,  
command you to fight hour after hour.  
Fly to the regions  
where in honored battle, Good raises  
its glorious banners  
and sets forth to conquer the world.  
The world lacks light; give it this ray  
that you hide in criminal cowardice!

The active laborer lives in pride  
in the fields he makes fertile,  
showing to evasive idleness  
the honored brow that drips with sweat.  
The bold miner labors on,  
he who picks at the earth  
and seizes splendid the precious vein  
that gathers in its breast.  
Fly to populate the abandoned field,  
opening worthy struggles to the future,  
you who with science and virtue take  
dominion over the peaks of lofty mountains,  
who discover new shores,  
who broaden unknown horizons  
and from the desert to the distant ends of earth  
bear the triumphs of human progress.

Yet—ah!—those who retire  
from the world's arena of battle:  
you scorn, with disenchantment, the wails  
that make the enthusiast's heart beat fast;  
make way for intelligence!  
Faint-hearted competitors, get thee gone!

And you, students of science,  
who make chaos fertile,  
populated by splendid creations,  
don't tremble and flee before your destiny;  
raise up the standard of all nations,  
open the road to all virtues.

Elisa Monge (18XX-1932)

Elisa Monge was a Guatemalan writer associated with Jesusa and Vicente Laparra as well as Carmen P. de Silva. She was one of the editors of the journal *El Ideal*. She wrote for *El Renacimiento* and for *La Revolución*, a journal edited by J. Adelaida Chéves (or Chévez), Dolores Montenegro (Barrios y Barrios). In 1886 she became part of a group of women professors headed by the feminist educator Dolores Aquino. Later she was director of a women's school, the Escuela Práctica de Señoritas (Méndez de la Vega).

A short biography in *Poesía Femenina Guatemalense* mentions that Monge left behind an extensive collection of poems (Figuerola Marroquín 275). I have not yet gained access to that material.

Her poems "La azucena" and "El cisne," are *de arte mayor*, with 11 syllable lines in quatrains with consonant rhyme. They can be read in the tradition of modernismo and as situating Monge and her fellow women writers in a world of poetic ideals. Monge walks by the side of the blue lake of modernismo, the "azulada y poética laguna." The goddess Diana, the moon and stars, and the virginal flowers are all watching the lake and the swan, actively enjoying the scene's beauty and the painting of their own reflections in the lake. The swan, which I read as a male poet, perhaps a particular poet, is admired by the gathered women. In the context of modernismo's beliefs that attention to aesthetics and beauty of soul is political, this can be read as a strong statement in favor of idealism. Monge asserts her own right as a woman poet to walk the shores of the lake and to be a literary and artistic critic as well as to write her own poetry. She and the gathered female observers of beauty are participating in the modernista project of internalizing the poetic, watching the reflections in the lake. In the poem's last half, Monge's narrator bears witness to the tragic death of the swan, and reflects that all the physical beauty of the night, the lake, the moon, and the swan's grace are nothing compared to inner beauty.

## El cisne

Era la noche de un hermoso día,  
el céfiro nocturno suavemente  
movía con su suplo la corriente  
que tenue resbalábase a mis pies.

Yo seguí el curso de las blancas aguas,  
que en sueltos rizos de nevada espuma,  
pasar veía con presteza suma  
cual si corrieran uno de otro en pos.

Y luego, poco a poco deslizarse  
en la azulada y poética laguna  
que brillaba a los rayos de la luna,  
como espejo de lúcido esplendor.

La casta Diana desde su alto trono  
sonriendo, se veía retratada  
en la azul superficie iluminada  
por los destellos de su limpia faz.

Y las estrellas con creciente anhelo  
en torno de su reina colocadas,  
también queriendo verse retratadas,  
brillaban reflejando su fulgor.

Las blancas azucenas y los lirios  
con su perfume el aire embalsamaba;  
y al lago sus corolas inclinaban  
refrescando su frente virginal.

En medio de las aguas se mecía  
un bello cisne de nevada pluma,  
que hundía su cabeza entre la espuma  
y con placer volvíala a sacar.

Y luego, con orgullo caminando,  
su alabastrino cuello enderezaba,  
y al compás de las auras entonaba  
melancólica y tímida canción.

Ya con garbo salta a las orillas  
levantando su frente, majestuoso;  
ya su blanco ropaje, presurosos

tendía blandamente en el cristal.

Y ya después, tal vez como cansado,  
inclinaba su cuello con dulzura,  
y el genio de los sueños, con ternura  
lo arrullaba en sus brazos con amor.

¡Cuánto gozaba yo en este paraje,  
admirando del cisne la hermosura!  
Por eso cada noche con premura  
dirigíame allí con ilusión.

Llegó una vez, que con placer buscando  
del cisne la elegancia y la belleza,  
vi con dolor y sin igual tristeza,  
que el ave blanca no se hallaba allí.

No le veía en el tranquilo lago  
mecer con gallardía su figura,  
tampoco le veía con soltura,  
a las orillas rápido saltar.

Al pie de un sauces de frecura lleno  
yacía el cisne triste, desmayado,  
su plumaje de nieve ensangrentado,  
herido por el fiero cazador.

Ya no era el bello y majestuoso cisne  
que orgulloso pasaba en la laguna,  
ya no los rayos de la blanca luna,  
iluminaban su garboso andar.

Era el ave que sola y sin aliento  
lanzaba de su pecho dolorido,  
último canto que cual un gemido  
de su cuello inclinado se escapó.

Era el ave que casi agonizante  
olvidando un instante su amargura,  
entonó tierno canto con dulzura  
y a mis pies tristemente falleció.

Entonces de la luna limpio rayo  
iluminó radioso su alba frente,  
y los lirios y el sauce suavemente  
cubrieron su plumaje con amor.

Y yo, al verlo a mis pies cadáver yerto,  
comprendí que del rostro la hermosura  
pronto acaba, y que debe la criatura,  
la belleza del alma procurar.

Porque el cuerpo se muere y se sepulta,  
y el alma que se adorna con anhelo,  
cándida y pura se remonta al cielo  
a gozar de la vista de su Dios.

## The Swan

It was the evening of a beautiful day,  
the nocturnal zephyr gently  
moved with a sigh the rippling waters  
that lapped shallow at my feet.

I followed the course of the limpid waters  
with its smooth waves of snowy foam,  
to pass my gaze with rapid summation  
on how it ran from one thing to another.

And then, little by little, it slipped  
into the azure and poetic lake  
that shone in the rays of the moon  
like a mirror of splendid clarity.

Chaste Diana, from her lofty throne  
smiling, was seen pictured  
in the blue surface that was lit  
by the sparkle of her pure face.

And the stars with growing desire  
gathered around their queen,  
they, too, longed to see her portrait painted;  
they shone reflecting her brilliant flame.

The white spikenard and the lilies  
with their perfume embalmed the air;  
and inclined their petals to the lake,  
refreshing their virginal brows.

In the middle of the waters swayed  
a handsome swan of snowy plumage,  
that sank his head into the foam  
and with pleasure dipped it out again.

And later, walking with pride,  
he straightened out his alabaster neck,  
and trumpeted to the accompaniment of the winds  
his shy melancholy song.

Now with elegance he leaps to the shore  
raising his head, quite majestic,  
now his white feathers rapidly

extended smoothly into crystal.

And then, later, almost as if exhausted,  
he bent his neck sweetly  
and the tender spirit of dreams  
lulled him to loving sleep in his arms.

How I enjoyed this place,  
admiring the swan's gorgeous beauty!  
Because of this, each night, as soon as I could,  
I took myself there in imagination.

Another time I went, searching joyously  
for the swan's elegance and beauty;  
I beheld with pain and equal sorrow  
that the white bird was nowhere to be found.

I didn't see him in the tranquil lake  
swaying his figure with elegant charm,  
nor did I see his agile grace  
nimble skipping over the shore.

At the foot of the fresh, full willows,  
laid the sad swan, undone,  
his snowy plumage bloodied,  
wounded by the fierce hunter.

Nevermore would the handsome majestic swan  
so proudly pass over the lake,  
nevermore would the rays of the silver moon  
illuminate his graceful gliding.

It was that bird, who alone and breathless,  
pierced through his wounded breast,  
let escape a final cry  
from his bent neck, like a lament.

It was that bird, who almost dying,  
forgetting for an instant his bitter plight,  
he trumpeted with sweetness a tender song  
and at my feet sorrowfully expired.

Then a shining ray of the moon  
radiantly lit up his white brow,  
and the lilies and the willow softly  
showered his plumage with love.

And I, on seeing the corpse laid at my feet,  
I understood that beauty would soon pass  
from his face, and that all creatures  
should search for beauty of soul.

Because the body dies and is buried,  
and the soul imbued with longing  
honest and pure mounts to heaven  
to enjoy the sight of its God.

Adela Zamudio (1854-1928)

Adela Zamudio was a Bolivian poet, essayist, novelist, teacher, and school director. She was also an activist and an advocate of women's higher education. In her early years, her poems were published under the pseudonym "Soledad" (Aguirre Lavayen 12). Throughout her life, well into her sixties, Zamudio fought for divorce laws, secularization, women's labor movements, and other feminist liberal causes. She was also a painter, though most of her paintings are lost. Zamudio wrote a long narrative poem, "Loca de hierro" 'Iron madwoman.' She was one of the founding members of *Feminiflor*, a Bolivian feminist magazine.

Her publications include: *Ensayos poéticos* (1887); *Ensayos políticos* (1887); *Íntimas* (1912); *Peregrinando* (1912); *Ráfagas* (1912); and *Cuentos breves* (1921). Her books were published in Bolivia, Paris, and Buenos Aires. *Íntimas* was a romantic epistolary novel about and for women, meant to expose the hypocrisy of the upper classes (García Pabon vii).

Her poems, romanticist and controversial, were called "virile" and "rationally masculine" by her contemporaries; they considered her a "mujer-macho" (Cajías Villa Gómez 38). She read and admired Byron, de Musset, Becquer, José Zorrilla, and José Espronceda. The all-male La Paz Literary Circle, who considered themselves to be romanticists, elected her an honorary member in 1888. An entry in the *Diccionario de Mujeres Celebres* of 1959 lists her as a leader of the women poets and novelists of Bolivia, who included: Hercilia Fernández de Mujía ("la ciega Mujía"), Lindaura Anzoátegui, Mercedes Belzu, Sara Ugarte, and Amelia Guijarro. In 1926 she was given a medal by the president of Bolivia (Sáinz de Roblez 1200). October 11th, her birthday, is Bolivian Women's Day.

There are biographies of Zamudio written by Gabriela de Villarreal, Alfonsina Paredes, Augusto Guzmán, and Sonia Montaña.

Much of her work remains unpublished.

She compiled a spelling book in Quechua for use in schools, and composed many poems in Quechua, among them “Wiñaypaj Wiñayninkama” 'Para siempre / Forever' (Taborga de Villarroel 181). Her translation of the poem into Spanish puts it into octosyllabic lines, a romance *de arte menor*. I have translated it from Spanish. Though I do not know Quechua, I include the original here because it was useful to refer to the word patterns. For example, the original used repetition in a way that the Spanish version does not duplicate.

"Nacer Hombre," her most famous short poem, was published in 1887. It is a poem “pie quebrado,” ‘broken meter,’ with verses of octosyllabic lines and one line shortened to four or five syllables, and thus is *de arte menor*, in a popular form for poetry and folk song.

Wiñaypaj wiñayninkama

Para siempre

Ripunaykita yachaspa  
Tuta-p'unchay yuyask'ani  
Sonqoy ukhu pakasqapi  
Waqaspa tukukusqani.

Al saber que ya te irías  
noche y día me atormento,  
y sangra mi corazón  
como una sombra en tormento.

Ripuy, ripuy waj llajtaman  
Waj kausayta kausarqamuy  
Kaypi ñak'arisqaykita,  
Chay kausaypi qonqarqamuy.

Véte a ciudades lejanas,  
anda a vivir otra vida,  
y lo que yo haya sufrido  
olvidalo en tu existencia.

Ya( . . )huyu, lakha phuyu  
Uyaykipi rikukusqan  
Chay shhika llakikusqayki  
Llakiyniywan tantakusquan.

Nubes negras, celajes oscuros  
se aborrascan en tu frente,  
y el dolor que he sentido  
brota en cascada de lágrimas.

Rejsisusqaymanta pacha  
Wasiykita saqerpariy,  
Sonqoyki rumiyachispa  
Waj kausayta kausarqamuy!

Desde el día en que te vi  
nimbé mi alma en tus ojos,  
y saturé mi corazón  
con unos pétalos rojos.

T'ikachus sonqoypi kanman,  
Umphu sonqoy ch'akisqapi  
T'kata t'akarpariyman,  
Purinayki yan patapi.

Si en mi pecho hubieran flores  
desde este corazón lánguido  
y marchito, alfombraría con pétalos  
el pasar de tu camino.

Ripuy, ripuy waj llajtaman,  
Waj kausayta kausarqamuy,  
Ripuy, ripuy qonqarqamuy  
Tukuyta kaypi kaj kama.

Véte a esas tierras lejanas,  
corre a vivir otra vida,  
y sepulta en el olvido  
todo cuanto aquí ha existido.

Forever

Knowing that you're leaving  
torments me night and day  
my heart bleeds  
like a damned soul in hell.

Depart, depart for distant cities  
keep on living your other life  
and forget whatever I've suffered  
as you enjoy existence.

Black mists, jealous clouds of darkness  
obscure your brow in storm,  
and the pain that I've felt  
bursts forth in a torrent of tears.

Since the day I saw you  
my soul glows haloed in your eyes  
and my heart is full  
of scarlet petals.

If in my chest there could be flowers  
since this heart languishes, withering,  
it would carpet with petals  
the road where you walk.

Depart, depart for distant lands  
go on living your other life  
and bury in forgetfulness  
everything that's existed here.

## Nacer Hombre

Cuánto trabajo ella pasa  
Por corregir la torpeza  
De su esposo, y en la casa,  
(Permitidme que me asombre).  
Tan inepto como fatuo,  
Sigue él siendo la cabeza,  
Porque es hombre!

Si algunos versos escribe,  
De alguno esos versos son,  
Que ella sólo los suscribe.  
(Permitidme que me asombre).  
Si ese alguno no es poeta,  
Por qué tal suposición  
Porque es hombre!

Una mujer superior  
En elecciones no vota,  
Y vota el pillo peor.  
(Permitidme que me asombre).  
Con tal que aprenda a firmar  
Puede votar un idiota,  
Porque es hombre!

El se abate y bebe o juega.  
En un revés de la suerte:  
Ella sufre, lucha y ruega.  
(Permitidme que me asombre).  
Que a ella se llame el "ser débil"  
Y a él se le llame el "ser fuerte."  
Porque es hombre!

Ella debe perdonar  
Siéndole su esposo infiel;  
Pero él se puede vengar.  
(Permitidme que me asombre).  
En un caso semejante  
Hasta puede matar él,  
Porque es hombre!

Oh, mortal privilegiado,  
Que de perfecto y cabal  
Gozas seguro renombre!

En todo caso, para esto,  
Te ha bastado  
Nacer hombre.

To be born a man

She works so hard  
to make up for the sloth  
of her husband, and in the house  
(Pardon my surprise.)  
he's so inept and pompous,  
that of course he's the boss  
because he's a man!

If some poems get written,  
a person must have written them,  
but she just transcribed them.  
(Pardon my surprise.)  
If we're not sure who's the poet,  
why assume it was him?  
Because he's a man!

A smart, classy woman  
can't vote in elections,  
but the poorest felon can.  
(Pardon my surprise.)  
If he can just sign his name  
even an idiot can vote  
because he's a man!

He sins and drinks and gambles  
and in a backwards twist of luck  
she suffers, fights, and prays.  
(Pardon my surprise.)  
That we call her the "frail sex"  
and him the "strong sex"  
because he's a man!

She has to forgive him  
when he's unfaithful;  
but he can avenge himself.  
(Pardon my surprise.)  
In a similiar case  
he's allowed to kill her  
because he's a man!

Oh, privileged mortal  
you enjoy lifelong  
honor and perfect ease!

For this, to get all this,  
it's enough for you  
to be born a man.

Mercedes Matamoros (1851-1906)

Mercedes Matamoros was a Cuban poet who first published essays and poems in 1867 under the pseudonym "Ofelia" (Vallejo 7). Her first book, in 1879, included a poem to Martí. Matamoros was a translator of Byron and Longfellow; she published *Cantos y Baladas de Thomas Moore*; *La joven cautiva* by Chenier; *El águila y la paloma* by Goethe; and *Pegaso bajo el yugo* by Schiller (Arencibia Rodríguez). She lived part of her life in Mexico.

Matamoros had strong ties with many other poets, including Aurelia Castillo, Juana Borrero, Nieves Xenes, and María Xenes; the women often wrote poems dedicated to each other as well as to male poets. She was part of the intellectual circle that met at the house of the Borrero family in the 1890s, a circle that included the Xenes sisters, the Borrero sisters, Castillo, Pérez de Zambrana, the Urbach brothers, Julián Casal, and other poets and artists. She wrote for many Cuban literary journals such as *Revista de Cuba* and *El Almendares* (Randall 15).

Her book *El último amor de Safo* is a sonnet sequence that I believe pays homage to the sonnet sequence *Sappho and Phaon* written by Mary Robinson in 1796. It should also be seen in the context of Gertrudis Gómez de Avellaneda's poems and essays on Sappho, and perhaps also in the light of Pierre Louÿs. In her sonnets, Matamoros tells the story of Sappho's passions and obsessions, culminating in her legendary leap from the cliff into the sea—a theme also explored by Nydia Lamarque in her poem "Invocación (a la sombra de Safo)." By writing the story of Sappho, and speaking as poets to Sappho, Matamoros establishes her place in a feminine poetic genealogy.

Other poems by Matamoros range over lyric, patriotic, feminist, and political themes. Her 1903 patriotic poem "La estatua de la Libertad: a una novia" consoles a woman whose rival in love is Liberty itself. She wrote poems to revolutionaries and workers, antislavery poems, along with her lyrical exaltations of erotic love and the blue

and lilies of modernista purity. I have translated three poems from *El último amor de Safo*, here, but they don't adequately represent the wide range of her poetry.

Her books include *Poesías completas* (1892), *Sonetos* (1902), *El último amor de Safo* (1902), *Mirtos de antaño* (1904), and *Por el camino triste* (1904). She wrote for *El País*, *El Figaro*, *Diario de la Marina*, and other journals and periodicals. Many Cuban intellectuals, male and female, including José Martí and Juana Borrero, wrote poetry dedicated to her. She was included in many critical analyses and anthologies as a modernista.

Matamoros has also been compared to the modernista poet María Eugenia Vaz Ferreira, because of the violence and passion they both dared express in lyrical language (Vallejo 26). Her Sappho sonnet sequence has also been called an alternative to the myth of Narcissus, a “discurso femenino” which exalts mystic aesthetic madness and inspiration (Melo Pereira).

“A Aurelia” (1892) is considered to be a perfect example of the *décima*, a popular poetic form. It was answered by Aurelia Castillo in her poem that compares Matamoros to a lark—apparently one of Matamoros' common nicknames (Vallejo 12).

## A Aurelia

Cuentan que en el valle un día  
dulce y cándida azucena  
de orgullo y contento llena,  
bajo el sol resplandecía.  
Habrá otra, entre sí decía,  
tan blanca y pura cual yo?  
Y de envidia se murió  
lamentado su locura,  
porque otra más blanca y pura  
en Aurelia se encontró.

To Aurelia

They say in the valley one day,  
a sweet, innocent lily,  
full, proud, happy,  
shone in the sunlight.  
"Could there be another, tell me true,  
so white and pure as I?"  
And she died of envy,  
howling with madness,  
when she met Aurelia,  
who was whiter, more pure.

La bestia (Soneto XVII)

En lo más negro de aquel monte umbrío,  
nuestro lecho, Faón, he preparado,  
¡de mi pecho el volcán se ha desbordado!  
¡de la fiebre fatal ya siento frío!

¿No escuchas a lo lejos al sombrío  
león, que con rugido apasionado  
responde a la leona, en el callado  
y hondo recinto de su amor bravío?

¡Amémonos así! Ven y desprende  
de mi ajustada túnica los lazos,  
y ante mi seno tu pupila enciende!

¡Es el amor que humilla y que deprava!  
¡No importa! Lleva a Safo entre tus brazos,  
donde los el Placer la rinda esclava! . . .

The beast-girl (Sonnet XVII)

On that shadowed mountain, in its blackest depths,  
Phaon, I've prepared our bed -  
A volcano's erupting from my heart!  
I'm shivering cold from desperate fever!

Can you hear, in the distance, the gruff  
lion, who with passionate rumble  
answers the lioness, in the deep  
hushed presence of her savage love?

That's how we'll make love! Come, loosen  
the stays of my tight dress,  
and let your eye catch fire at my breast!

Love: it humiliates and depraves!  
Who cares! I'm Sappho in your arms,  
where Pleasure, crazed, would make herself a slave.

## Invitación

La Bacante:—Ya escucho la doliente  
lira en que tu alma su pasión deplora . . .  
¡Necia, en verdad, es la mujer que llora  
cuando el vino en la copa salta hirviente!

Si el hombre huye de ti, mi cuerpo siente  
a tu lado un afán que lo devora!  
¡Mira! . . .con verde pabellón decora  
Amor su nido entre la sombra ardiente!

Safo:—Qué horror! . . .ya vuelven tentadores  
los placeres que en tiempo que maldigo  
me hundieron en el fango de la vida! . . .

La Bacante:—¿Por qué vanos temores?  
¡La dicha sólo encontraras conmigo!  
¡Baco te aguarda! ¡Embriágate y olvida!

## Invitation

The Bacchante: I can hear the anguished  
lyre, where your soul laments its passion...  
Foolish, for sure, is the woman who cries  
when the wine in her cup leaps and boils!

If that man flees from you, my body burns  
at your side with longing to devour you!  
Look! . . . Love adorns our bower with leaves,  
a nest in ardent shadow!

Sappho: Horrible! . . . they're coming back now,  
the tempting pleasures that in cursed times  
sank my life into the gutter!

The Bacchante: Why these vain fears?  
I only asked you to come and meet me!  
Bacchus guard you! Have a drink, forget!

## Los Alfileres

¡Mátame sin temor! Yo fui quien puse  
más de un fino alfiler en la almohada  
de tu Mirene, mi rival odiada,  
y su rostro de Venus descompuse.

¿Y quieres saber más? Después me impuse  
en su alcoba secreta con Andrada;  
y con Cintis y Friné! . . . Desesperada,  
gritó, lloró . . . Remedios le propuse,

y aunque atenderla con piedad fingimos,  
¡cómo luego a hurtadillas nos reímos!  
¡Por Júpiter! ¡Qué triunfo! Yo creía

que todos los placeres conocía,  
y es el más grande, a una rival temible  
la encantadora faz dejarle horrible! . . .

The pin-stickers

Kill me, I don't care! It was I who put  
a sharp-edged pin in the pillow  
of your Myrene, my hated rival,  
to ruin her goddess-like face, Venus's face.

And you know what else? Afterwards I hid  
in a secret alcove with Andrade,  
and with Cynthis and Phryne! Desperate,  
she screamed, she cried . . . I suggested remedies,

and though we faked that we were helping her,  
we soon sneaked away to laugh!  
By Jupiter! What triumph! I realized

that of all the pleasures I've known  
this was the greatest, to make horrible  
the enchanting face of a feared rival! . . .

## Nieves Xenes (1859-1915)

Nieves Xenes was a Cuban poet. She had at least two sisters who were also poets and painters. She began writing in her teens in association with the literary salon of José María de Céspedes. Her work was published in many Cuban journals and newspapers, including *El País*, *La Lotería*, *El Triunfo*, *Revista Cubana*, *Letras*, *El Figaro*, *Cuba y América*, and *La Habana Elegante*.

She was publishing from the 1890s until at least 1906, and was associated closely with Mercedes Matamoros, Aurelia Castillo, Luisa Pérez de Zambrana, and the Borrero sisters. *El Figaro*, in 1897, published a poem Xenes wrote in praise of Matamoros (Vallejo 287). She is sometimes classified as a romanticist (Biblioteca Virtual Miguel de Cervantes). Other critics, such as Vallejo, group her with the Cuban modernistas.

Her poems were only published in book form in 1915, after her death, by the Academia Nacional de Artes y Letras, of which she was an honored member. Aurelia Castillo wrote the book's introduction. Xenes, before her death, had grouped her poetry into several book manuscripts. The first was *Amorosas*; the second, for patriotic poems, *Evocaciones de patria*; the third, *Rimas*; the fourth, *Floreillas*; and the fifth unnamed (Catalá vii-viii).

"Anonymous," written in 1899 but first published in 1915, describes the poet contemplating the perfect beauty of a statue of a man. She politely insults the statue and its perfect ideal of art, objectifying the statue (or the man) by denying that he has the capacity for thought.

Anonymous

No siento del amor la honda tortura  
cuando contemplo con tenaz fijeza  
la rara perfección de su cabeza  
y su cuerpo de helénica escultura.  
Como imprimiendo a su gentil figura  
sello de augusta y varonil nobleza,  
en su mirar de fúlgida limpieza  
la luz del pensamiento no fulgura.  
Al contemplarlo sin afán ni anhelo  
de un artista inmortal digno modelo,  
su belleza magnífica que encanta  
sólo en mi alma a despertar acierta  
la admiración tranquila que despierta  
la belleza del bruto o de la plata.

Anonymous

I don't sense the tortured depths of love  
when I contemplate with studied gaze  
the rare perfection of your head  
and your body, that Hellenic sculpture.  
As if, printed in your genteel figure  
sealed with august and manly nobility,  
in your bright clear gaze,  
the light of thought never shines.  
As I contemplate it without pain or desire,  
worthy model of an immortal artist,  
your magnificent beauty, so enchanting,  
only manages to inspire in my soul  
the calm admiration sparked  
by the beauty of a brute or of silver.

María Luisa Milanés (1893-1919)

María Luisa Milanés was an ardent feminist and Cuban nationalist who killed herself in part because of an unhappy marriage (Davies 58). She wrote poems that were deep critiques of patriarchal culture and that were expressions of solidarity with other women and all oppressed people.

Her poems were sometimes published under the pseudonym Liana de Lux. Her passions were philosophy, music, and literature. Her works include *Autobiografía*, published though unfinished. She destroyed many of her own poems and essays before her death. Amado Nervo was said to be her favorite poet and a great influence on her work.

She read French, English, and Latin, writing in and translating from French, Spanish, and English, publishing in the journal *Orto* (Fajardo). A 1920 volume of *Orto* gathered a selection of her verses and was dedicated to her memory (Lizaso and Fernández de Castro 299).

Hago como Spártaco

Ya decidí, me voy, rompo los lazos  
que me unen a la vida y a sus penas.  
Hago como Spártaco;  
me yergo destrozando las cadenas  
que mi existir tenían entristecido,  
miro al mañana y al ayer y clamo:  
¡Para mayores cosas he nacido  
que para ser esclava y tener amo!

El mundo es amo vil; enloda, ultraja,  
apresa, embota, empequeñece, baja  
todo nivel moral; su hipocresía  
hace rastrera el alma más bravia.  
¡Y ante el cieno y la baba, ante las penas  
rompo, como Spártaco, mis cadenas!

I'll do what Spartacus did

I've decided: I'll go, breaking the ties  
that bind me to life and its sorrows.  
I'll do what Spartacus did;  
I'll stand tall to destroy the chains  
that have saddened my being,  
I'll look towards morning and the past and declaim:  
I was born for greater things  
than being a slave and having a master!

The world is a vile master; filth, insult,  
snare, mind-numbing, soul-narrowing, below  
all moral standards; its hypocrisy  
makes the bravest soul despicable.  
And considering the mud and slime, considering sorrow,  
I break, like Spartacus, my chains!

No puedo comprender . . .

Me abisma no entender, bello Narciso,  
la ingenua admiración que te arrebató  
y te fascina en la onda azul y plata . . .  
Claro, que para ti es un paraíso  
mirar tus ojos bellos y tu boca,  
tu sonrisa, tu frente y tu figura  
llena de majestad y de dulzura . . .  
Pero ¿no piensas que haya algo de bueno  
que distraiga tus ojos y tu mente,  
fije más alto tu mirar sereno  
y entretenga tus horas dulcemente?  
¡Quisiera comprender mi alma sencilla  
la perfecta hermosura de tu frente,  
donde jamás el pensamiento brilla!

I just don't get it . . .

Lovely Narcissus, I'm afraid I don't understand  
the naive admiration that grips  
you bewitched in the blue and silver wave . . .  
Sure, for you it's Paradise  
to look into your own beautiful eyes and your mouth,  
your smile, your brow and your figure  
full of majesty and sweetness . . .  
But don't you think there's something better  
that might amuse your eyes and mind,  
might direct your calm gaze to something higher  
and fill the hours with sweetness?  
My simple soul longs to understand  
the perfect beauty of your brow,  
where no thought ever sparks!

Aurelia Castillo de González (1842-1920)

Aurelia Castillo was known as a Cuban poet, patriot, humanist, and political progressive. She lived part of her life in exile in the Canary Islands and Spain, returning to Cuba in 1898. She wrote fables, stories, translations, travel narratives, and literary criticism as well as poetry. Her translations include work by D'Annunzio, Vittoria Agancor Pompili, Ada Negri, Carducci, Lamartine, Coppé, Fernand Gregh, and Byron (Arencibia Rodríguez). She was a member of the Cuban Academia Nacional de Artes y Letras (Lugones Andrés).

Her work was included in *Arpas Cubanas* (1904) and in *Florilegio de escritoras cubanas* (1919) (Davies 12). She wrote the preface to *Poesías de los Borrero* (a book of poems by the Borrero family) and the preface to a book by Mercedes Matamoros.

“A Mercedes Matamoros” is a beautiful example of a *décima*, written in response to Matamoros’ poem “A Aurelia” (included in this thesis on page 92). Both poems were published in *El Figaro* in 1892. The *décima* is written with the rhyme scheme and form abba:ac, cddc; the first four lines establish the subject, the fifth and sixth lines pose a question or problem, the poem’s “turn,” and the final four lines answer the question. In this witty exchange of poems, the two women pay each other extravagant compliments. Castillo implies that Matamoros heard a poem but could not compose one in, perhaps, its new meter. The insult turns neatly to a compliment, as Castillo then implies Matamoros invented an even better poetic form. Matamoros’s poem to Castillo suggests that Castillo is such a good poet, some other poet went insane and died of jealousy.

A Mercedes Matamoros

Cuentan que en el valle un día  
cierta alondra se quejaba  
porque una nota ensayaba  
y emitirla no podía.

–¿Habrá otra, entre sí decía,  
más desgraciada que yo?–

- Y el lamento que exhaló  
fue de acordes tan divinos  
que apagó todos los trinos,  
y por reina allí quedó.

To Mercedes Matamoros

They say that one day in the valley  
a certain lark complained  
because she had learned a tune  
and couldn't sing it.  
"Could there be another, tell me true,  
as unfortunate as I?"  
And the lament that she sang  
was so divinely harmonious  
that all songs stopped  
and made her their queen.

Juana Borrero (1878-1896)

Juana Borrero was a Cuban poet who began publishing in the 1890s. She was probably a few years older than she claimed to be. She lived in Havana and Key West, and visited New York City, where she met José Martí and participated in his literary salons. She studied painting with several famous Cuban painters, and was considered a child prodigy. Borrero published in the Cuban journals *El Figaro*, *Azul y Gris*, and *La Habana Elegante*.

Her poems were collected and published in book form after her early death; her passionate epistolary exchange with Carlos Pío Uhrbach, published in the 1960s, became famous in the canon of love letters. Borrero was secretly engaged to Pío Urbach against her father's wishes. Five books of hers in manuscript were accidentally destroyed when her family was exiled from Cuba. Her sisters were also writers; Dulce María Borrero became a well-known poet. Like Delmira Agustini, Borrero participated in the creation of a life-myth of herself as child-muse and vestal virgin. A talented painter, Borrero deeply admired the painter and diarist Marie Bashkirtsieff.

I first came across Borrero while reading about early or “pre” modernista Julián Casal, in relation to whom Borrero was given peripheral mention:

Fuera de los dos grandes iniciadores, Martí y Casal, el núcleo intelectual correspondiente a la primera de esas dos etapas se compone principalmente de los compañeros de Casal, más jóvenes que él, que se reunían en casa de Borrero: las hermanas Borrero y los hermanos Uhrbach. (Henríquez Ureña 419)

Aside from the two great initiators, Martí and Casal, the intellectual nucleus corresponding at first to those two groups was composed principally of Casal's companions, younger than him, who used to meet in the Borrero house: the Borrero sisters and the Uhrbach

brothers.

Statements like these were typical. In volume 3 of *The Literature of Spanish America*, Angel Flores devotes over 600 pages to modernista poets and their work. Borrero is mentioned in Julián Casal's biography as follows: "the doctor's youngest daughter, Juanita, who was later recognized as a promising poetess, fell in love with him, unrequited" (108). Flores either does not know, or counts as insignificant, the poetry of Borrero's circle of female friends.

It became clear through further reading that Borrero and her sister were not minor members of a circle dominated by Casal. Castillo, Matamoros, Pérez de Zambrana, and other women writers were part of their salons. Critics have frequently numbered Borrero and the other women of her literary circle among the modernistas, and in fact Borrero's work was very well received by critics:

Poetisa modernista cubana. Dueña de una asombrosa madurez, tocó los temas eternos de la poesía con rara habilidad en la creación de sugerencias. (Gullón 209)

Modernist Cuban poetess. Mistress of a surprising maturity, she touched upon eternal themes of poetry with rare ability in the creation of subtle meanings.

Margaret Randall calls her and Casal Cuba's greatest modernist poets, and says "Sonnets written by her at the age of twelve still rank among the best in the language" (17). The critic Chacón y Calvo, quoted by Sainz de Roblez, said of Borrero's work:

Hay en esta poesía un gran sentido de intimidad, una aguda introspección de su momento lírico. . . . Es una poesía que empieza a sugerir.

There is in this poetry an overwhelming sense of intimacy, a pointed introspection of the lyrical moment. . . . It's a poetry that works from hints, allusions. (Sainz de Roblez 179).

In "Apolo," written in 1891 to the poet Julian de Casal, Borrero establishes the male figure as a statue, as object, and dissects his physical and aesthetic characteristics. The poem presents itself as one of frustrated desire and love and could be read as a personal love poem, or a presentation of a gender-reversed Pygmalion and Galatea myth. Yet it is also, and I suspect it is primarily, a commentary on art and poetry, for Apollo is the god of poets and song. The poem celebrates her creative energy, her desire, though her passionate entreaty is unable to spark a response from the haughty statue. Borrero situates herself as a woman poet in a gendered landscape of metaphysical and artistic creation. In fact, the poem could be read as a pointed critique of the male-dominated world of letters in which the female poet's passion for her art is spurned. We can read "Apolo" as Borrero's critique of Casal's poetics—not as the expression of a frustrated teenage crush.

In "Las hijas de Ran," Borrero establishes a female world of creativity, one that functions without male participation or a male gaze. Ran, "the Ravager," unpredictable and malicious, is a giant from Norse mythology. She rules the sea and storms, collecting drowned sailors in her net. Her nine daughters, the ondines or undines, are the ocean's waves. Borrero's ondines define each other by collective interaction and play. The poem can be read as a description of Borrero's literary circle, of herself, her sisters, the Xenes sisters Neves and María, Aurelia Castillo, Pérez de Zambrana, and other Cuban women poets, who were very aware of each others' work and who frequently wrote and published poems to each other. The ondines live joyously "entre el cielo y el mar," 'between sky and sea' on a margin, without rigid form or definition. They are in friendly competition and rivalry, spurring each other on, "de espumas coronadas," crowned with sea-foam. Their sparkling sea-foam crowns, or worldly honors, are beautiful but temporary. The poem celebrates a dynamic aesthetic of feminine performativity for other women.

## Apolo

Marmóreo, altivo, refulgente y bello,  
corona de su rostro la dulzura,  
cayendo en torno de su frente pura  
en ondulados rizos el cabello.

Al enlazar mis brazos a su cuello  
y al estrechar su espléndida hermosura,  
anhelante de dicha y de ventura  
la blanca frente con mis labios sello.

Contra su pecho inmóvil, apretada,  
adoré su belleza indiferente,  
y al quererla animar desesperada,

llevada por mi amante desvarío,  
dejé mil besos de ternura ardiente  
allí apagados sobre el mármol frío.

## Apollo

In marble, most proud, indifferent, beautiful,  
your face wreathed in sweetness,  
hair in waving ringlets  
tumbled round your noble brow:

Twining my arms around your neck  
and embracing your splendid loveliness  
filled with bold and joyous longing,  
I seal your white brow with my lips.

Pressed to your unmoving breast,  
I adored your indifferent beauty;  
and hoping against hope that you'd come to life,

carried away by my delirious love,  
I left a thousand kisses, tender, burning,  
there extinguished on your icy stone!

## Las hijas de Ran

Envueltas entre espumas diamantinas  
que salpican sus cuerpos sonrosados,  
por los rayos del sol iluminados,  
surgen del mar en grupo las ondinas.

Cubriendo sus espaldas peregrinas  
descienden los cabellos destrenzados,  
y al rumor de las olas van mezclados  
los ecos de sus risas argentinas.

Así viven contentas y dichosas  
entre el cielo y el mar, regocijadas,  
ignorando tal vez que son hermosas,

Y que las olas, entre sí rivales,  
se entrechocan, de espumas coronadas,  
por estrechar sus formas virginales.

Ran's daughters

    Wrapped in diamantine froth  
that flecks their blushing bodies  
glowing with the rays of the sun,  
the undines rise, gathered in a group.

    Covering their far-ranging shoulders  
their unfastened hair tumbles down,  
and to the clamor of the waves they mix  
the echoes of their silvery laughter.

    Thus they live content and fortunate  
between sky and sea, rejoicing,  
perhaps ignoring that they're beautiful.

    And how the waves, contesting with each other,  
crash and twine, crowned with shining foam,  
stretching out, defining their virgin forms.

María Eugenia Vaz Ferreira (1875-1924)

Vaz Ferreira was a member of the "Generación del 1900" of Uruguayan intellectuals, which included José Enrique Rodó, Julio Herrera y Reissig, Ernestina Méndez Reissig de Narvaja, Florencio Sánchez, Samuel Blixen, Alberto Nin Frias, Horacio Quiroga, and Carlos Reyles (Verani 9). She began publishing in 1894. After her illness and death in 1924, her brother, who published her book, *La isla de los cánticos*, downplayed the friendship between María Eugenia and Delmira Agustini. In 1959, her unpublished poems were printed as *La otra isla de los cánticos*.

Biographical notes on Vaz Ferreira often paint her as a frail, waiflike young maiden with a posthumous "slim volume of poems" who had a tragic illness before her early death (Jacquez Wieser 8). Her illness is sometimes alluded to as mental: Sidonia Rosenbaum implies that Vaz Ferreira, embittered by Delmira Agustini's fame, lost her mind because of jealousy and a combination of caprice and frustrated, "sterile" sexuality (50). However, other sources emphasize her positive, charismatic qualities as a rebel, speaking of her literary and intellectual influence, her fondness for wearing men's clothes, her shocking bohemian manners, and her notorious love of practical jokes. She was the first woman in Uruguay to fly in an airplane, in 1914, at the Fiesta Aérea, a public event. Juan Carlos Legido describes her as one of the most cultured, sure of herself, famous, and popular women in Montevideo's social circles (Legido 6). She was a literature professor at the Women's University of Montevideo, along with Dr. Clotilde Luisi. Vaz Ferreira was also a dramatist, composer and pianist. Her works were often performed at the Teatro Solís (Rubenstein Moreira 12). Vaz Ferreira was especially fond of Heine and other German poets and philosophers.

The critic Alberto Zum Felde counted Vaz Ferreira among modernista writers, influenced by the Mexican writers Salvador Díaz Mirón and Manuel Gutiérrez Nájera (Rubenstein Moriera 46). Anderson-Imbert, in *Spanish American Literature*, refers to her

as "the nucleus of Uruguayan poetry" and of modernismo; then he calls her "a solitary voice, solemnly religious, although capable of creating sharp images on a high level" and goes on to discuss Julio Herrera y Reissig, "not a great poet . . ." for several pages. (Andersen-Imbert 279). The general pattern is for literary historians to call Vaz Ferreira's work brilliant, and then to pay more attention to the work of poets who are men.

With typical blunt condescension, María Monvel says of Vaz Ferreira:

Interesante "caso" de mujer, de letras, esta uruguayana, que a pesar de haber nacido en 1880, tiene en sus versos todo el acento libre de la mujer nacida en pleno siglo veinte. Gran poeta lírico, con algo de reflexivo y meditativo a la vez, esta mujer es uno de los más finos cantores que ha tenido América, y tal vez es su influencia la única perceptible en Delmira Agustini, que la superó en pasión y en arrebató lírico, pero no en cultura y sensibilidad. (Monvel 63)

Interesting "case" of a woman of letters, this Uruguayan, who despite the burden of being born in 1880, has in her verses all the free tone of a woman born right in the 20th century. A great lyric poet, with something of reflexivity and meditateness at the same time, this woman is one of the finest poets that America has had, and perhaps her influence is the only one perceptible in Delmira Agustini, who surpasses her in passion and in going overboard with lyricism, but not does not surpass her in culture or sensitivity.

My translation of the title of "Vaso furtivo" was a difficult choice. The poem is toasting and drinking to impermanence, lightness, madness, surfaces and illusion. "Sly toast" does not work in English, and "Furtive glass" does not convey the meaning of a toast. The poem itself celebrates qualities that have traditionally been attributed to women. Considered in this light, it is a radical feminist aesthetic statement. "Las ondinas," a poem about the beauty of ocean waves at dawn, emphasizes feminine beauty, impermanence,

and dynamic movement; Vaz Ferreira's poems often celebrate an ethereal world of ideal beauty, writing modernista aesthetics from the viewpoint of a powerful woman, as in her poem "Yo soy la Diosa de las azules, diáfanos calmas" 'I am the Goddess of all blue, diaphanous calm' (Vaz Ferreira, *Otra isla*, 57-58).

## Vaso furtivo

Por todo lo breve y frágil,  
superficial, fugitivo,  
por lo que no tiene bases,  
argumentos ni principios;  
por todo lo que es liviano,  
veloz, mudable y finito;  
por las volutas del humo,  
por las rosas de los tirsos,  
por la espuma de las olas  
y las brumas del olvido . . .  
por lo que les carga poco  
a los pobres peregrinos  
de esta trashumante tierra  
grave y lunática, brindo  
con palabras transitorias  
y con vaporosos vinos  
de burbuja centelleantes  
en cristales quebradizos . . .

## A quick drink

To all that's brief and fragile,  
superficial, unstable,  
To all that has no foundation,  
logical argument or principles;  
for everything imprudent,  
quick, mutable, and finite;  
to spirals of smoke,  
to thyrsus-stemmed roses,  
to foam on the waves  
and forgetting's sea-mist . . .  
to all that's nearly weightless  
for the wandering folk  
of this transient earth;  
grave, moonmad, I drink to all that  
with transitory words  
and heady wines  
sparkling with bubbles  
in the most breakable glasses . . .

## Las ondinas

Junto a la costa  
donde la arena tibia y plateada  
bañan las ondas,  
y los lucientes  
rayos primeros de la alborada  
brillan y mueren,

de entre la espuma  
surgen ligeras de las ondinas  
las raudas curvas  
y los informes  
trajes etéreos de hadas marinas,  
blancas visiones.

Ruedan, verdosas,  
resplandecientes como esmeraldas,  
las claras gotas  
que se destiñen  
en la tersura de sus espaldas  
de níveo cisne . . .

Unas se envuelven  
las vaporosas gasas azules  
del alba veste,  
otras al viento  
sueltan los leves florantes tules  
color de cielo

y hunden las blancas  
esbeltas formas del mar sonoro  
bajo las aguas,  
y serpentean  
sobre las ondas cual rayos de oro  
sus cabelleras . . .

## The ondines

At the shore  
where the cool and silvered wave  
bathes sand,  
and the shining stars  
flare and die  
at dawn's first rays,

from sea-foam  
the ondines lightly leap,  
swift curves  
and forms,  
ethereal dress of ocean nymphs,  
fair visions.

They roll onward, clear green,  
resplendent as emeralds,  
the bright waters  
that lend color  
to their polished shoulders,  
snow-white swan . . .

Some wrap themselves  
in diaphanous blue mists  
dressed in dawn,  
others in the wind  
let fly light floating gauze  
the color of heaven

and the fair ones sink  
svelte forms of sonorous ocean  
beneath the waters,  
and over the waves  
their hair snakes  
like rays of gold . . .

Emilia Bernal (1884-1964)

Emilia Bernal de Agüero was born in Cuba, and lived in Ecuador, Perú, Bolivia, Chile, and New York. She was married young and had four children before 1908. She taught college literature. In 1909 she separated from her husband, and began publishing in 1910. After her divorce, she joined the Cuban diplomatic staff. She was known as a rebel, non-conformist, and political writer (Vega Ceballos). She wrote for *La Nación*, *Bohemia*, *Social*, and *El Figaro* (Biblioteca Virtual Miguel de Cervantes).

The Basque writer Llorenç Villalonga, author of *Silvia Ocampo* (1935), wrote the novel *Fedre* and the first part of *Madame Dillon* based on his relationship with Bernal (Pomar).

Henríquez Ureña mentions Bernal as a modernist and follower of Martí in his history of modernismo. Emilia Bernal translated from Catalan, Portuguese, and other languages into Spanish; her translation work includes a book of poems by Rosalia del Castro.

Her publications include: *Alma Errante*, poems (1916); *Cómo los pájaros!* poems and translations (1923); *Layka Froyka*, autobiography (1925); *Los nuevos motivos*, 1925; *Exaltación* (1934); *Poetas catalanes de hoy*, translations (1927); *Cuestiones cubanas para América*, political essays, (1928); and *Negro* (1938).

Though her work is often spoken of as personal, modernista, or lyrical, Bernal was engaged in politics for much of her life and read a series of lectures in Spain, Portugal, and elsewhere on Cuban and United States politics (Davies 22). Along with many other feminists such as María Luisa Milanés, she allied herself with anti-racist movements and described herself as a sister-in-arms of enslaved people—going so far as to declare that all women were slaves because of the lack of female suffrage and other factors (Davies 57).

Anderson-Imbert said of her: "Tender, ardent, intuitive, was capable of denying these qualities in herself in order to complicate sounds which brought her close to a poetry which, under the heading 'abnormality' will be studied in the second part of this

panorama. Those who remain, then, are Cubans of the ‘abnormality’—Mariano Brull, Navarro Luna, and others . . ." (337). What Anderson-Imbert calls “the abnormality” is the "vanguardist subversion" against modernismo.

Bernal is noticeably absent from many biographical dictionaries of Latin American writers.

“Pedrería” plays with modernista color symbolism; the gems represent ideals of perfect beauty. Rather than setting a scene of fantasy to which the soul of the poet is transported, or a situation of transmutation to a plane of ideals, Bernal engages sensually and physically with the perfect beauty of the gems. “A una rosa” (1916) is a poem in *sexta rima* with a scandalous subtext: the rose and its stalk are limp and drooping, while the poet wishes and imagines that her efforts will make it stand erect again. “Hierro” is from the México chapter of Bernal’s 1937 book *América*. There is an earlier version of the poem from 1925, but I have not yet found it. In “Hierro,” Bernal ventures into the realm of free verse and presents a vision of industrialization, and Mexico, as boldly but perturbingly masculine.

## Pedrería

Ámbar. Mármol. Zafir. La algarabía  
de un cofre de fakir. Que se aproveche  
de tanto encanto mi osadía. Eche  
a revolver en él la mano mía.

Alabastro y azur. Sangre del día.  
Piedras a granel. Rosas de leche.  
Carcajadas de luz. Mi afán estreche  
y agite la ofuscante pedrería.

Mar. Cielo. ¡Sol, entre mis brazos!  
¡Fuego  
de los claros diamantes con que juego!  
Malquitas, topacios. ¡Serpentinas

de centelleos en mis manos! ¡Presas  
en los dedos guirnaldas de turquesas,  
lapislázuli, jade, aguas marinas!

## Jewels

Amber. Marble. Sapphire. The jingling babble  
of magic treasure. May my bold desires  
make the most of such enchantment. Let me  
stir them around with my hand.

Alabaster and azure. Day's blood.  
Stones in a heap. Roses made of milk.  
Great laughter of light. My longing grasps  
and tumbles the precious jewels.

Sea. Sky. Sun in my arms!  
Fire  
of bright diamonds playing!  
Malachite, topaz. Serpentine ribbons  
sparkling in my hands! Caught  
in my fingers, wreaths of turquoise,  
lapis lazuli, jade, aquamarine!

## A una rosa

O rosa, ¡rosa mía! que ayer lozana fuiste,  
por qué doblas ahora lacia, debil y triste,  
tus pétalos marchitos, tu cáliz sin verdor.  
¿Le cuentas a la tierra tus dulces remembranzas  
como en largo secreto sus muertas esperanzas  
la moribunda virgen le cuenta al confesor?

Pensando en lo que fuiste y al ver cómo feneces,  
quisiera alzar el tallo en donde languideces,  
tornarte la frescura, la belleza, el color,  
volverte en un suspiro tu aliento perfumado,  
acercarte mis labios y a un beso prolongado  
prender en ti, de nuevo, suavísimo el calor.

To a rose

Oh rose, rose of mine! that once sprang sprightly up,  
why do you bend double, flaccid, weak and sad,  
your petals withered, your once-green calyx pale?  
Do you tell the earth the sweetness of your past,  
like the long secret story of dead hopes  
a dying virgin whispers to her priest?

Thinking on what was was, and to see how you decline,  
I'd wish to raise the stalk on which you languish,  
to give fresh strength to you; beauty, color;  
to return, with a sigh, your perfumed breath  
to bring you to my lips and in a long, long kiss  
press upon you new, most softly, heat and fire.

## Hierro

¡Un hombre de hierro!  
De hierro las carnes del pecho invencible.  
De hierro los bíceps y tríceps del brazo que erecta triunfante ademán.  
Las manos de hierro y el vientre.  
Y los muslos columnas potentes de hierro, y las piernas,  
cual zócalos bravos sostenes de aquel formidable titán,  
con el pie clavado en la tierra apretando en los dedos de garra  
las raíces del árbol que arranca del bíblico Adán

De hierro los ojos.  
De hierro los dientes.  
De hierro el cerebro, los pulmones y el corazón,  
los riñones, el bazo y el sexo.  
Por fuera y por dentro un hombre completo de hierro.  
¡La fuerza!  
La fuerza más grande que el tiempo a la vida ha lanzado  
es su encarnación.

## Iron

A man of iron!

Iron the flesh of his invincible chest.

Iron his biceps and triceps, his arm raised in triumphant sign.

His hands of iron and his belly.

And his thighs potent columns of iron, and his calves,

brave pedestals sustaining that formidable Titan,

with his foot nailed to the earth, with clawed fingers he seizes  
the roots of the tree from the Biblical Adam.

Iron his eyes.

Iron his teeth.

Iron his brain, his lungs and heart,

his kidneys, spleen, and sex.

Inside and out a man completely made of iron.

Strength!

The greatest strength that time has launched  
is his incarnation.

Delmira Agustini (1886-1914)

Agustini was part of the Uruguayan generation of 1900 along with María Eugenia Vaz Ferreira, Julio Herrera y Reissig, Leopoldo Lugones, and Rubén Darío; and was also considered part of the "generation of the Río de la Plata" of 1910-1920 (Camps 6). She was close to the Argentine writer Manuel Ugarte and to María Eugenia Vaz Ferreira. Early in her career, poets and critics like Juan Zorrilla de San Martín and Carlos Vaz Ferreira called her "The baby muse" and played up the image of her as a chaste, virginal child. Later, scandal accompanied her image as an artist and poet, her bohemian life and her tragic murder.

In 1902 Agustini began writing a regular column, "La legión etérea," for *La Alborada*, a popular weekly journal, under the pseudonym "Joujou" (Rosenbaum 67-68). The column focused on prominent artistic and literary women.

She was considered a modernista, though a maverick "feminine" modernista who, outside mainstream literary circles, was one of "algunas figuras independientes . . . que introdujo una nota de honda y sensual femineidad en la poesía modernista" 'a few independent figures . . . who introduced a note of depth and sensual femininity into modernista poetry' (Henríquez Ureña 275). Other critics identify Agustini as part of a movement of women's poetry: "It was perhaps Delmira Agustini who better represented a certain concept of feminine poetry: a poetry of passion and sensuality, a poetry written to challenge social conventions and to exalt eroticism unabashedly" (Rodríguez Monegal 1:368). Critics early in the 20th century often praise the technical perfection of her verse.

## Fiera de amor

Fiera de amor, yo sufro hambre de corazones.  
De palomas, de buitres, de corzos o leones,  
No hay manjar que más tiente, no hay más grato sabor,  
Había ya estragado mis garras y mi instinto,  
Cuando erguida en la casi ultratierra de un plinto,  
Me deslumbró una estatua de antiguo emperador.

Y crecí de entusiasmo; por el tronco de piedra  
Ascendió mi deseo como fulmínea hiedra  
Hasta el pecho, nutrido en nieve al parecer;  
Y clamé al imposible corazón . . . la escultura  
Su gloria custodiaba serenísima y pura,  
Con la frente en Mañana y la planta en Ayer.

Perene mi deseo, en el tronco de piedra  
ha quedado prendido como sangrienta hiedra;  
Y desde entonces muerdo soñando un corazón  
De estatua, presa suma para mi garra bella;  
No es ni carne ni mármol: una pasta de estrella  
Sin sangre, sin calor y sin palpitación . . .

Con la esencia de una sobrehumana pasión!

Fierce from love

Made fierce by love, I'm starving for hearts.  
Pigeon, vulture, dun deer or lion,  
no meat tempts me more with exotic flavors.  
I'd blunted my claws and my primal drives.  
Then, set up on a plinth, almost otherworldly,  
a statue dazzled me—an ancient emperor.

And I fed my eagerness; over his stone body  
my desire ascended like ivy lightning, sudden  
up to his chest, feeding on skin like snow;  
and I cried out to his unreachable heart . . . sculpture  
guarding his glory, most chaste, still, and pure,  
his face towards Tomorrow, feet rooted in Yesterday.

Everlasting my desire; on the stone body  
I've stayed pressed like a living blood-filled vine;  
And since then, dreaming, I devour  
a statue's heart, prey worthy of my gorgeous claws;  
it's not flesh, not marble: the stuff of stars,  
without blood, heat, or heartbeat . . .

I devour it with deep, inhuman passion!

## Nocturno

Engarzado en la noche el lago de tu alma,  
diríase una tela de cristal y de calma  
tramada por las grandes arañas del desvelo.

Nata de agua lustral en vaso de alabastros,  
espejo de pureza que abrillantas los astros  
y reflejas la sima de la Vida en el cielo . . .

Yo soy el cisne errante de los sangrientos rastros,  
voy manchando los lagos y remontando el vuelo.

## Nocturne

Lake of your soul, gem-mounted in night,  
you would tell a thread of crystal and calm  
spun by the huge spiders of wakeful evening.

Lustral waters born in alabaster cups,  
mirror of purity where the stars shine  
and reflect the abyss of Life in the heavens . . .

I am the wandering swan of bleeding trails,  
I'm dirtying the lakes and soaring in flight.

Claudia Lars (1899-1974)

Margarita del Carmen Brannon Vega is her birth name; she is also called Carmen Brannon Beers or Carmen Brannon de Samoya Chinchilla. She was born in El Salvador. She studied and lived in the United States, Mexico, Costa Rica, and Guatemala.

Her early work in the 1920s and 1930s was compared to Agustini, Mistral, Storni, and Ibarbourou. She lists as her early influences Cervantes, Fray Luís de León, Lope de Vega, Quevedo, Góngora, Shakespeare, Wordsworth, Burns, Coleridge, Whitman, Poe, Dickinson, Shelley, Byron, Yeats, Blake, and Darío (Barraza 142). Critics called her a lyrical postmodernist. Later, she was considered part of the Vanguard, writing in both formal and free verse.

Her books include *Tristes mirajes* (1916); *Estrellas en el pozo* (1934), *Canción redonda* (1937). She also wrote poems and books for children, sonnets to famous women writers of many countries, and, later in the 20th century, she wrote a poem cycle on the cosmonauts of the United States and Russia—including the dog Laika.

“Dibujo” sets out a bold feminist vision of the future. The poem’s woman “que llega,” who’s coming, arriving now, or will soon arrive, transcends the usual gendered metaphors. Her ascension is not like flight, and not like the growing of a plant that is rooted in the earth. Instead, Lars describes a woman who stands up, who has agency and raises herself up with all her intelligence and power.

Dibujo de la mujer que llega

En el lodo empinada,  
No como el tallo de la flor  
y el ansia de la mariposa . . .  
Sin raíces ni juegos:  
más recta, más segura  
y más libre.

Conocedora de la sombra y de la espina,  
Con el milagro levantado  
en los brazos triunfantes.  
Con la barrera y el abismo  
debajo de su salto.

Dueña absoluta de su carne  
para volverla centro del espíritu:  
vaso de lo celeste,  
domus áurea,  
gleba donde se yerguen, en un brote,  
la mazorca y el nardo.

Olvidada la sonrisa de Gioconda,  
Roto el embrujo de los siglos,  
Vencedora de miedos.  
Clara y desnuda bajo el día limpio.

Amante inigualable  
en ejercicio de un amor tan alto  
que hoy ninguno adivina.  
Dulce,  
con filtrada dulzura  
que no daña ni embriaga a quien la prueba.

Maternal todavía,  
sin la caricia que detiene el vuelo,  
ni ternuras que cercan,  
ni mezquinas daciones que se cobran.

Pionera de las nubes.  
Guía del laberinto.  
Tejedora de vendas y de cantos.  
Sin más adorno que su sencillez.

Se levanta del polvo . . .  
No como el tallo de la flor

que es apenas belleza.

Sketch of the woman of the future

Standing tall in the mud.  
Not like the flower's stalk  
and butterfly's desire . . .  
No roots, no flitting,  
more erect, more sure  
and more free.

Knower of shadow and thorn,  
With miracle held high  
in her triumphant arms.  
With obstacle and abyss.  
beneath her stride.

Absolute queen of her flesh  
returned to the center of her spirit:  
vessel of the celestial,  
*domus aurea*, home of the golden;  
clod where shoots burst forth into  
maize and fragrant flower.

Forgotten: the Mona Lisa's smile.  
Broken: the spell of centuries.  
Conquered: the fears.  
Bright and naked in the pure, clean day.

Unequaled lover  
in enjoyment of a love so lofty  
that no one today could predict it.  
Sweet,  
with controlled sweetness  
that doesn't hurt or intoxicate the drinker.

Maternal still,  
without the caress that holds back flight  
nor tenderness that traps,  
nor submission and giving in, that little by little, smothers.

Pioneer of the clouds.  
Guide to the labyrinth.  
Weaver of veil and song.  
Adorned only in her simplicity.

She stands up from the dust . . .

Not like the flowering stem  
that's not so beautiful.

Juana de Ibarbourou (1894-1979)

Juana de Ibarbourou, born Juana Fernández Morales in Uruguay, has been called a modernist, post-modernist, vanguardist, experimentalist, and surrealist at different stages of her long career as a writer (Anderson-Imbert 347-49). She was strongly influenced by Delmira Agustini, whom she referred to as her "elder sister," and María Eugenia Vaz Ferreira.

Her early works include *Las lenguas de diamante* (1919), *El cántaro fresco* (1920), *Raíz salvaje* (1922), and *La rosa de los vientos* (1930). In 1929 she was awarded the honor of being crowned in the Montevideo capitol building in a state ceremony and was given the name "Juana de América" (Russell xlvi). She wrote and published under various pseudonyms including "Jeannette d'Ibar" (Aira 285). She was a popular poet with strong European recognition, publishing well into the 1970s.

Diaz-Diocaretz says of her work, "Juana de Ibarbourou is, perhaps, the most polemical and anti-traditional 'female poet'. Her intertextual bonds are mostly transgressions against mythology, teleology and the canonical tropes of Western discourse" (99).

"Las olas" juxtaposes sea-waves, gulls, wings, and airplanes to carry Ibarbourou to a new land of the imagination. This poem read in conjunction with "Atlántico," Vaz Ferreira's poem "Las ondines," and Borrero's "Hijas de Ran" reveals a dense symbolist tangle that presents the ocean as the location of women's freedom.

Ibarbourou's early education was not formal, and, though she was well read, she reportedly did not know what a sonnet was until well after her first book was published. Her early work often lacks technical perfection in form because she was not aware of the structure of formal verse. "La estatua," however, is a *seguidilla de arte menor*, with four-line stanzas and alternating lines of 7 and 5 syllables. Ibarbourou plays with paradox as the statue complains of its transformation from human to unfeeling gold and laments in

song its inability to speak.

Las olas

Si todas las gaviotas de esta orilla  
Quisieran unir sus alas,  
Y formar el avión o la barca  
Que pudiesen llevarme hasta otras playas . . .

Bajo la noche enigmática y espesa  
Viajaríamos rasando las aguas.  
Con un grito de triunfo y de arribo  
Mis gaviotas saludarían el alba.

De pie sobre la tierra desconocida  
Yo tendería al nuevo sol las manos  
Como si fueran dos alas recién nacidas.  
¡Dos alas con las que habría de ascender  
Hasta una nueva vida!

## The waves

If they wanted to, all the gulls  
on this beach could join their wings  
to make an airplane—or a ship—  
to carry me to some other shore . . .

Through the dense mystery of night  
we'd venture, skittering over the water.  
With a scream of triumph, my gull-ship  
would alight on land and greet the dawn.

Walking on virgin soil  
I'd hold out my hands to the rising sun  
like two newborn wings.  
Two wings, to lift me  
to a new life!

## Atlántico

Océano que te abres lo mismo que una mano  
A todos los viajeros y a todos los marinos:  
Tan sólo para mí eres puño cerrado,  
Para mí solamente tú no tienes caminos.

Jamás balanceará tu lomo milenario  
La nave que me lleve desde esta tierra mía,  
Ondulada y menuda, a las tierras que sueña  
Mi juventud inmóvil y mi melancolía.

Ah! océano Atlántico multicolor y ancho  
Cual un ciel caído entre el hueco de un mar:  
Te miro como un fruto que no he de morder nunca  
O como un campo rico que nunca he de espigar.

Ah! océano Atlántico, fiel leopardo que lames  
Mis dos pies que encadenan el amor y la vida:  
Haz que un día se sacien sobre tu flanco elástico  
Esta ansiedad constante y este afán de partida.

## Atlantic

Ocean, you open up like a hand  
to all voyagers and all sailors:  
except me—for me you're a closed fist,  
to me alone, you deny all roads.

Your fertile loins will never bear  
the ship that carries me from my native land,  
tiny, bobbing, wave-swept, to lands imagined  
by my melancholy and my landlocked youth.

Ah! Atlantic ocean, multicolored, wide  
like a sky fallen into a hollow sea bed  
I watch you—fruit I've never bitten,  
rich harvest I've never reaped.

Ah! Atlantic ocean, faithful leopard that licks  
my two feet enchained by life and love:  
Let me, one day, straddle your elastic flank and ride,  
to sate this constant longing, this eagerness for parting.

La estatua

Soy campana rota,  
Nardo sin olor,  
Fuente que ha perdido  
Su vivo rumor.

Sólo espinas largas  
Mis rosales dan,  
Soy de un trigo negro  
Que hace amargo el pan.

¿Para qué me quieres  
Si no tengo aromas?  
¿Para qué me quieres  
Si sequé mis pomas?

El estambre de oro  
Que mi vida dió,  
En un polvo oscuro  
Ya se diluyó.

Anda, di a la Muerte  
Que aguardando estoy.  
Anda, di a la Muerte  
Que de bronce soy.

Que ya mis pupilas  
No saben llorar,  
Y que labios míos  
No pueden besar.

Anda, que el rey Midas  
Pasó por aquí,  
Y en estatua de oro  
Transformada fui.

Vete, no murmure  
Más esa palabra  
Que en mi encanto puede  
Ser de abracadabra.

No me digas nada,  
No te quejes más.  
Si la estatua siente,

Te arrepentirás.

The statue

I'm a broken bell,  
lily without scent,  
fountain that has lost  
its lively murmur.

My rosebushes grow  
only long thorns.  
I'm black wheat  
that makes bitter bread.

Why would you want me  
if I don't have scent or savor?  
Why would you want me  
if my apples are withered?

The golden pollen  
that gave me life  
has been diluted  
with dark dust.

Go on, let Death know  
that I'm expecting her.  
Go on, let Death know  
that I'm made of bronze.

That my eyes  
don't know how to cry,  
and that my lips  
can't kiss.

Go on. King Midas  
passed by here,  
and I was transformed  
into a statue of gold.

Go! Don't whisper  
that word again,  
that abracadabra  
to break my enchantment.

Don't say a word,  
don't hang around here.  
If the statue comes to life,

you'll be sorry.

Enriqueta Arvelo Larriva (1886-1962)

Cesar Aira calls Venezuelan Arvelo Larriva a poet of the "generation of 1918," but she was also part of the Vanguard. While her first book, *Voz Aislada*, was published in 1939, her poems were widespread in the teens and 1920s in Venezuela; the poems I've included here are from 1922-1930 (Instituto de Investigaciones 46-47).

Arvelo Larriva has been described by critics as an Emily Dickinson figure, a hermit in the country:

Sin haber hecho estudios formales, tuvo una extraordinaria cultura literaria. No formó parte de grupo alguno, y vivió toda su vida en su Barinas natal. Su poesía es personalísima, conceptual y soñadora a la vez. Hace pensar en Emily Dickinson. (Aira 54)

Without having completed any formal schooling, she had an extraordinary literary education. She wasn't part of any group, and she lived all her life in her native Barinas. Her poetry is simultaneously very personal, conceptual, and resonant. She makes one think of Emily Dickinson.

While she may have lived in Barinas, Enriqueta was not disengaged from the worlds of writing and politics. She and many Venezuelan poets of that time were involved with the student uprisings of the 1920s. Her brother, the modernista and criollista poet Alfredo Arvelo Larriva (1883-1934), a member of the "generation of 27," was jailed under the dictatorship of the 1920s and died in exile in Madrid. Her younger cousin Alberto Arvelo Torrealba, and his mother Atilia Torrealba Febres, were poets as well (Mannarino 11).

"Destino" can be read in light of the Venezuelan llanos and the prairie burn-off of the dry season. Yet, like many of her poems, it can be read as a political commentary. There is the "dry season" layer, specific to her region's geography; the tangled, thorny groves

are burned with controlled fires in order to clear room for new growth for vast herds of cattle. The poem could also work as a personal one about philosophical and spiritual renewal. However, the “pájaros sin nidos” ‘birds without nests’ can also be read as the journalists, students, and poets who had to flee the country under the rule of Juan Vicente Gómez, after the 1927 student uprisings or other political clashes. “Vive una guerra” continues the internalization of violent metaphors, with war metaphors to represent existential and philosophical struggles.

The creative act of the word, of poetry, is presented as a solution to the problems posed in “Destino.” “Balada de lo que oí” praises poetic and spiritual sensitivity, “¡Dichoso el oído mío!” ‘How fortunate I am!’ that leads to epiphany. Enriqueta speaks as a confident and accomplished poet and thinker.

Enriqueta’s cryptic, dense, metaphysical vanguardista lines make me think of the early poems of David Rosenmann-Taub from the late 1940s and early 1950s. Her poetry is unusual and excellent. As challenges to the translator, they offer an interesting task, with multiple interpretations for many lines and for the poem’s general meaning.

## Destino

Un oscuro impulso incendió mis bosques  
¿Quién me dejó sobre las cenizas?

Andaba el viento sin encuentros.  
Emergían ecos mudos no sembrados.

Partieron el cielo pájaros sin nidos.  
El último polvo nubló la frontera.

Inquieta y sumisa, me quedé en mi voz.

## Destiny

A dark impulse burned up my forests.  
Who is left for me from the ashes?

The wind roamed alone, meeting no one.  
Echoes emerged, mute, unsown.

Parrots without nests divided the skies.  
The last dust clouded the frontier.

Anxious and meek, I dwell in my voice.

## Confesión

En pleno campo  
asaltóme el miedo.  
Y me inquietó el trino claro  
y el emboscado ruido.  
El sol en acción,  
la tendida sombra.  
La quietud del tronco,  
el estremecimiento de la rama viva.

Y corrí sin ley.  
Me llevaba el miedo.  
Las cintas filosas de un cañal tupido  
me hirieron el rostro.  
Corría de miedo.  
Y nadie lo supo.  
Y me avergüenzo.

## Confession

Full wild in the field  
fear assaulted me.  
And the bright wheat unnerved me  
and the rustle of ambush.  
The sun, signifying;  
the diffuse shadows.  
The tree trunk's quietness,  
the extremity of living branches.

And I ran, lawless, wild.  
Fear had overcome me.  
The dividing ribbons of a reed-thick stream  
scratched my face.  
I was running from fear.  
And no one knew.  
And I was ashamed.

Vive una guerra

Vive una guerra no advenida. Guerra  
con santo y seña, con la orden del día,  
con partes, con palomas mensajeras.

Guerra pujante dentro de las vidas.  
No digo en las arterias; más adentro.

Ni un estampido ni un rojor de fuego  
ni humo vago dan desnudo indicio.

Mas paz de tiza la refleja entera.

A war lives

A war lives, unheralded. War  
with saint and sign, with the order of day,  
with parts of things, with messenger doves.

War throbbing inside whole lives.  
I don't say in the veins; deeper inside.

No bang or ruddiness of fire  
no smoke cloud gives naked warning.

Instead, the peace of whiteout reflects the whole thing.

Balada de lo que oí

No supe quién me lo dijo.  
El acento, divino.

No supe quién me lo dijo.  
No corrí tras los detalles  
cuando oí lo infinito.

No supe quién me lo dijo.  
Lo oí.  
¡Dichoso el oído mío!

En ese instante se hizo en mí lo armonioso.  
Lo que oí va eterno y limpio.

Y qué tremenda la gracia  
de no saber quién me lo dijo.

Ballad of what I heard

I didn't know who told it to me.  
The voice, divine.

I didn't know who told me.  
I didn't dwell on the details  
when I heard what's infinite.

I didn't know who told me.  
I heard it.  
So lucky, that hearing of mine!

In this instant, in me, it creates what's harmonious.  
What I heard runs eternal and clean.

And how tremendous the grace  
of not knowing who told it to me.

Gabrela Mistral (1889-1957)

Mistral's first book, *Desolación*, was published in 1922 by the Spanish Institute of Columbia University, where Mistral was teaching. She also taught at Vassar, Middlebury, and the University of Puerto Rico. Her birth name was Lucila Godoy y Alcayaga. Mistral taught and lectured in the United States, Chile, France, Mexico, and Spain. (Valbuena Briones 416). Her first published poem was "Sonetas a la Muerte," ('Sonnets to Death' 1914).

Langston Hughes calls her "influenced by the Chilean modernists and Amado Neruo" but does not consider her a modernista. He makes an effort to separate Mistral from the scandalous Delmira, while linking her with a safely distant mystic ancestress: "She found in Delmira Agustini a kindred desperate soul, but her love was untainted by sensuality. She was more in debt to the Bible and Saint Teresa . . ." (Hughes 9-11).

Other critics disparage Mistral's work even while reluctantly praising it:

She achieved a sort of stark and uncompromising beauty that came very close to justifying the 1945 Nobel Prize she received at a time when Reyes, Neruda, and Borges were all still very active.

(Rodriguez Monegal, 1:484-85)

Hughes published a thin volume of his translations of Mistral in the United States in 1957. In his introduction he emphasizes the myth of Mistral as an unmarried widow, as being sentimental over children because she could never have her own, as being pure, never sensual, writing about mothers and children. Hughes says "For the most part I have selected from the various books those poems relating to children, motherhood, and love . . ."

In *The Defiant Muse*, Angel and Kate Flores continue this view of Mistral as universal yet sexless mother,

who wrote with matchless intensity of frustrated and suffering

womanhood. Her children's songs and lullabies are among the tenderest in the Spanish language. Without children of her own, she turned her love of children into a universal love for all humanity. She became a sort of world mother, singing about children . . . (xxi)

Bautista Gutiérrez points out that this sanctification was reserved for poets, as poetry was considered to be more erotic and scandalous than novels; women writers like Mistral were labelled “la Santa” or “la Divina” to make them more palatable to readers (xii). In the first half of the twentieth century in Latin America, the assumption of authorial distance between the poem’s speaker and author was not prevalent. The poem’s speaker or narrator was assumed to be the poet herself—unlike the speaker in a novel in which third person creates authorial distance. Thus, a poem with a passionate subject threw direct implications onto the sexuality of the poet, especially a woman poet, and it had to be carefully explained.

Recent United States anthologies stand further back from Mistral’s image as an author: Tapscott's introduction to her work says, "Mistral in her early poems pursued the creation of an intense Symbolist life-myth . . ." (79). This life-myth told the story that she was passionately in love with a young man when they were teenagers. He was unfaithful to her, she broke up with him, and he shot himself. This was the explanation for Mistral remaining unmarried throughout her life—as well as her explanation for writing love poetry.

Her poems describe exiles and wanderers, women without countries. She wrote poetic manifestos, invocations, and a long conversation with Poetry, “La flor del aire.”

Mistral’s “longtime companion,” Doris Dana, is her literary executor and translates her work into English (Tapscott 79).

Paisajes de la Patagonia  
I. Desolación

La bruma espesa, eterna, para que olvide dónde  
me ha arrojado la mar en su ola de salmuera  
la tierra a la que vine no tiene primavera:  
tiene su noche larga que cual madre me esconde.

El viento hace de mi casa su ronda de sollozos  
y de alarido, y quiebra, como un cristal, mi grito  
y en la llanura blanca, de horizonte infinito,  
miro morir inmensos ocasos dolorosos.

¿A quién podrá llamar la que hasta aquí ha venido  
si más lejos que ella sólo fueron los muertos?  
¡Tan sólo ellos contemplan un mar callado y yerto  
crecer entre sus brazos y los brazos queridos!

Los barcos cuyas velas blanquean en el puerto  
vienen de tierras donde no están los que son míos;  
y traen frutos pálidos, sin la luz de mis huertos,  
sus hombres de ojos claros no conocen mis ríos.

Y la interrogación que sube a mi garganta  
al mirarlos pasar, me descende, vencida:  
hablan extrañas lenguas y no la conmovida  
lengua que en tierras de oro mi vieja madre canta.

Miro bajar la nieve como el polvo en la huesa;  
miro crecer la niebla como el agonizante,  
y por no enloquecer no cuento los instantes,  
porque la "noche larga" ahora tan sólo empieza.

Miro el llano extasiado y recojo su duelo,  
que vine para ver los paisajes mortales.  
la nieve es el semblante que asoma a mis cristales;  
¡siempre será su albura bajando de los cielos!

Siempre ella, silenciosa, como la gran mirada  
de Dios sobre mí; siempre su azahar sobre mi casa;  
siempre, como el destino que ni mengua ni pasa,  
descenderá a cubrirme, terrible y extasiada.

## Patagonian Landscapes

### I. Desolation

The seafoam, endless, thick, so I couldn't find  
the line where the sea dashed its wave at me.  
The land I came to doesn't have spring:  
it has its long night, in which I find no mother.

The wind at my house makes its round of laments  
and howling; breaks, like a mirror, my shout.  
And in the white prairies, the infinite horizon,  
I gaze at the dying of immense sorrowful sunsets.

What to call her, she who has come  
so far that only the dead have gone further?  
The dead, so alone, study an ocean hushed and grow stiff,  
frozen the arms of the dead, in the arms of those they love.

The ships whose sails fly white in the harbor  
come from lands where my loved ones never have been;  
their bright-eyed men don't know my rivers  
and bring forth pale fruits without the light of my orchards.

And the question that rises in my throat  
upon seeing them pass, falls, conquered:  
they speak strange tongues and are not moved  
by the words that my ancient mother sings in lands of gold.

I watch the snow as if the dust of graves;  
I watch the mist form and grow like death throes,  
and so as not to go mad I don't count the seconds,  
because the long night now so lonely begins.

I watch the entraptured prairie, gather to me its pain,  
I that came to see the mortal lands.  
The snow is the semblance that appears in my mirror;  
its whiteness will ever be, ever under the heavens!

Ever, she, grandly silent, like the lofty gaze  
of God upon me; ever her bridal wreath laid over my house;  
ever, like a fate that never fades nor comes to pass,  
she will descend to cover me, terrible and ecstatic.



Emma Vargas Flórez de Arguelles (1885-19??)

Emma Vargas Flórez, a Colombian poet, was related to the poets Luz and Paz Flórez Fernández and to Julio, Manuel de Jesus, and Leonidas Flórez, symbolist poets (Biblioteca Aldeana de Colombia 32). Her work was published in newspapers and magazines, often under the pseudonym “Concha del Mar.” Her books include *Melodias del alba*, *Ecos del Alma*, *Camparas de cristal*, *Luz en la senda*, and *Policromías*, a book of short stories (Biblioteca Aldeana de Colombia).

“Manos Femeniles,” written in sexta rima, is conventional on the surface, yet its sentiment is radical. Vargas Flórez enlists stereotypical images of women as embodiments of virtue and caring, to proclaim the right of women to work as writers, to write of their dreams rather than of political events and war, and to participate in a sisterhood of women of all nations. She often wrote poetry about women’s lofty missions and civilizing conscience, wrote poems to other women poets, and even wrote a sonnet to Manuelita Saenz, pardoning her sins for the sake of her sincere passion and her strength (Vargas Florez, *Melodias* 52).

“Manos Femeniles” would be considered an old-fashioned and romanticist poem by many poets of modernism and postmodernism. Vargas Flórez continued writing formal, mannered verse well into the 1950s and 1960s, and defended this adherence to style in an essay which praised all “nuevas manifestaciones de arte” ‘new manifestation of art’ and yet railed against those which break form, sense, elegance, and beauty not for the sake of liberty but merely for the sake of destruction, like atomic bombs (207-08).

## Manos Femeniles

Manos oficiosas que en vez de la aguja  
empuñáis la pluma que el anhelo empuja  
y en vez de calados formáis un ronde;  
sois las secretarias activas del alma,  
que en horas felices trabajáis en calma  
versos armoniosos de acíbar y miel.

Hay manos pequeñas de blancor de cirios,  
que en la vida enjugan los lentos martirios  
de los perseguidos por algún dolor;  
son manos de madre que bendicen y oran,  
son manos de hermana que cariños imploran  
y nuestros senderos salpican de amor.

Varones marcados con nimbos de gloria:  
respetad las manos que limpias de escoria  
hilan sus encajes con rayos del sol;  
las que con visiones de su fantasía  
decoran el verso, llenas de alegría,  
dejando en sus letras dorada ilusión.

\  
Doncellas esquivas y bellas esposas,  
interpretadoras de las mariposas  
que van y que tornan en vuelo gentil:  
no sois escritoras, sois trovas errantes,  
del Divino Artista quimeras flotantes  
que traen misteriosa caricia sutil.

Hay frágiles dedos que el hambre adivinan  
en los pequeñuelos, que suaves se inclinan  
y que distribuyen todo con afán;  
semejan de Cristo las manos liliales  
que con su contacto curaban los males  
y multiplicaban los peces y el pan.

Dedos que aprendieron la santa obediencia,  
que dulcificaron amarga existencia  
y que han respetado la vida, el honor  
Van para esas manos de virtudes llenas  
enhiestos manojos de albas azucenas  
y la unción perenne de nardos en flor.

Dejad que las ostras busquemos muy lejos

la eterna belleza de limpios reflejos,  
la lumbre de Sirio que tiembla en el mar,  
y que nuestra mano, que la mente obliga  
jamás en la lucha demuestre fatiga;  
perdonad si sólo sabemos soñar.

Mujeres de América, de sueños hermanos:  
para el himno nuevo todas nuestras manos  
tejerán un verde ramo de laurel,  
y—unidas—pondremos de nuestros jardines  
las frescas violetas, los raros jazmines,  
las lilas frondosas, el rojo clavel!

## Feminine hands

Professional hands that instead of a needle  
take up the pen, driven by longing,  
and instead of embroidery, shape verses;  
you're the busy secretaries of the soul,  
that in happy times, peacefully create  
harmonious verses from honey and vinegar.

There are small hands, lily-pale,  
that all their lives soothe the tears of slow martyrdom  
of those who are persecuted by sorrow;  
they're mother's hands that bless or pray,  
they're sister's hands that beg for tenderness  
and scatter love in our paths.

You men marked with glorious halos:  
respect the hands that, innocent of slime,  
thread their laces with rays of sunlight;  
hands that with fantastic visions  
decorate their verse, full of happiness,  
leaving in their letters golden illusion.

Shy maidens and lovely wives,  
interpreters of butterflies  
that drift and flutter in the gentle breeze:  
you're not writers, you're nomad poems,  
floating chimeras of the Divine Artist  
that bear his mysterious subtle caress.

Fragile fingers that detect hunger  
in little children, that softly summon up  
and distribute everything longed-for;  
similar to Christ—those lily hands  
that with their touch cured all ills  
and multiplied the loaves and fishes.

Fingers that learned holy obedience,  
that sweeten bitter existence  
and that have respected life, honor.  
Through these hands full of virtue  
slip handfuls, raised, of white lilies  
and the eternal unction of narcissus in flower.

Let it be that we search far, far, for pearls,

for the eternal beauty of clean reflections  
for the light of Sirius that trembles in the sea,  
and that our hands, directed by reason,  
never show battle-weary scars;  
pardon us if we only know how to dream.

Women of America, sisters of dreams,  
for a new hymn, our hands together all  
shall weave a laurel wreath,  
and—united—we'll add from our gardens  
fresh violets, exotic jasmine,  
leafy lilies, red carnation!

## Alfonsina Storni (1892-1938)

Storni was an Argentine poet. In 1911, she began to write and publish poetry and began her teaching career. She was known as a non-conformist and center of controversy; as a journalist, she was vocal in defense of women's rights (Castro-Klarén, Molloy, and Sarlo 143). At 20 years old, alone in the world with her son, she was in Buenos Aires supporting herself by her writing and became a well-known part of "literary cafe culture" (Tapscott 106).

Her books include *La inquietud del rosal* (1916), *El dulce daño* (1918), *Irremediablemente* (1920), *Languidez* (1920), and *Ocre* (1925) (Lagos 37).

Always suspicious of politics and especially of communist, socialist, or leftist leanings, María Monvel says of Storni:

Extraño caso de mujer que piensa tanto como siente, Alfonsina Storni es sin duda la mejor poetisa argentina y una de las mejores de América. Extraordinariamente intelectual, su verso es puro y culto, de una gran sencillez que es al mismo tiempo una suprema elegancia. Apenas si se ha enredado un poco en las filas izquierdistas, para lo cual, se ve, no tiene afición ni temperamento. Su gusto por la sencillez y su nítida visión de las cosas, la alejan quizás del obscurantismo del día. (Monvel 105)

Strange case of a woman who thinks as much as she feels, Alfonsina Storni is without a doubt the best Argentine poetess and one of the best of America. Extraordinarily intellectual, her verse is pure and refined, showing great sensitivity at the same time as a supreme elegance. She was entangled a bit with the leftists ranks; however, it can be seen she hasn't the inclination nor temperament. Her taste for simplicity and her sharp vision of things are greatly enjoyed perhaps

because of the obscurantism of the current day.

“Peso Ancestral,” one of Storni’s most famous poems, is often anthologized. It can be read as a personal exploration of a mother-daughter relationship, or as a woman’s vision of the weight of history, connections with the past, and the problem of the agony of double consciousness that develops with feminist awareness.

## Peso Ancestral

Tú me dijiste: no lloró mi padre;  
Tú me dijiste: no lloró mi abuelo;  
No han llorado los hombres de miraza,  
Eran de acero.

Así diciendo te brotó una lágrima  
Y me cayó en la boca . . . más veneno  
Yo no he bebido nunca en otro vaso  
Así pequeño.

Débil mujer, pobre mujer que entiende,  
Dolor de siglos conocí al beberlo:  
¡Oh, el alma mía soportar no puede  
Todo su peso!

## Ancestral burden

You told me: My father never cried;  
You told me: My grandfather never cried;  
The men of my family never cried;  
they were steel.

While you spoke, a tear welled up  
and fell to my mouth . . . the most venom  
I've ever drunk from a cup  
so small.

Frail woman, poor woman, who understands  
the pain of centuries I tasted in that drink:  
Oh, this soul of mine can't bear  
all your burden!

Adela Sagastume de Acuña (18XX-1926)

Adela Sagastume grew up in rural Guatemala. She was married and had eight children. One of her daughters, Angelina Acuña, became a poet.

Adela was a dressmaker and helped to run her husband's coffee plantation. She left numerous journals filled with poetry, but only one was published in her lifetime, *Sensitiva*, in 1920 (Figueroa Marroquín 21).

While the form of “Los siglos” (1924) would be considered old-fashioned by many metropolitan poets of the 1920s, it ambitiously addresses philosophy, history, and politics. In fact, it may be read as Sagastume de Acuña’s oblique criticism on local political upheavals, expressing disrespect for those who jockey for power.

Los siglos

Las obras del Eterno eternas fueron  
no perdieron jamás su colorido;  
las obras de los hombres se extinguieron  
bajo el polvo inmutable del olvido.

Al abismo insondable del pasado  
se ven rodar naciones colosales,  
con su inmenso cortejo aparatado  
de sabios, de monarcas y deidades.

Allá van empujados por la muerte  
los lacayos, guerreros y señores;  
unos, en el harapo de su suerte  
los otros, con su pompa y sus honores.

Pasa Egipto, país de los misterios,  
y la gran Babilonia va arrogante;  
pasa Roma, reinando en los imperios;  
con su ciencia y sus artes va triunfante.

Pasan Tiro y Sidón, Gomorra, Atenas . . .  
Sodoma se hunde ahogada en su pecado;  
Ytálica y Persépolis que apenas  
vestigios dejan de su gran pasado.

Convertidos en polvo son los templos,  
destruidas, entre ruinas, las ciudades;  
sólo quedan del sabio los ejemplos  
en la gran tradición de las edades.

Sólo el tiempo camina indiferente  
sin detener su paso ni un segundo,  
arrastrando su carro, ufanamente,  
ante la inmensa convulsión del mundo.

Su asombroso equipaje es de grandezas,  
de miserias, soberbia y poderíos,  
lleva negras memorias y bellezas,  
males y bienes y potentes bríos.

Y el mundo en su vaivén vertiginoso,  
envuelto en sus victorias y peligros,  
sus anales nos lega, ¡tan curiosos!

Mientras él se corona majestuoso  
con la eterna diadema de los siglos.

## The Ages

The works of Eternity endure for all time  
without losing their color;  
the works of men are extinguished  
by forgetting's immutable dust.

Enormous nations have rolled  
into the abyss of the past unfathomed  
with their immense train of chattering  
monarchs, wise men, deities.

There they go, jostling, dead;  
lackeys, warriors, and great lords;  
some in the rags of misfortune,  
others with their pomp and honors.

Egypt passes, country of mysteries,  
and the great Babylon, arrogant;  
Rome passes, noblest of empires,  
triumphant in arts and science.

Tyre passes, and Sidon, Gomorrah, Athens . . .  
Sodom sinks, drowning in sin;  
Italica and Persopolis scarcely  
leave a trace of their great past.

Converted to dust are the temples,  
destroyed, in ruins, the cities;  
they remain only as examples of wisdom  
in the great tradition of the ages.

Only Time walks indifferent  
without staying his step for a second  
pulling his chariot proudly  
above the world's immense convulsion.

His awe-inspiring crew is made up of wealth,  
poverty, pride, and power;  
they bear dark memories and beautiful ones,  
evils and goodness and powerful charm.

And in its swaying vertigo, wrapped  
in its victories and dangers, the world  
leaves us its histories: how strange!

While Time crowns himself majestically  
with the eternal diadem of the centuries.

## Magda Portal (1901-1989)

Magda Portal, a Peruvian novelist, poet, essayist, and magazine editor, tended to write about feminist themes and activist struggle. She was in socialist literary circles and published in *Amauta*, along with María Wiesse, Angela Ramos, Alicia del Prado, Catalina Recavarren, and José Carlos Mariátegui. She was forced into exile from Peru in the late 1920s, living in Mexico, Cuba, Puerto Rico, Colombia, Venezuela, and Bolivia. The Peruvian government imprisoned her mother, teenage sister, and her infant daughter. She wrote extensively about Flora Tristan, the French feminist and writer who wrote about her visit to Peru during the wars of independence (Bustamente Moscosos). Her early poetry was published under the name Tula Sovaina (Reedy 490).

María Monvel describes Portal's poetry with suspicion, mentioning "unánimismo," a vanguardist and surrealist literary movement which arose from the French and Latin American Symbolists. *Unánimismo* is also the title of a book by early 20th century Cuban writer María Buceta Villar. Monvel's acerbic judgement on Portal is as follows:

Del mismo tipo que Blanca Luz Brum, estas dos poetisas ofrecen pocas diferencias. Abanderas al ultraismo desde su nacimiento, se han hecho notables allí por sus versos buenos o malos. Respetuosos del juego unánime a que se ha entregado la gente de letras, temeríamos caer en error al juzgarlas sin comprenderlas. Preferimos, luego de atacarlas y darles aquí sitio, entregarlas al juicio de sus semejantes. (175)

Of the same brand as Blanca Luz Brum, these two poets offer few differences. Standard-bearers for Ultraism since their birth, they have gained fame through their verses, good or bad. Highly respectable as it is—this "unánime" game which people of letters have taken up—we fear falling in error to judge them without understanding them. We

prefer, after contradicting them and giving them space, to deliver them to the judgement of the like-minded.

Magda Portal's early works include *Ánima absorta* (1923), *El desfile de miradas* (1923), *Vidrios de amor* (1926), *El derecho de matar* (1926), *Varios poemas a la misma distancia* (1927), *Constancia del Ser* (1928), *Una esperanza y el mar* (1927), *América Latina contra el Imperialismo* (1931), and *Hacia la mujer nueva* (1933).

"Liberación" could be written in response to (or could be an inspiration for) José Carlos Mariátegui's assertion that women poets are held back from true greatness by sexual and poetic inhibition. Vicky Unruh describes Portal as an important vanguardist critic who helped define the movement with her position papers in *Amauta*, and points out the irony that her reactions against male-dominated modernismo's "rendition of women as static embodiments of aesthetic creeds" was then metamorphosed by Mariátegui into the new muse of Peruvian literary culture, as a natural and biological force of womanhood who wrote without artifice (Unruh, *Performing* 177).

Liberación (from “Los poemas torturados”)

Un día seré libre, aún más libre que el viento,  
será claro mi canto de audaz liberación  
y hasta me habré librado de este remordimiento  
secreto que me hunde su astilla al corazón.  
Un día seré libre con los brazos abiertos,  
con los ojos abiertos y limpios frente al sol,  
el Miedo y el Recuerdo no estarán encubiertos  
y agazapados para desgarrarme mejor.  
Un día seré libre . . . Seré libre presiento,  
con una gran sonrisa a flor de corazón,  
con una gran sonrisa como no tengo hoy.  
Y ya no habrá la sombra de mi remordimiento,  
el cobarde silencio que merma mi Emoción.  
Un día habré logrado la verdad de mi Yo!

## Liberation

One day I'll be free, even freer than the wind;  
my verse will be bright with daredevil liberation  
after I've freed myself from this secret shame  
that plunges its sharp splinter into my heart.  
One day I'll be free with my arms open wide,  
with my eyes open and unshielded before the sun,  
Fear and Memory won't be hiding  
crouched in ambush, the better to rip me apart.  
One day I'll be free . . . I'll be free, I know it,  
with a huge smile that flowers from the heart,  
with a huge smile that I don't have today.  
And then I won't have the ghost of my shame,  
the coward silence that tamps down my Emotion.  
Someday I'll have achieved the truth of my Self!

Mariblanca Sábás Alomá (1901–1983)

Mariblanca Sábás Alomá was an Ultraist feminist Cuban writer. She was involved with the first Congreso Nacional de Mujeres in Havana in 1923. Her work was published in *El Cubano Libre*, *Diario de Cuba*, *Orto* y *El Sol* in Havana. Sábás Alomá took literature courses in Mexico and also attended Colombia University in New York and Puerto Rico. She travelled throughout South America, worked as a journalist and editor, and was politically active as a communist and feminist.

In *Poetisas de América*, Sábás Alomá's contemporary María Monvel, with characteristic blunt opinion, says of her:

Mariblanca comenzó escribiendo versos blancos, soñadores, llenos de ritmo, musicalidad y vulgaridad. Mariblanca cambió de filas, se pulió, se cultivó, y hoy hace campear su estandarte en las filas del más refinado ultraismo. Poeta de las revoluciones, como la uruguaya Blanca Luz Brum, Don Quijote de las ilusiones extremas, Mariblanca se ha convertido como en broma, en una notable poetisa. Es de esperar que cuando aconche un poco su absolutismo izquierdista, Mariblanca será una de las grandes poetisas americanas. (193)

Mariblanca began writing poetry that was pretty, sonorous, full of rhythm, musicality and vulgarity. Mariblanca changed her tune, became refined, cultivated, and today has raised her banner in the ranks of the most savvy ultraists. Poet of revolutions, like the Uruguayan Blanca Luz Brum, a Don Quixote of extreme illusions, Mariblanca has converted herself from a trivial writer into a notable poetess. It's to be hoped that when her absolutist leftism settles, Mariblanca will be one of the greatest American poetesses.

Sabás Alomá's 1920 article "Masculinismo, no. Feminismo!" was published recently

in a volume of her essays, *Feminismo*. In 1928 she published an article in which she characterized lesbianism (“garzonismo”) as a crime against nature, encouraged by capitalism, that would disappear with the advent of true socialism; for her, feminism was in complete opposition to lesbianism (Menéndez).

Magda Portal wrote critical articles about the socially engaged vanguardist poetry of Sabás Alomá in a 1928 issue of *Repertorio americano*, “El nuevo poema y su orientación hacia una estética económica” (Unruh, *Performing*, 176).

In “Poema a una mujer aviadora,” Sábás Alomá spaces words freely across the page, leaping great distances in sweeping arcs, just as the aviator would zig-zag across the Atlantic. A later poet, the Argentine writer Elvira Hernández, might be paying homage to Sábás Alomá in her long poem “Carta de viaje,” both in form and in theme. Hernández describes a flight across the Atlantic from south to north, from Latin America to Northern Europe, focusing on the dislocated state of flying, not on land, sea, or earth, detached from terrestrial metaphor.

Juana de Ibarbourou echoes the “shout” of Sabás Alomá in her 1930 poems “El grito,” “Las olas,” and “Atlántico” in which she longs to leap the distance between the world of the real and the world of ideals .

Poema de la mujer aviadora que quiere atravesar el Atlántico

MUJER

mujer aviadora que quieres  
atravesar de un salto

el atlántico

mujer

vereda en el motor una

bandera roja

y una canción

COMUNISTA

para que se limpie de toda macula

la ambición

que te lanza a la conquista

de la distancia

enorme

mujer

no asciendas por coquetería

asciende porque el clamor intenso da

los hombres que sufren

te prestes alas

mujer

tiende sobre la vastedad marina

que

S

E

P

A

R

A

dos

continentes

el arco fraternal que una en un mismo

anhelo de

JUSTICIA

a América

y a

Europa

mujer

desde una altura de 2,000 metros

deja caer sobre el mar

y sobre la tierra

LA NUEVA PALABRA

así veremos en la noche

un zig

zag  
de estrellas jubilosas  
mujer  
esconde en la cabina de tu aeroplano el

GRITO

– santo–y–seña de la América joven –  
ANTIMPERIALISMO  
y clávalo  
– para que toda Europa lo contemple

y

los ejércitos de

RUSIA

le hagan los saludos de ordenanza  
EN LO MÁS ALTO DE LA TORRE DE EIFFEL  
mujer

si tu sueño se rompe en el canto de una ola  
no llegues a los dominios de lo

desconocido

rezando–padre nuestro, que estás

en los cielos

–sino regalando el oído

de los proletarios exámenes

con un

– ARRIBA LOS POBRES DEL MUNDO  
DE PIE LOS ESCLAVOS SIN PAN . . .

Poem of the aviator woman who would cross the Atlantic

WOMAN

woman aviator who wants  
to cross in one bound

t h e a t l a n t i c

woman

in the engine falling into step with a

red flag

and a song that's

COMMUNIST

in order to cleanse everything soiled from

the ambition

that throws you at the conquest

of distance

enormous

woman

you don't ascend through coquetry

you ascend because the intense clamor of

people who suffer

l e n d s y o u w i n g s

woman

you stretch above the marine vastness

that

S  
E  
P  
A  
R  
A  
T  
E  
S

two

continents

the fraternal arch that in the same

longing for

JUSTICE

for America

and for

Europe

woman

from a height of 2,000 meters

let fall across the sea

and across the land

THE NEW WORD

so that we'll see it in the night

a zig

zag

trail

of jubilant constellations

woman

hidden in the cabin of your airplane is the

SHOUT

– sacred–and–signal of the young America–

ANTIMPERIALIST

and drive it home

– so that all Europe will see it

and

the multitudes of

RUSSIA

will make their comradely greetings the norm

ON THE HIGHEST PEAK OF THE EIFFEL TOWER

woman

if your dream breaks on the song of a wave

you won't arrive at the domains of what's

undiscovered

praying–our father, who art

in heaven

– not conforming to the rule

of the watchful proletariats

with a

RISE UP, POOR OF THE EARTH

STAND UP, SLAVES WITHOUT BREAD . . .

María Monvel (1897-1936)

María Monvel was the pen name for the Chilean writer Ercilia Brito Letelier, also known as Tilda Brito de Donoso after she married the writer Armando Donoso. Gabriela Mistral wrote essays about her poetry, which was known for its intense lyricism and eroticism (Miranda 85-6)

Monvel was publishing widely in the 1920s and 1930s, and edited an anthology, *Poetisas de América*, in 1930.

“En un cuarto de hotel” is a sonnet written in alexandrine lines. The poem’s subject, a lovers’ tryst in a hotel room, is unusual.

As a critic and editor, Monvel valued boldness, difference, and experimentation. She admired the work of Marta Brunet, María Villar Buceta, Teresa de la Parra, Vaz Ferreira, Agustini, and the Comtesse Noailles (Monvel 10-11).

En un cuarto de hotel

En cuartito de hotel lindo y desconocido:  
–horizontes azules, focos esmerilados–,  
en donde entramos juntos, absortos y turbados  
por el fiero imposible que habíamos vencido.

El me besó en la boca, y le entregué rendido  
mi cuerpo frágil, dulce, deseoso y extenuado . . .  
¡Oh reposo indecible después de lo pasado!  
¡Oh delicia inefable después de lo sufrido!

Yo no sentí rubor de mi carne desnuda.  
La dicha me ahogaba como una mano ruda  
y el cristal de mis ojos se enturbiaba de llanto,

mientras él de rodillas, con sus besos furtivos,  
abrazaba el marfil de mis pies sensitivos  
con la fiebre ardorosa de su boca de santo.

In a hotel room

In a small hotel room, pretty, unknown:  
–blue horizons, green lights–,  
we entered it together, entranced and flustered  
by the impossible fire that we'd conquered.

He kissed me on the mouth, and I surrendered  
my fragile body, sweet, desirous & swooning . . .  
Oh inexplicable repose after what had happened!  
Oh ineffable delight after what had been suffered!

I didn't feel shame for my naked body.  
Happiness drowned me with a rough hand  
and the crystal of my eyes was clouded from tears,

while he on his knees, with furtive kisses,  
embraced the ivory of my sensitive feet  
with the most ardent fire of his saintly mouth.

Nydia Lamarque (1906-1982)

Argentine writer Nydia Lamarque's first book of poems, *Telarañas*, was published in 1925, and her second, *Elegía del gran amor*, in 1927. She was a lawyer and a socialist associated with the vanguard writers' group "Boedo." An officer of the Ateneo Femenino Buenos Aires, Lamarque wrote social and political criticism as well as poetry for newspapers and magazines such as *Nosotros* and *La Nación*. Juan Pinto, in *Literatura Argentina Contemporánea*, calls her "la poetisa de acento más varonil de nuestra literatura" 'the poetess with the most masculine voice of our literature' and praises her further for her social conscience and lack of inhibitions (214). She translated Baudelaire, Racine, Rimbaud, Henri De Man, Adolfo Boschot, and Héctor Berlioz. (Maube 287)

"Invocación" summons the ghost of Sappho for an intimate conversation with the poem's speaker. The myth of Sappho's frustrated love for Phaon, and Sappho's leap into the sea from his rejection, dates from the 3rd century BC (Reynolds 71). This legend is also used by Mercedes Matamoros in her poem-cycle *El último amor de Safo*, published in 1902. Lamarque's rolling cadences invite Sappho to confess her deepest secrets and to describe any part of her love that she found unspeakable. The implication is that only Lamarque can understand and give voice to Sappho's complaints—because she feels them so deeply herself, perhaps for Sappho's ghost or for some other person.

Invocación  
(A la sombra de Safo)

Ahora hermana lejanísima, ven a mí, háblame con tu boca de siglos.  
Ven ahora hermana, que es de noche y vive el silencio.  
Nadie a mi lado, nadie oirá nuestro coloquio.  
Sólo estará junto a mí el buho fiel del recuerdo.  
Mira, las estrellas se dejan caer en el lecho obscuro de la noche,  
y para nosotros va a dar marcha atrás el Tiempo.  
Me dejarás que llegue hasta tus brazos acogedores;  
me dejarás que acerque mi cuerpo tibio a tu marmóreo cuerpo,  
y que apoye también la frente calenturienta  
para mejor escucharte, sobre tu seno.  
Todo me lo dirás entonces al oído, muy bajo,  
aunque nadie más que yo habrá de escuchar la voz de tu duelo.  
Y me dirás el dolor de la pasión que te ensombreció los instantes,  
y la angustia del desamor, flagelante como látigo recio,  
y me dirás del hombre aquel en quien concentraste la vida,  
por el que tu frente se sumergió en el misterio.  
Me dirás si eran sus dos pupilas de ámbar anohecido,  
me dirás si era su boca, en la caricia, sabia hasta el tormento;  
y si podía en su frente albergarse un pueblo de ideas,  
y si toda la sombra nocturna dormía entre su cabello . . .  
Y me dirás también qué emoción te agitó la noche aquella,  
sobre el desolado promontorio griego,  
y si en el momento de la muerte más que nunca lo ansiaste,  
y si más que nunca te castigó implacable el recuerdo,  
y si más que nunca te agobió la desesperación impotente,  
entonces, entre el cielo y el mar, sola en el instante supremo . . .  
Y si la salsedumbre de tus lágrimas,  
venció en amargor a la balsámica salsedumbre marina,  
y si en espíritu lo besaste aun con un beso resumen de besos . . .

Todo me lo dirías ¡oh hermana! aquí en la noche,  
muy bajo, mientras nos envuelve el silencio,  
ahora, que estoy ya entre tus brazos acogedores;  
ahora que está ya mi cuerpo tibio junto a tu marmóreo cuerpo,  
ahora que apoyo la frente calenturienta sobre tu seno,  
frío como las helénicas ondas que te dieron el reposo eterno.

## Invocation

(To the ghost of Sappho)

Come to me, now far distant sister, speak to me with your voice of centuries.  
Come now, sister, made of night, alive in silence.  
No one at my side, no one will hear our talk.  
Only memory, that faithful owl, will be with me.  
Look, the stars let their bodies fall into the hidden nest of night,  
and for us alone, Time will turn, running backward.  
You'll let me come into your welcoming arms,  
you'll let me press my warm flesh to your marble body,  
so I can rest, too, my fevered brow  
to hear you better on your breast.  
You'll tell me everything aloud, very low,  
though I hear nothing more than the voice of your lament.  
And you'll tell me the pain of passion that darkened every second,  
and the anguish of being unloved, like the sting of a brutal whip,  
and you'll tell me how you focused your life on that man,  
the one for whom you drowned your brow in mystery.  
You'll tell me if it was his two eyes of dusky amber,  
you'll tell me if it was his mouth which you kissed till torment,  
and if it was true that his mind harbored a city of ideas,  
and if all nocturnal shadow slept in his hair . . .  
And you'll tell me also what emotion that shook you, that night,  
atop the desolate Greek cliffs,  
and if in that moment of death, more than ever, you longed and desired,  
and if, more than ever, you were punished by implacable memory,  
and if, more than ever, impotent desperation oppressed you,  
then, between heaven and sea, alone in that supreme instant . . .  
And if the acid salt of your tears  
defeated in bitterness the vinegar salt of the sea,  
and if in spirit you kissed him with one kiss that summed up all kisses . . .

You'll tell me everything—oh sister!—here in the night,  
very low, while silence wraps us round,  
now, while I am yet in your welcoming arms;  
now, while my warm flesh is pressed to your marble body,  
now while I rest my fevered head between your breasts,  
cold as the hellenic waves that gave you eternal rest.

Olga Acevedo (1895-1970)

Olga Acevedo, a Chilean poet, began publishing in the 1920s. A late 20th century critic says of Acevedo, "her style is modern, but unclassifiable" (Orozco de Mateos). Her early work tends to be philosophical and mystical. The editors of *Selva Lirica*, a 1917 poetry anthology, called her the greatest woman poet after Gabriela Mistral and said that Acevedo's work "inspira la sensación más encantadora de sinceridad espiritual y riqueza artística" "inspires the most bewitching sensation of spiritual sincerity and artistic richness" (Nómez 447). Pablo Neruda admired her work and wrote poetry to her. Together with Gabriela Mistral and Julio Munizaga Ossandon, she edited the literary magazine *Mireya* (Vega Letelier).

Her books include: *Los cantos de la montaña* (1927), *Siete palabras de una canción ausente* (1929); *El árbol solo* (1933); *La rosa del hemisferio* (1937); *La violeta y su vértigo* (1942); *Donde crece el zafiro* (1948), *Las cábalas del sueño* (1950), *Isis* (1954), *Los himnos* (1968) and *La víspera irresistible* (1968).

In "Nieve," a prose-poem reminiscent of Andre Gide's *Les nourritures terrestres*, Acevedo describes her relationship to a stark and snowy landscape, and declares although the snow is beautiful, she prefers the chaotic beauty of fertile Mother-Earth. In "Serenata" Acevedo addresses the moon, inviting its light to ravish her and transform her body into ethereal non-being. The poem expresses a passionate longing for union with the abstract.

Nieve

¡Nieve! ¡Alma de la Tierra-Viuda! Mis ojos te bendicen por bella, más mi corazón, nunca te ha amado.

Yo amo el espíritu de la Tierra-Madre, abrasada en los fuegos viriles del Sol, florecida de hijos melodiosos y perfumada a todas las fecundaciones y los frutos de la vida.

No amo a esta faz de Tierra-Viuda. Esta tierra es como una inmensa tumba de corazones, donde cayeran todas las lagrimas de todas las ánimas que gimen en el caos.

¡Nieve! ¡Alma de la Tierra-Viuda! Mis ojos te hallan bella, pero mi corazón nunca te ha amado. ¡Por fría, por muda, como una página demasiado blanca, donde la Vida no escribe nunca nada.

Snow

Snow! Soul of the Widow-Earth! My eyes bless you for your beauty, but my heart, it has never loved you.

I love the spirit of the Mother-Earth, blazing in the virile fires of the Sun, blooming with melodious children and perfumed with all the fecundities and fruits of life.

I don't love this face of Widow-Earth. This land is like an immense tomb of hearts, where all tears fall, tears of souls that howl in chaos.

Snow! Soul of the Widow-Earth! My eyes find you beautiful, but my heart has never loved you. For your chill, for your silence like a too-white page where Life never writes a word.

Serenata

*(Para ti . . . Luna de mis silencios . . . Luna de mis tristezas).*

Rayo de luna suave que llegas a mi estancia . . .  
Entre tus velos blancos mi Carne disolved!  
Este espíritu puro puede ser la fragancia  
del espíritu blanco de tu buena merced!  
Rayo de luna suave que llegas a mi estancia  
a ponerme de blanco «la tristeza de ser» . . .  
Ya que en tus albos tules soy como una fragancia  
¡hazme como una nube que no pueda volver!  
Llévame entre los pliegues de tus rasos plateados!  
Tómame con tus manos que son flores de amor . . .  
Vedme como una novia con los velos rasgados  
y con los azahares deshojados en flor! . . .  
Rayo de luna suave que llegas a mi estancia . . .  
¡Vedme como una novia que no habrá de ser más!  
Ya que en tus blancas gasas soy como una fragancia  
¡hazme como una nube que no vuelva jamás!

## Serenade

*(For you . . . Moon of my silences . . . Moon of my sad moods).*

Ray of soft moonlight, streaming into my room . . .  
In your white veils—my Flesh would melt!  
This pure ghost could become the perfume  
of the white spirit of your blessed mercy!  
Ray of soft moonlight that comes into my stanzas  
to purify my existential despair . . .  
Since in your dawn-gauze skirts I'm like perfume,  
make me change to mist, never to return!  
Bear me in the draped folds of your silvered clarity!  
Take me, with your hands that are love's flowers . . .  
Gaze upon me like a bride with torn veils  
and with my crown of orangeblossoms stripped of petals! . . .  
Ray of soft moonlight, streaming into my room,  
gaze upon me, a bride who doesn't have to be anymore!  
Since in your white lace clouds I'm like perfume  
make me change to mist, never to return!

Appendix A. Other women poets of importance to this project.

- María Abella de Ramirez (1863-1926). Uruguay. Poet and journalist.
- Raquel Adler (1901-??). Argentina. Poet.
- Romelia Alarcón Folger (1900-1971). Guatemala. Poet.
- Emilia Altomare de Pereyra (1891-??). Argentina. Poet. Pseudonym: Clea Masa.
- Elsie Alvarado de Ricord. Poet.
- Agustina Andrade (1861-1891). Argentina. Sister of Olegario Andrade.
- Amanda Aragón. (1907-??). Nicaragua.
- Elena Avellaneda (1904-?). Argentina. Poet.
- Amarilis. Peru.
- Giaconda Belli.
- Emilia Bertolé. Argentina. Poet.
- Dolores Bolio. Cuba. Poet.
- Sarah Bollo. Uruguay. Poet, editor, literary historian and critic.
- Dulce María Borrero de Luján. (1883-1945). Cuba.
- María Villar Buceta. (1899-1977) Cuba. Poet, journalist, avant-garde, unanimismo
- Bertha Buitrago (1886-??). Nicaragua.
- Julia de Burgos (1914-1953) Puerto Rico.
- Marta Brunet (1897-1967). Chile.
- Esther de Cáceres (1903-1971). Uruguay. Poet.
- Susana Calandrelli (1904-??). Argentina.
- María Enriqueta Camarillo. (1872-1968) Mexico. Poet. Wrote under the name Iván Moszkowski.
- María Luisa Carnelli. Argentina.
- Margarida del Campo. Argentina. Associated with Boedo.
- Nelly Campobello (1908-1986). Mexico. Poet, novelist.
- Margarita Abella Caprile (1901-1960). Argentina. Poet.
- María Luisa Carnelli. Argentina.
- Ursula Céspedes de Escanaverino. Cuba.
- J. Adelaida Cheves and her sisters. Guatemala.
- Clarinda. Peru.
- María Cruz. Guatemala.
- Amelia Denis de Icaza.
- Miriam Elim. (1895-1927.) Chile. Pseudonym of María Preuss.

Silvia Fernández (1857-??). Argentina.  
Eloísa Ferraria Acosta (Argentina). Communist, associated with Boedo.  
Léonie Julieta Fournier (1902-??). Argentina. Translator and poet. Published in France.  
Pseudonym: Nirene Jofre Oliú.  
Hebe Fourssats. Argentina. Poet and translator.  
Rosa García Costa (1892-19??). Argentina. Poet and translator.  
Juliana Gauna. Argentina. Poet, publishing in 1870s.  
Gertrudis Gómez de Avellaneda (1814-1873). Cuba. Poet, translator, essayist, novelist.  
Jenny, Blanca, and María Granados. Guatemala.  
Elina Herrera (1902-?). Argentina. Pseudonym: Eros.  
María Elena Izcuca de Muñoz (1873-1964). Uruguay.  
Norah Lange (1906-1973). Argentina. Vanguard.  
Jesusa Laparra. (1820-1887). Guatemala.  
Alice Lardé (1896-19??)  
Carmen Lira (1888-1949). Costa Rica. Pen name of María Isabela Carvajal.  
María Loucel (1899-1957). Ilapso, 1936.  
Dulce María Loynaz (1903-??). Cuba.  
Clotilde Luisi (1885-??). Uruguay.  
Luisa Luisi (1888-1940). Uruguay.  
Juana Manso de Noronha (1820-1875). Poet.  
María del Mar (1909-??). Mexico. Poet.  
Cándida Rosa Matus (1850-1931). Nicaragua.  
Laura Méndez de Cuenca (1853-1928). Mexico. Poet.  
Dolores Montenegro y Méndez (1857-1933). Guatemala. Poet, editor.  
Lola Montenegro (1857-1933). Guatemala. Poet. Interestingly bohemian.  
Sara Montes de Oca de Cardenas (1892-19??). Argentina. Translator and poet.  
Josefa Murrillo Carlin (1860-1898). Mexico. poet.  
Carmen Naranjo.  
Julia Pérez y Montes de Oca (1839-1875). Cuba.  
Silvina Ocampo (1903-1993). Argentina. Poet, fiction writer.  
María Isabel Peralta. Chile. Poet.  
Josefina Pelliza de Sagasta (1848-1888.) Argentina. Poet.  
Josefina Pla (1907-1999). Paraguay. Poet, surrealist.  
Martina Pierra de Poo. Cuba.

María del Pilar. Guatemala. Poet. Pen name “Flor de Lys.”  
Carolina Poncet (1870-1944). Cuba. Poet, editor, folklorist, essayist.  
Alicia del Prado. Perú.  
Isabel Prieto de Landázuri (1833-1876). Mexico. Poet, journalist.  
Violeta Quevedo (1882-1962, Chile)  
Mercedes Quintero (1898-1924)  
Ángela Ramos, Perú.  
Catalina Recavarren. Perú.  
Vicenta Rosal (1815-1885). Guatemala. Madre María Encarnación.  
Aura Rostrand (1905-1959). Nicaragua.  
Laura Rubio de Robles (1882-1975). Guatemala. Poet.  
Lilian Serpas (1905-??). El Salvador, Mexico. Poet.  
Fryda Schultz de Mantovani (1912-??). Argentina. Associated with Boedo.  
Carmen P. de Silva. Guatemala.  
Carmen Sobalvarro (1908-194?) Nicaragua. Vanguardista.  
Clementina Suarez. Honduras. Vanguard, surrealist.  
Rosa Umaña Espinoza (1888-19??) Nicaragua.  
Silvia Valdes. Uruguay. Nationalist and nativist poet.  
Lydia Valiente (1900-1976)  
Blanca Varela.  
Lola Villacorta Vidaurre. Guatemala. Poet. Historical dramatist.  
Idea Vilariño (1920-??) Uruguay. Poet.  
María Xenos. Cuba.  
María Wiese (1894-19??). Perú.  
Iris M. Zavala. Poet, critic.

## Appendix B

This poem is by the Argentinian writer Alfredo Arteaga and was published in 1917 in

*Antología Contemporánea de poetas argentinos.*

### Feminismo

Porque es vuestro, mujeres, el encanto  
que ilumina y perfuma la existencia;  
porque vertéis amor—eterna esencia  
de toda la alegría y todo el llanto;  
porque, al pasar vosotras, los más nobles  
y fuertes corazones se estremecen  
y juncos, tiemblan los que fueron robles;  
porque gemas y flores nos parecen  
creadas sólo para vuestro lujo;  
porque no hay en el mundo quien ejerza  
función sagrada o soberano imperio,  
sin estar sometido a vuestro influjo;  
porque dáis, aunque débiles, la fuerza  
que penetra al abismo del misterio  
y sube del ensueño hasta la cumbre;  
porque la irradiación de vuestra gracia  
a todas las tinieblas presta lumbre,  
y nos brindáis un bálsamo divino  
para cerrar heridas del destino;  
porque formáis la excelsa aristocracia  
de virtud, de bondad y de belleza,  
a la que sólo el vil infiere agravios;  
porque sós la suprema fortaleza  
(que dijo Salomón en sus Proverbios)  
ante la cual se humillan los soberbios;  
porque son siempre necios los más sabios,  
si en vuestra copa no han bebido un día  
la ignorante, esencial sabiduría;  
porque es vuestra la luz de las leyendas,  
el alma musical de los cantares  
y el fecundo calor de los hogares;  
porque recibe Dios nuestras ofrendas  
con agrado mayor, si vuestras manos  
o labios la elevan; porque el cielo  
os desterró para adornar la tierra  
y aquí extender de la ilusión el velo;  
en fin, porque, entre títulos humanos,

os pertenece el título que encierra  
toda la majestad y la dulzura –  
ese nombre de madre–¡oh bellos seres  
que derramáis primavera fresca  
en los tiempos más oscuros de la historia  
y que santificáis nuestros placeres,  
contentaos por siempre con la gloria  
y con la suavidad de ser mujeres!

## Feminism

Because it's yours, women, the enchantment  
that illuminates & perfumes existence;  
because you shed love—eternal essence  
of all happiness and all sorrow;  
because, on meeting you, the noblest,  
strongest hearts tremble  
and oaks turn to shivering reeds;  
because to us you seem to be gems and flowers  
created only for our luxury and enjoyment;  
because there isn't anything in the world that exercises  
sacred function or imperial sovereignty  
without being submitted to your influence;  
because, though weak, you give strength  
that penetrates the abyss of mystery  
and you mount in dreams to the summits of mountains . . .  
Because the radiation of your grace  
brings hunger to all that's dark and and hidden  
and you bring us a divine balm  
to heal the wounds of fate:  
because you form the highest aristocracy  
of virtue, of kindness, and of beauty  
to which only the evil give offense;  
because you are the supreme fortitude  
(just as Solomon said in Proverbs)  
before which soveriegnns make themselves humble;  
because even the wise are most foolish  
if they never drink, from your cup,  
your naive, essential wisdom:  
because it's yours, the light of legends,  
the musical soul of the singers  
and the fertile heat of the hearths;  
because God hears your prayers  
with greater amiability if your hands  
or lips lift them to heaven;  
because heaven exiled you to adorn the earth  
and extends here the veil of illusion;  
in fin, because, among human titles  
you have the title that encompasses  
all majesty and sweetness,  
this name of mother—oh lovely beings  
that spill over with primeval freshness  
in the greatest focal points of history;  
you who sanctify our pleasures,

content yourselves for always with the glory  
and the softness of being women!

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