

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

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### 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 Femeninas* 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 cataloguing 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 superrealismo—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 que 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 Agosín 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 multiseemic 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 excluyantemente 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 Xenos, 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 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 and 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 Diaz-Diocaretz, women poets cannot avoid being part of that discourse the way men can avoid it. Women poets lack that privilege. Diaz-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 Hippus, 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.