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# feministas u n i d a s



*Sábado Corto* by Héctor Quintero. Photo: courtesy of Héctor Quintero. LEFT: Natasha Díaz; RIGHT: Zenía Marabal

A Coalition of Feminist Scholars in Spanish, Spanish-American, Luso-Brazilian,  
Afro-Latin American, and U.S. Latina/o Studies

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# f e m i n i s t a s

Founded in 1979, **Feministas Unidas** is a Coalition of Feminist Scholars in Spanish, Spanish-American, Luso-Brazilian, Afro-Latin American, and US Latina/o Studies. As an allied organization of the Modern Languages Association, **Feministas Unidas** sponsors panels at the annual convention. As an interdisciplinary alliance, we embrace all fields of study relating to Hispanic women.

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Candyce Leonard, Treasurer and Membership Recorder•Wake Forest University•  
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# u n i d a s 27.1

## About the artist

*The photograph on the front cover is a scene from *Sábado corto*, a play by Héctor Quintero.*

*Sábado corto made history for its enormous success in 1986 and for the inimitable performance by the original lead actress who had so many professional offers after appearing in Héctor Quintero's play that she did not to return to the role in 1987. No other actress wanted to take the role since comparisons would be inevitable, but in 2003 the timing was right and Quintero found another star performer. In the fall of 2003, *Sábado corto* opened at the Teatro Mella with Natasha Díaz in the lead role that won her the "Premio Caricato 2003" from UNEAC (Unión Nacional de Escritores y Artistas de Cuba) for Best Dramatic Actress. Quintero explained that he had wanted Díaz for the role, but alcoholism had left her unemployed for some time. In her mid-forties, Díaz agreed that she would not drink if cast in the lead role. Such was the success of the play and the high praise for her stellar performance that Díaz went into rehab and returned to the stage sober in the spring of 2004.*

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# Feministas Unidas Profiles



**Candyce Leonard** earned her Ph.D. in the Department of Spanish and Portuguese at Indiana University (Bloomington). Her work in both theatre and film consider the cultural and political imperatives that are both implicitly and explicitly portrayed in these media. In addition to many articles, Professor Leonard has co-edited five collections of contemporary Spanish theatre with three more in progress: *Testimonios del teatro español: 1950-2000* (Ottawa: Girol Books, 2002); *Dramaturgas Españolas en los Noventa, Vols. 1 and 2* (Ottawa: Girol Books, 2001); *Panorámica del teatro español actual* (Madrid: Fundamentos, 1996); and *Teatro de España democrata: Los noventa* (Madrid: Fundamentos, 1996). Currently she is an associate professor of Humanities at Wake-Forest University. Candyce has been Treasurer of *Feministas Unidas* since 1999.

**Margarita Vargas** is an associate professor of Romance Languages and Literatures at the State University of New York at Buffalo. She earned her PhD from the University of Kansas and specializes in Spanish-American Theater, Spanish-American Literature, Mexican Literature, Feminist Criticism and Theory. Professor Vargas has co-edited *Latin American Women Dramatists: Theater, Texts, and Theories*, *Women Writing Women: An Anthology of Spanish-American Theater of the 1980's* and co-translated *The House on the Beach* by Juan García Ponce. Her current research is a book length project on the construction of feminine identity in 20th-century Spanish-American Literature. Margarita has been President (2004-05) and Vice President (2003-04) of *Feministas Unidas*.



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# Letter from the President/Carta de la presidenta

Estimadas colegas:

Muchas cosas importantes para la asociación han ocurrido en unos pocos meses. En primer lugar y gracias a los contactos realizados por Cynthia Tompkins (Arizona State University) durante el MLA celebrado en Philadelphia, este año Feministas Unidas tendrá un *cash bar* en el Courtyard Marriott/Magnificent Mile (Chicago) el 28 de diciembre de 5:00 a 6:30 de la tarde. Dicho *cash bar* se celebrará en colaboración con WCML, WIG y WIF. Esta será una magnífica oportunidad para socializar en un ambiente distendido y amable con colegas de otras asociaciones e intercambiar ideas y estrategias. Además del *cash bar*, como siempre, la asociación celebrará los dos paneles de ponencias y la junta de socias.

En segundo lugar, otra noticia también relacionada con el MLA. Este año el estatus de asociación aliada del MLA, de que goza Feministas Unidas, está siendo revisado por el MLA. Las revisiones se hacen cada siete años y la última se realizó en el año 2000, siendo presidenta Elizabeth Horan (Arizona State University). El MLA posee un protocolo para efectuar dichas revisiones. Para ello, tuve de documentar una serie de preguntas relativas a la asociación: membresía, forma de pago, actividades, premios, colaboraciones, *bylaws*, etc. Para la redacción del documento conté con la ayuda inestimable de Carmela Ferradans (Illinois Wesleyan University), María Di Francesco (Ithaca College), Beth Jörgensen (University of Rochester), Candyce Crew Leonard (Wake Forest University), Cynthia Tompkins (Arizona State University) y Margarita Vargas, (SUNY-Buffalo). Sin su conocimiento, ayuda y sugerencias el documento hubiera quedado incompleto. A todas ellas, en nombre de la asociación, mi más sincero agradecimiento. Una copia de este documento se incluye asimismo en este número.

En tercer lugar, deseo anunciar la extensión de fechas de nuestro Premio de Ensayo 2007. Este premio es una magnífica oportunidad para la publicación de un artículo tanto de profesores que empiezan como de estudiantes, aunque por supuesto está abierto a todas las miembros de la asociación. Además del premio en dinero (\$200), el verdadero premio del concurso de Ensayo consiste en la publicación del artículo en *Letras Femeninas*. Un nuevo *Call for Submission* se incluye en este número.

Por último, quisiera dar la bienvenida a nuestra nueva vicepresidenta Juana Suárez (University of North Carolina, Greensboro). Juana irá realizando las tareas de la vice y dentro de un par de años la tendremos como presidenta. ¡Bienvenida!

Por ahora nada más. Espero que tengáis un magnífico verano y un feliz final de semestre.

Carmen de Urioste  
Feministas Unidas, presidenta

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# Vice President's Statement

Juana Suárez

University of North Carolina en Greensboro

<http://www.uncg.edu/rom/faculty/suarez/index.htm>

Profesora Asistente del Departamento de Lenguas Romance de la Universidad de Carolina del Norte en Greensboro y afiliada al departamento de Estudios de Género y de la Mujer de la misma universidad. Autora de *Sitios de contienda: producción cultural colombiana y el discurso de la violencia* que será publicado por Iberoamericana/Vervuert en el 2007. He publicado artículos en *Revista Iberoamericana*, *Brújula*, y *Chicana Latina Studies*, entre otras, y contribuciones a libros y enciclopedias. Actualmente estoy preparando un libro titulado *Cinembargocolombia: ensayos críticos sobre cine y cultura* bajo el auspicio de la Beca de Estímulos a la Investigación sobre Cine del Ministerio de Cultura en Colombia. En el otoño del 2006 participé en el seminario *Bridges: Academic Leadership for Women* (UNC-Chapel Hill) que me brindó excelentes herramientas de trabajo y reflexión en la arena de la administración y el liderazgo.

Postularme a la Vicepresidencia de Feministas Unidas es una ratificación de mi compromiso con los estudios de género y de la mujer así como de mi apoyo e interés por todos los foros de diálogo y trabajo que fortifiquen el trabajo intelectual y de movilización de las mujeres latinoamericanas y latinas. Mis objetivos prioritarios se pueden resumir en las siguientes líneas:

1. Retomar iniciativas ya adelantadas en nuestra organización y fortalecerlas de modo que representen beneficio y continuidad entre lo que ya existe y ha probado ser positivo para la asociación y las nuevas iniciativas.
2. Determinar aspectos que deben cobrar más vigor y centralidad. Uno de ellos sería el proceso de mentoría a las estudiantes graduadas así como a las profesoras asistentes para navegar exitosamente las aguas académicas.
3. Incrementar la visibilidad nacional e internacional de la asociación creando alianzas y fomentando diálogo con programas de estudios de la mujer en diferentes esquinas y con asociaciones de índole similar a la nuestra. Del mismo modo, extender al diálogo a asociaciones que reúnen a mujeres en otros campos (las ciencias, la tecnología, los deportes, por ejemplo) para aumentar el intercambio de ideas e iniciativas.
4. Fortalecer nuestros ingresos para garantizar el sostenimiento general de la asociación.
5. Incluir en nuestras agendas el necesario diálogo sobre cómo compaginar nuestra labor intelectual con la práctica social. A este respecto, sería interesante pensar cómo incluir un diálogo sobre el estado actual de los feminismos latinoamericanos y latinos y su efecto en nuestros campos de trabajo.
6. Mantener los canales de comunicación abiertos para hacer que la agenda de trabajo sea dinámica y activa, permitiendo la oxigenación de ideas durante en término de la Vicepresidencia.

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# Letter from the Editor/Carta de la editora

Mayo 2007

Queridas colegas:

Como siempre agradecer a mi estudiante y asistente Rachel Slough por organizar y compilar la información correspondiente a congresos y noticias. También agradecer a la oficina del Dean and Provost de IWU que corre con los gastos de copia y correo de este boletín desde diciembre 2005.

En la sección de Profiles/Perfiles están incluidas **Candyce Leonard**, nuestra Treasurer and Membership Recorder desde 1999, y **Margarita Vargas**, que ha sido presidenta y vicepresidenta de nuestra organización. Mi idea es dar a conocer a las personas que trabajan o han trabajado más de cerca en esta organización. Me gustaría incluir dos o tres afiliadas en cada boletín. Por favor enviadme una foto y un bio si queréis estar incluidas en esta sección.

En este número incluyo los ensayos de la sesión **Feminisms and Religion: Theoretical Musings** que presidió Margarita Vargas en el MLA 2006 en Philadelphia que no pude incluir en el número anterior. De nuevo pido disculpas a Lisa Vollendorf, Meghan Gibbons y Julian Olivares por cualquier error que pueda haber—ha sido complicado transferir los documentos de la página web de ASU; la tecnología no ha estado de mi parte últimamente..

Este boletín de *Feministas Unidas* contiene algunas de las fotografías del MLA 2006 que me envió Candyce, así como una foto de la ganadora de nuestro concurso de ensayo, Debra Faszter-McMahon. En la página web nueva, habrá una galería de fotos completa del MLA y demás actividades.

En el próximo congreso de MLA 2007 en Chicago habrá dos sesiones organizadas por Feministas Unidas: Feminist Trajectories: desde las monjas to the New Left, organizado por Carmen de Urioste, y Feminists aren't funny? Humor as a Pedagogical Tool, organizado por Candyce Leonard.

Para el número de diciembre 2007, por favor enviadme una copia electrónica de documentos, reseñas, noticias, publicaciones y demás directamente a mi correo electrónico [cferrada@iwu.edu](mailto:cferrada@iwu.edu)

Mucha suerte con el trabajo de fin de curso y que tengáis unas vacaciones estupendas y relajadas.

Un abrazo,

Carmela



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# Feministas Unidas Essay Prize

The Executive Committee of Feministas Unidas, an allied organization of the MLA, is pleased to announce a call for papers for the Sixth Annual Feministas Unidas Essay Prize competition for scholars in the early stage of their career. The Feministas Unidas Essay Prize is awarded for an outstanding unpublished essay of feminist scholarship on women writers in the areas covered by our organization's mission: Spanish, Spanish-American, Luso-Brazilian, Afro-Latin American, and U.S. Hispanic Studies.

The purpose of the essay prize is to promote feminist scholarship on women writers by those who are entering our profession or who are in the early stages of their professional career. The prize is the product of collaboration between Feministas Unidas and the Asociación Internacional de Literatura Femenina Hispánica. The selection committee is drawn from officers and members of Feministas Unidas and the editorial board of *Letras Femeninas*. Feministas Unidas reserves the right not to award the prize in a given year.

**AWARD:** \$200 and publication of the essay in the December issue of the journal *Letras Femeninas*. The author of the winning essay must be a member of the Asociación de Literatura Femenina Hispánica at the time of publication of the essay.

**ELIGIBILITY:** Graduate students, instructors, lecturers and untenured assistant professors who are current or new members of Feministas Unidas are eligible to submit their original research for the prize.

## **GUIDELINES:**

- An unpublished paper completed in the year 2006
- Length: 18-25 pages, double-spaced, including notes and works cited
- Format: MLA style. Prepare the manuscript according to instructions for "Anonymous Submissions"
- Languages: Spanish or English
- **Deadline for submission: June 30, 2007**
- Announcement of award: **August 15, 2007**

## **ITEMS TO BE SUBMITTED:**

- Essay
- 200-word abstract of the essay
- Author's c.v.
- Submit all materials in the following ways: **one hard copy and as an e-mail attachment**

## **MAIL TO:**

Prof. Carmen de Urioste  
Dept. of Languages and Literatures  
Arizona State University  
Box 870202  
Tempe, AZ 85287-0202

e-mail: carmen.urioste@asu.edu

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# Essay Prize Winner 2006

Debra Faszler-McMahon of the University of California at Irvine is the recipient of our 2006 Feministas Unidas Essay Prize for her study of Rosa Chacel's *Memorias de Leticia Valle*. The photo was taken by Candyce Leonard at the MLA 2006 meeting when Debra attended the Business Meeting of our organization. Congratulations again, Debra.



# MLA 2006 Photos



Margarita Vargas and Cynthia Tompkins visit at the MLA meeting before a *Feministas Unidas* session .



Magdalena Maiz Peña and Lisa Vollendorf laugh it up as they show the friendly collegiality that characterizes *Feministas Unidas* members.



Lisa Vollendorf chairs one of the *Feministas Unidas* sessions, "Feminisms and Religion: Challenges in the Classroom" at the MLA 2006 Convention. Panelists Dawn Slack and Magdalena Maiz Peña are seated at the table.



Panelist Dawn Slack of Kutztown Univ. of Pennsylvania presents her paper, "Pat Mora's *The House of Houses*: An Exploration of Women's Wisdom" in the *Feministas Unidas* session titled "Feminisms and Religion: Challenges in the Classroom", while Valerie Hegstrom, Magdalena Maiz Peña and Cynthia Tompkins listen.

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# MLA 2006 Conference Papers

## Feminisms and Religion: Theoretical Musings

### **Feminism and Religion: Catholic Nationalism and the Argentine Military Dictatorship**

Meghan Gibbons  
University of Maryland, College Park

Numerous feminists have explored the concept of “woman” as an essentialist category and the advantages and disadvantages it can produce in terms of political action. Is gender primarily constructed by social forces or created by “natural” or divine agency? The case of the Madres de la Plaza de Mayo is an ideal lens through which to explore these questions, as their protests challenged fundamental assumptions about gender and religion in Argentina, a traditional Catholic country with a long history of state-church collusion. During the last military dictatorship, 1976-1983, Argentine motherhood became the site of intense struggle between a group of protesting mothers and the Catholic nationalist regime. In this study I will examine how *marianismo* and *machismo* influenced the definition of proper Catholic motherhood in Argentina and what implications this had for the *madres*’ ability to protest the disappearances. I will also explore how the *madres* and the dictatorship used strategies that were both essentialist and constructionist in order to use motherhood to their advantage.

The primary strength of an essentialist “motherhood” is that it crosses multiple identity categories: race, class, and nationality. The possibility of organizing across these lines is a boon for political groups who have traditionally struggled to articulate a common agenda in the face of these differences. Another strength of an essentialist motherhood identity is that it justifies maternal action that could easily be labeled as extreme or radical. That mothers tend to be very passionate about their children is a pattern that can be found across cultures and nations: most

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mothers show a willingness to sacrifice for their children that is unparalleled in their other relationships. Mothers' diligent concern for the well being of their children extends well into the children's adult lives. Rooting this maternal devotion in some essentialist grounding gives organized mothers a power that is unmatched. If they carry this identity into the ring of formal politics they don't have to play by the same rules as their colleagues because their identities as mothers supercede all other allegiances –citizenship, nationality, religious or racial affiliations.

The most prominent weakness in the use of essentialism to ground motherhood is that it can be co-opted by conservative forces like Catholic nationalism, which end up placing mothers in roles that are limited, domestic, and submissive. The Argentine military dictatorship tried to do just that. It argued that mothers were self-sacrificing and obedient because a divine force designed them that way. The paradigm of maternal submission became linked to patriarchal authority and motherhood became a subject position in service to a larger, hegemonic narrative of conservative Catholic nationalism.

The Argentine *madres* de la Plaza de Mayo have been protesting the disappearances of their children (20,000-30,000 by Amnesty International's count) for almost thirty years. They are one of the most widely studied women's protest groups in Latin America and yet they are an enigma on several levels. They challenge patriarchal power relations but they reject the term "feminism." They use the narratives of Christ and the Virgin Mary but they reject Catholicism. These two puzzles expose a common link between feminism and religion in the *madres'* case that is not often explored –their use of strategic essentialism. Essentialism is the notion that there exists a "true essence –that which is most irreducible, unchanging, and therefore constitutive of a given person or thing." (Diana Fuss, 2). In the case of the *madres'* protests we see that the women, themselves, and the dictatorship used essentialism at different times for distinct

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purposes. In certain instances essentialism empowered the *madres* and in others it weakened them. In examining these dynamics more closely we can better understand how essentialism functions and what role it plays in social movements around feminism and religion.

First, I will use “feminism” to mean a belief in the equal capacities of men and women and a desire to allow these to flourish in both genders. In the case of the *madres* I will focus on the potential of both genders to play both public and private roles equally, since this is a theme about which many of the *madres* have spoken. In their written testimonials and in my own interviews, many of the women described changes in gender consciousness brought about by their movement into public life. Before the military regime, the women ““never talked about politics or anything like that ..... I never went out to work, I was never anything more than a housewife and a mother .....”” (Carmen de Guede, p. 42 in Fisher) Another *madre* describes how she even furthered the machismo in her home: ““A mis hijos los crié además imbuida del machismo que había recibido. Mi papa , mi marido, el hogar patriarchal... Ay, pensar cómo cambió todo después!” (Nora Cortiñas, Página 12, March 24, 1996). After the disappearances, however, “ la vida cambió....la vida familiar fue distinta.” (Elisa Landin interview, 2005) Since it was much riskier for fathers and male relatives of *desaparecidos* to protest, the women took to the streets, confronting police, horses, and tanks. They were frequently arrested and constantly harassed and threatened. Despite this, “nothing could stop us, nothing could paralyze us. Our safety wasn’t important.” (Mellibovsky, 75) Because their gender in a machista society partially protected them from the state’s violence, the women ended up doing all of the public work: organizing demonstrations and marching, visiting embassies, contacting the media. They broke barriers that machismo had put around the image of the proper wife and mother (relegated to the private sphere) and did whatever it took to find their children. Their husbands, in many cases,

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took over the domestic tasks because their wives were busy with the protests. Because of the danger of their disappearance, the men were prohibited (frequently by their wives) from the public protests.

So, weren't the *madres* feminists? Weren't their lives dramatically altered in terms of gender relations and performance? Didn't they experience a new found gender consciousness? These are questions with which many North American and European scholars have been fascinated. From political science to communications to anthropology, numerous articles have addressed these questions in different disciplines. Many of these studies characterize the *madres'* movement as a triumph of feminism over patriarchy, neglecting the important reality that the *madres*, themselves, vehemently reject this label. "I don't believe we're feminists. I believe that women in Argentina are oppressed, by the church and by our laws, and I consider that women are equal to men but I believe that this country has a lot of problems that affect men and women.'" (151, Beatriz de Rubinstein qtd. in Fisher). Another *madre*: "I don't think the Mothers are feminists, but we point a way forward for the liberation of women....We aren't feminists because I think feminism, when it's taken too far, is the same as machismo.'" (President of the Plaza de Mayo, Hebe de Bonafini 158, qtd. in Fisher) In numerous testimonials the *madres* express what may appear to be feminist sensibilities but they refuse the label of feminism.

This phenomenon can be explained in several ways: First, the transformation of gender roles in the *madres'* case was an accidental byproduct of their campaign for their children's lives. Many of them define feminism as purposefully challenging patriarchal gender roles. Since it was not their original purpose to overturn gender roles (or, in most cases, to even to question them) they don't see their activities as feminist. Second, many of the *madres* don't want to lose rhetorical focus on their children. Talking about feminism would shift the discourse over to a

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subject that most see as far inferior, if not irrelevant, to the struggle over their children. The alteration of traditional gender roles was a result of the search for their children, not the impetus for it.

Finally, the question of feminism is frequently introduced by outsiders to Argentine culture, often scholars from North America and Europe. In fact many books about the group have been written by non-Argentines. Jo Fisher's *The Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo* (British) and Marguerite Guzman Bouvard's *Revolutionizing Motherhood* (North American) are two that are widely cited among scholars who study the *madres'* group. The focus on feminism by these scholars has become somewhat of an annoyance to many of the *madres* because it detracts from their own agenda: justice for their children. In addition, several of the *madres* whom I interviewed, seem to associate "feminism" with separatist models: "es ridículo que de un lado salgan hombres.... Somos todos del género humano.....los hombres y las mujeres tienen que luchar del brazo." (Matilde Mellibovsky, 2005). Some appear to define feminism in reductive terms, such as: "Las feministas luchan contra el hombre. Nosotras, no." (Elisa Landin, Dec. 2005) Some of this might be explained by sensationalist media coverage of second-wave-feminism in the U.S. in the 1960s and 1970s. Or it may be the chasm between first and third world feminisms that Chandra Talpade Mohanty and so many other feminist theorists have commented upon. But aside from this debate, the fact that the *madres* do not want to be labeled as feminists is the most important factor here. Having suffered both discursive and physical repression for so many years, their desire to maintain control over their own representation is not surprising. The more important question may be why feminist scholars outside Argentina are so eager to claim this movement as their own.



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I see several explanations for this trend as well. First, there is no doubt from their testimonies and my own interviews, that many of the *madres* developed a new awareness of the way that they were limited as women and mothers by the culture of machismo and traditional Catholicism. Their descriptions of this awareness paralleled many expressed by middle class North American women during the second wave of feminism. This similarity may be what leads many North American historians and political scientists to want to apply this label to the *madres* as well. The *madres*' linkages of personal experience (the disappearance of a child) to political conditions (the widespread repression of the Argentine dictatorship) was another phenomenon that echoed second-wavers experiences. The popular U.S. slogan, "the personal is the political," was applied to many causes from the Vietnam war to domestic violence, and was a powerful rallying cry for middle-class feminist activism.

Similar to the US feminist movement, the *madres*' campaign also grappled with the question of essentialism in the political action. At times they rejected the essentialism that the dictatorship tried to apply to them as Catholic mothers in the tradition of *marianismo* (prayerful, obedient, submissive, mourning.) At other times the *madres* played on these characterizations, conjuring up traditional images of Argentine mothers in their performances of public prayer, identification with the Virgin Mary, and their claims to be "unas locas" (Bousquet, 57). They made obsequious appeals to the junta, the military and the church, emphasizing their status as simple, non-political women, whose devotion to their children allowed them no identity apart from them. Above all the women stressed that they had no designs on political power, reinforcing the *machista* image of women as belonging to the private sphere: "nuestros móviles son transparentes, detrás de nuestro accionar solo está el amor a nuestros hijos y no abrigamos propósitos mezquinos o de política menuda." Their appeals for help were often cast in terms of

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their identities as helpless women, appealing simultaneously to the cultural tradition of machismo and the image of the sacred mother: “No tiene verguenza de atacar a madres indefensas?” (Bousquet, 48). Such postures may seem like markedly unfeminist approaches but they functioned to keep the dictatorship’s violence at bay on a number of occasions.

At the same time that they used essentialism to their advantage, the *madres* also challenged the dictatorship’s construction of proper Catholic motherhood. “We were supposed to keep our mouths shut: we made accusations. We were supposed to be submissive: we unmasked them. We were supposed to be quiet: we screamed with all our might. They needed to bury things quietly: we dug them up. Above all, we were supposed to stay very quietly at home: but we went out, walked around and got into unimaginable places.” (Mellibovsky, 52)

The *madres*’ betrayals –by their own government and the Catholic Church—exposed the ways in which these institutions constructed their members to benefit their own agendas.

Constructionism is the idea that the subjectivities in which we find ourselves (mother, Catholic, heterosexual), are shaped for us by social, religious and political forces. It rejects the idea that there are any “essential or natural givens that preceed the process of social determination.” (Fuss, 2-3) Mothers who were nationalists, obedient and prayerful were more amenable to the sacrifices of “el proceso nacional.” So the regime worked to interpellate the *madres* into these beliefs and behaviors through propaganda. They were officially dubbed the “*locas de la plaza de Mayo*,” stigmatized as bad mothers, Communists and traitors. But their construction in these terms also tapped into an essentialism present in cultural notions of *marianismo* and *machismo*, confirming Fuss’ notion that “any radical constructionism can only be built on the foundations of hidden essentialism.” (13) This essentialism was located at the heart of the regime’s Catholic nationalist movement.

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To thoroughly understand Catholic nationalism in Argentina we must look at the forces of *machismo* and *marianismo*, both essentialist paradigms that structured gender roles significantly. Evelyn Steven's work on *marianismo* describes it as a cultural paradigm in which "women are semi-divine, morally superior to and spiritually stronger than men." (91) This power is rooted in women's life-giving abilities which brings them closer to divinity and makes them stronger than men when it comes to ethics. The Virgin Mary is the ultimate example of this behavior so mothers are especially identified with her.

The counterpart to *marianismo* is *machismo*, the male paradigm in which men are cast as rule-breakers, sexually potent and dismissive towards women (other than their own mothers or sisters). This model is also informed by the warrior culture in which men are encouraged to be aggressive, dominant, and non-emotional. The origins of machismo are hypothesized in several ways: behaviors brought by the conquistadors to the New World from European patriarchies, behaviors developed by Natives in response to the violence of European invaders, or rooted in the Aztec military culture. Scholars disagree on which of these theories is most salient but agree on the patterns of behaviors that are produced in cultures influenced by *machismo*.

In combination with to these two paradigms, the relationship of the Catholic Church to the state in Argentina is an important element in understanding the behavior of the Catholic nationalist regime. For hundreds of years the land that is now Argentina was ruled by *patronato* (patronage), meaning that the state had powers that seemed to fall within the purview of the church, such as appointing bishops and collecting taxes to support the clergy. Although these patterns were dismissed by several national governments in the modern era (particularly in 1966) several modern junta resurrected them in order to increase their power over Church forces. The military government of 1976 had a powerful interest in expanding the powers of the state over

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church functions. Reacting against the alienation that Peronsim had opened with the Church General Videla signed a 1977 law that the national government would revert to paying the salaries of bishops and would provide them with retirement benefits as well, establishing an economic dependence between the Bishops and the ruling military class. This arrangement cemented a reciprocal relationship—at least at the highest level—between Argentine bishops and their new government. This move, in addition to the lengthy history of collaboration between these two powers and the maintenance of Argentina as an officially Roman Catholic state, facilitated the junta's promotion Catholic nationalism. A conservative Catholic movement that positioned Catholic doctrine as a moral beacon the state became a kind of spiritual power under this paradigm. The sense that : “*La lucha antisubversiva es una lucha en defensa de la moral, de la dignidad del hombre; es, una lucha en defensa de Dios.* ””

As part of this fight, left-wing groups were rhetorically conflated with Communism, and the junta's favorite scapegoat, atheism, to stir up hostility within the Argentine populace, already tired by years of violent attacks by disparate guerrilla groups. This instability combined with the junta's censorship of all unsympathetic newspapers, gave them a monopoly on public representation of “subversive” groups, facilitating this slippage. Frequent public appearances by the junta in Catholic masses and at military parades with Catholic clergy by their sides solidified the image of the regime as endorsed by the Catholic Church. Reports by survivors of centros clandestinos included stories of Catholic priests hearing prisoners' confessions and being present for their torture.

The union of conservative religious values and military power enabled the regime to justify their repressive tactics in the interest of the moral formation of the national body: el proceso. There are numerous instances of Catholic clergy inserting political content into their

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sermons, making explicit claims that “‘ The army is expiating the impurity of our country.’”

Another bishop’s sermon claimed that, “It was written, it was in God’s plan that Argentina must not lose its greatness and it was saved by its natural guardian, the army.’”

The Catholic Church was not entirely hostile to the Left, however, and many lower-level clergy were sympathetic to the *madres*, sometimes working actively on their behalf.

Unfortunately, none of them had the stature or influence that would have moved the military to reverse its tactics. In fact, many clergy who did speak out were, themselves, disappeared. From 1976 to 1983 sixteen Catholic priests were murdered or disappeared and two bishops were killed. Two nuns who were working with the *madres de la plaza de mayo* were abducted and murdered in 1977.

For many of the *madres* the disappearances and the complicity of the church took away their most profound religious beliefs:

*I had been brought up in a deeply Catholic household. Now I question my religion and the ecclesiastic hierarchy. I have found proof of how far they are from what the Gospel preaches. The attitude of most of the members of the Catholic Church has made me feel swindled, defrauded.* (Enriqueta Maroni, in Mellibovsky, 78)

*I brought [my children] up in the bosom of the Catholic Church. Both my husband and I devoted ourselves to its service ..... I should have recorded the conversations I had with Mons. Aguirre, Bishop of the diocese of San Isidro, to which we belonged. I left the Archbishop sick. I believe that at the peak of the Inquisition you could not have found a harder and more insensitive Inquisitor. I only wish God may have mercy on him.* --(Josefina Gandolfi de Salgado qtd. in Mellibovsky, 110)

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Despite their disillusionment the *madres* continued their searches diligently. When dismissing the *madres* as *las locas* did not disperse them, the regime tried to pacify the *madres* by directing them back into obedient, prayerful postures, like that of the Virgin Mary: One Archbishop, Antonio José Quarracino de la Plata, chastised the *madres* for their public grief and protest with: “I can’t image in the Virgin Mary yelling, protesting, and planting seeds of hate when her son, our Lord, was torn from her hands.”

This approach contained powerful cultural capital in Argentine society where the worship of the Virgin Mary was an integral part of Catholic identity. Within the paradigm of *marianismo*, the life of the Virgin Mary is considered a model for women and mothers: her piety as a young woman, her humility in accepting God’s decree that she would bear the child, Christ, her obedience to God as she raised Jesus from childhood. Her acceptance of God’s will for her son --his crucifixion-- is among her most celebrated stances and the vision of her weeping at the foot of his cross is among the most poignant of Biblical images. These narratives were not far from the minds of bishops who met with the *madres* to discuss their cases: “Twenty-seven of us were allowed to see three bishops who were the head of the episcopate. They didn’t give us any information [about the *desaparecidos*] . They recommended that we pray to the Virgin.” - María del Rosario (Fisher, 27)

Another *madre* who approached her local Bishop was sent away with : “Piense en la Virgen María” (Muñoz & Portillo).

But the *madres* were not so easily interpellated by *marianismo* and they struck back by reclaiming la Virgen María as their own. In order to display their identification with the mother of Jesus, each of the earliest *madres* wore a single nail attached to her jacket “para recordar el sacrificio de Cristo, clavado en la cruz .....Nosotras también tenemos nuestro Cristo, y

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revivimos el dolor de María” (Bousquet, 47). They frequently met in churches where they prayed together, while secretly passing notes about marches and other organizing functions.

One even published a poem about praying the rosary, asking the Virgin Mary, in her role as a mother, to protect her missing son on his birthday: “Rezaré un rosario y pediré a la Virgen como ‘Ella’ fue madre, me comprenda a mí; le dire orgullosa que mi hijo es bueno, y juntas te diremos: Que los cumplas feliz.” Given the Catholic cultural influences in Argentina, such invocations may have been strategic attempts to win the hearts of more traditional Catholics, for whom Mary was the embodiment of good motherhood. Or it may be a rereading of Mary as a figure of resistance who fights for the missing son. Whichever the case, the essentialism of the Virgin is certainly present in this passage: either authorizing the humble petition of this Madre for her son, or justifying the *madre*’s unexpressed rebellion against her son’s imprisonment.

The extent to which these performances were authentic or were done for the benefit of the regime or other observers who were ignorant of the violence is difficult to tell. Most likely it was something of both. What is certain is that the image of Mary and the construction of proper Catholic motherhood were used by the regime to try to control the *madres*’ activities. The women were savvy enough to use these images to their advantage, as far as they might protect them from violence or win sympathetic supporters.

Although most of the *madres* publicly dismissed the Church, their relationships with spirituality were more complex. Some, it is true, abandoned a belief in God. Others maintained a concept of God outside of the Church, a challenging paradigm in a culture so heavily constructed by Catholic worship: “I still believe in God. It is not very easy. I cannot go into a church....I can’t go and confess with a priest because we feel they have been accomplices of the military, but inside me I feel that there is a supreme being.” (Josefa Donato de Pauvi, in

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Bouvard, 8) Some of their poetry take the form of letters written directly to God, affirming that He is still with the *madres*, despite the Church's dismissal of their claims: "Yo sé que tú, Señor, no puedes aprobarlos, ni estás con ellos [los torturadores], sino con la verdad y la justicia para que, tu paz se restablezca, de Nuevo y resplandezca como el sol. – Señor, perdóname si juzgo mal, tengo el alma, Señor, tan dolorida, que solo en tí, Señor, confío." (Analcharo)

For many of them this religious loss was replaced by a profound solidarity that developed among the *madres*. "In the Plaza I have shared many beautiful moments with the Mothers. We feel bound to each other, very united in our pain. We could share our hopes, our doubts, our fears... These dramatic moments in our life, very sad, but when we are together we feel strong, we really feel strong..." Another madre described that, "Once we were in the Plaza, the fact of being arm in arm, or of walking together, compelled us to return. We really wanted the week to go by quickly so that we could be together." Even those who were reluctant participants were eventually won over by the solidarity that only other mothers could provide: "At first I thought it was a waste of time to talk to other mothers who were in my situation. I wanted to find my son and I did not see the connection. What was the use of speaking to others who were going through the same? But another mother kept insisting and one day I finally agreed and went to the Plaza with her. "

Based on these bonds the *madres'* political movement also took on a quasi-spiritual quality, as they were reborn through the examples of their childrens' lives: "I always say that I didn't give birth to my children, they gave birth to me because it was Martín who really taught me to love people." Another transformation was that their individual searches were actually and symbolically converted into a collective one: "I keep on looking for my children and everybody else's children, because to me your daughter is my daughter, she's a little bit mine. My children



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are a little bit yours....because the children belong to everyone, to every person who walks in those circles we walk in....” (Carmen Robles de Zurita, 86, in Mellibovsky). The paradigm has become one of the rhetorical cornerstones of the Asociación’s activism. On the twentieth anniversary of the beginning of the madres’ protests, the headline of *Página 12* read, “Todos son nuestros hijos.” Hebe de Bonafini, the president of the Asociación de las madres de Plaza de Mayo, explains the phrase with “Las Madres no luchamos para nosotras, luchamos para los otros porque el otro soy yo, y cuando uno lucha para uno mismo tiene mucha fuerza, mucha fuerza.” (May 2, 2002)

The reading of the madres’ movement as a feminist one is a phenomenon that can be understood in light of some of its similarities to U.S. second wave feminism: the bonding of an all-female group, its sense of rebirth, its privileging of emotion, and its confrontation of societal institutions, both political and religious. For first-world feminist scholars these themes, in light of the arguably patriarchal qualities of the Argentine regime, appear at times, irresistible. That the madres, themselves, reject this label, however, should not be dismissed. It speaks to power dynamics that North American scholars are repeatedly warned of: the tendency to universalize first-world, removing them from their historical and geographic environments.

As their letters and poetry demonstrate, however, the madres’ relationship to Catholicism is not a simple one. While they are primarily critical of the Church, they publicly used the narrative and imagery of Mary to gain support for their movement. The dictatorship used the same elements to try to repress them. The madres’ private relationships to the Catholic faith have been, unsurprisingly, altered, with some of them cutting all ties with the Church, and others practicing privately but dismissing the Catholic hierarchy. For many of them the community of other madres and their political activism is a kind of spiritual home. It is where they feel the most

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supported in their fight for justice and the closest to their children. The unwritten organizational principles of the group are diametrically opposed to the hierarchical structure of the Catholic Church. All members are equal; each one speaks only for her own experience and not for other *madres*; each member works not only for her own child, but for the return of all the *desaparecidos*. These principles seem to echo those of Catholic spiritual communities of the 1960s --a shade, perhaps, of the liberation theology precepts that some of their children advocated. But to use the word “religion” to describe this dynamic would be inaccurate. If the *madres* have fought for anything besides justice for their children, it has been the preservation of their own voices from forces that wish to dominate them: the dictatorship, the Church, and, at times, well-meaning scholars.

In my own research on the *madres* I try to respect this position. I do not use the term “feminist” to describe their movement, or the word “religion” to describe their community’s rebirth and solidarity. Their stories are too complex for these terms which hide the many contradictions that the *madres* have experienced, as women, as Catholics, and as Argentines. As much as possible I try to let them tell their own stories, like the one of Esther Ballestrino de Careaga, one of the founding *madres*: Careaga, whose 16-year old daughter was miraculously freed by the dictatorship, continued to publicly protest for the release of the other *desaparecidos*. With her own daughter settled safely in Brazil, Careaga returned to Argentina and put her own life on the line for the “hijos de todos” -- for which she was disappeared along with two other *madres* in 1977. The *madres* still memorialize Careaga, along with Azucena Villaflor de De Vicente and María Ponce de Bianco, who were abducted with her. At a recent memorial service for the three *madres*, whose remains were discovered together in July of 2005, a surviving *madre* commented on the symbolism of their return and the purpose of their community: “Se

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las llevaron juntas y juntas volvieron hacia nosotras..... Hoy más que nunca sabemos que la lucha sirvió.”

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## Female Mysticism: Cecilia del Nacimiento & María de San Alberto

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Cecilia del Nacimiento (1570-1647) and María de San Alberto (1568-1640) were sisters by birth and sisters in religion, and first-generation spiritual daughters of Sta. Teresa, professing in the Discalced Carmelite Convent in Valladolid, founded by Sta. Teresa. The sisters were the only girls among the nine children born to Antonio Sobrino, a Portuguese gentleman from Braganza, and his wife, Cecilia Morillas. Four of their brothers became Discalced Carmelites; Francisco became bishop of Valladolid and preacher to the king; José was a canon in Alcalá and chaplain to the royal house. It was he who gathered the writings of St. Teresa of Avila, as part of the beatification process, and saw that her works and letters were preserved. As a consequence, Cecilia and María were very familiar with the writings of Sta. Teresa. The convent also contain various manuscripts of San Juan's poetry and prose commentaries.

In the period of 1599-1600, Cecilia del Nacimiento and María de San Alberto wrote a verse contemplation on San Juan de la Cruz's "Noche oscura." Cecilia's is titled "Canciones de la unión y transformación del alma en Dios por la tiniebla divina de pura contemplación," and María's refers specifically to its source and is titled "Lira sobre la noche oscura." Around 1602-1603, Tomás de Jesús requested Cecilia to write a commentary on her poem, which she completed in 1603, with the title of *Tratado de la transformación del alma en Dios*.

These poems, as well as others of these sisters, are included in a forthcoming anthology compiled by Elizabeth Boyce and I, titled "*En desagravio de las damas*": *Women's Poetry of the Golden Age*. Their poems are among the various documents that I procured via photocopies in my two visits to the convent. In the companion volume of critical essays, Alison Weber and

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Elizabeth Rhodes contribute two lucid studies on these poets: "Could Women Write Mystical Poetry? The Literary Daughters of Juan de la Cruz" and "Gender in the Night: Juan de la Cruz and Cecilia del Nacimiento," respectively. In the course of this presentation, I shall refer to these studies. There are very few studies of the Madres Cecilia and María. Other than those mentioned, there are two by Evelyn Toft on Cecilia, and Stacy Schlau's edition of the poetry of María.

I have believed, or been led to believe, that a mystic, such as San Juan or Sta. Teresa, has an experience of divine union, then attempts to express this experience either through prose or poetry, or a combination: poetry and commentary. San Juan has a mystical experience but the experience is, by definition, imageless and uncommunicable; so in order to give some idea of his experience, he writes a poem, "Noche oscura," using imagery and the vehicle of a girl who slips out of her house to have a sexual encounter with her lover in order to express allegorically the union of soul and God. The literal level, its erotic content, is absolutely necessary for the impact of the allegory.

What can we say about the mystical experiences expressed by Sor Cecilia and Sor María in their respective poems? Do they rely on San Juan's "Noche oscura" to express a mystical yearning; or do they have the experience then use San Juan's "Noche oscura" (there are also allusions and references to the "Cántico) in order to assist them to express this experience; or does their experience derive directly from their contemplation of San Juan's poem, after which they use the poem as their source and intertextual construct? Or do they use the mystical experience for another purpose? The titles of the poems point to the contemplation of "Noche oscura" as the basis of a mystical experience.

A cursory comparison of the sister's poems with San Juan's reveals many similarities with regard to language, structure and imagery. The first stanzas are "niebla oscura" and "noche

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oscura”; l.7 of Sor Cecilia’s corresponds to l.2 of San Juan’s, the “salí sin ser notada” is echoed in Sor Cecilia, ll. 13-17; the “escalera” in l. 32 of Cecilia, in l. 27 of María, and so on. The climax in San Juan’s poem functions as such in Cecilia’s, ll. 61-65; but not in María’s appearing early in ll. 21-25. The three mystical steps are clearly given in Cecilia’s, ll. 1-12, via purgativa, and from this point to l. 60, the via iluminativa, and from l. 61 the vía unitiva. These steps are less clear in María’s; perhaps ll. 1-12 the via purgativa; if so the via iluminativa would be, perhaps, from this point to l. 48: “abrió y entró el esposo.” But at this point I would expect a forceful expression of union, the climax, for example, voiced by an apostrophe, which is lacking here.

Before returning to the question of the contemplation, in this case of “Noche oscura,” I should like to comment on medieval reader response to the *Song of Songs* and its possible relation to the subject at hand. Ann Astell, in her *The Song of Songs in the Middle Ages*, traces this response, first noting that the Song of Songs presented two problems to the Church; the first being “what the Song leaves unstated; the second from what it actually says . . . the Song makes no direct mention of God; instead it celebrates the passionate joys and sorrows of unnamed lovers” in lushly erotic terms (1). The theologian Origen, 3rd century, indicated that the literal carnality of the Song, the marriage of Solomon, veils two allied spiritual meanings, so that the Song refers allegorically to the wedding of Christ and the Church, and tropologically to the union of Christ and the soul. Origen’s definition of the bridal soul led him to stress its higher, rational powers (*mens, spiritus, logos*) at the cost of suppressing the body and its drives; so that for him intellection and loving are one and the same. As Etienne Gilson puts it, his “is the mysticism of an exegete” (Astell 4, 7-8, [cf. Fray Luis]).

This is the way the *Song* stood until the 12th century when theologians (Isaac of Stella) began to consider the emotive value of the *Song*’s literal sense. This is occurring at the time



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when it is perceived that Salvation for both men and women must come through the feminine powers of the soul (the *anima* or *affectus*, as opposed to the *ratio* ). The “twelfth-century understanding of the soul gives prominence to its lower, affective powers, which are intimately connected with the bodily senses and the volition. Indeed, the central consciousness of the *Song*, in its literal sense, is feminine, not masculine, gynocentric, if you will. The soul’s mystical union with God is thus experienced not primarily as intellectual enlightenment, but as a loving, personal surrender to the will of God” (Astell 8), that is, affective mysticism. With regard to the *Song*, then, the breach between its literal and allegorical levels caused by Origen’s intellection of the *Song*, is reconciled. As Astell states, “In the process the allegory is reliteralized, joined again to the letter from which it was derived” (8). The *Song* is directed at the *anima*. By way of contrast and process, secular love lyric, such as courtly love, masculinizes the reader, it is directed at the *animus*; the religious lyric feminizes the reader, it is directed at the *anima*.

The feminizing exegesis of the *Song* conceived the Sponsa (Bride) of the *Song* as a way of analogous self-knowledge and self-expression. Coupled with the reader’s/auditor’s reliteralization of the *Song*, the reader/auditor was also expected to respond to the *Song* tropologically, not in our sense of tropes, but the transfer of the *Song*’s meaning to the personal experience of the reader/auditor. In other words, “What does the *Song*—and by extension other sacred scripture—mean to me and how should I respond”? As Astell puts it, “Tropology is the reader’s response to the rhetorical appeal of the text, rightly understood: the meeting point of life and letter . . . *tropologia* is best understood not as part of the text but as an extension of the text into the world. It consists in each reader’s heartfelt, personal discovery of what he or she ought to do” (21). This is how Sta. Teresa reads and responds to the *Cantar de los cantares*.

Disregarding the *Song*’s literal sense, she centers on Origen’s allegorical-tropological sense and

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also reads it as *tropologia* as defined by Astell. Carole Slade, it appears to me, calls this *tropologia* the "hermeneutics of enjoyment" which "yields passionate expression of her own spiritual experience" (35).

"What he or she ought to do," then is the consequence of the tropological application of the *Song*. In another type of application, tropology culminated in the contemplation of the *Song* in order to achieve mystical experience. This was particularly the case among the Victorines (Richard of St. Victor, Hugo of St. Victor) who perceived the Bride as a Medial Woman and Seeress, and among the Cistercians, especially Bernard of Clairveaux, who in his *Sermones super Cantica Canticorum*, instructed "readers and writers to appropriate the bridal ego and use the words of Canticles to express their emotions, inner attitudes, and aspirations" (Astell 77). In the context of the tropological import of the *Song* and its contemplative and mystical treatments, we can consider San Juan's *Cántico espiritual*. Did he have a mystical experience then express it by appropriating the fable and imagery of the *Song of Songs*? Or was his mystical experience tropologically incited by his contemplation of the *Song of Songs*? Of course, we cannot answer these questions, but considered in the context of the mystical experiences derived by others from the contemplation of the *Song*, it seems that this is a possibility. In any event, San Juan's response to and contemplation of the *Song* results in a reliteralization, an erotic fable linked to an allegorical account of the union of the soul with God: the *Cántico espiritual*.

In this same manner, then, San Juan writes "Noche Oscura," a literal carnal love song and an allegorical mystical love song. We do not know how Cecilia and María responded to the poem, but the consequence of their contemplation is quite clear. The tropological import of the "Noche oscura" is its allegorical, mystical dimension. They each write a poem—of almost the

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same length—that severs the connection between its carnality and its spirituality; they separate the poem's tenor from its vehicle. But why do they do this?

Alison Weber and Elizabeth Rhodes answer this question. Weber rightly affirms that the sisters avoided the erotic fable and developed the allegorical line because, being women and nuns, they feared censure. Rhodes, commenting on Cecilia's poem—but which holds true also of María's, states:

The poetic persona of "Noche oscura," smitten with desire and rushing to surrender under cover of darkness, was not a viable option for Cecilia del Nacimiento, nor was she [persona] accessible to any upper-class woman poet of the seventeenth century writing anything but satire, for two reasons. First, for a woman to have composed a poem in which (on the literal level) an admirable, successfully transgressive woman leaves her house, no matter how quiet, to meet her lover, constituted an irreparable violation of social and moral decorum for women: proper ladies were desired, not desiring, and good women (particularly good nuns), did not go climbing ladders in the darkest of night to seek out lovers with whose ways they were already familiar. In the dominant representational paradigm, a woman's soul simply could not do that, literally or figuratively, and still serve as an acceptable vessel of divine intervention on earth. The anecdote was accessible to Juan de la Cruz because on the one hand, he was a man and his feminine voice did not threaten behind its veil of obvious fiction, and on the other, the anecdote itself supports a repressive, reductive representation of Woman that was normalized in patriarchal discourse. In the male mystic, sexual desire was transgressive only if completely literal; in Juan de la Cruz's poem, it is not.

Furthermore, each poet distances the lyrical speaker through the third person. Instead of a *yo*, as in San Juan's "salí sin ser notada," Cecilia writes of *el alma*: "Y en aquesta salida / que sale de sí el alma dando un vuelo" (ll. 16-17); and María writes: "Subió para dormirse / por la secreta escala y escondida" (ll. 26-27); and both use the spousal nouns "esposo" and "esposa." Yet there is a fundamental difference between the sisters' lyrical alma/esposa, and that of San Juan's alma. Whereas at the conclusion of his poem, San Juan's alma expresses the delight of abandonment, a leaving off—as Rhodes says—, Cecilia's "describes a taking on." The final stanza expresses a "conversion into the divinity as as the acquisition of a new and powerful identity." The same can

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be said—albeit not as emphatically—of María's verse 43, "señoreando" and in vv. 56-60.

Without the literal, erotic dimension of the "Noche oscura," their poems lack a dramatic impact, remaining solely on a spiritual level which traces the soul's progress to divine union. Weber add: "if lyric's fictional premise invites the reader to enter into another fictional world, its ritual premise also invites the reader to enact thought and feeling through the fictional *persona*. It was this invitation to ritual enactment [or re-enactment, i. e., *tropologia*] that proved so attractive and so problematic for the Carmelite nuns: poetry gave them the opportunity to re-experience the *particularidades de amor* of mystical rapture, yet it exposed them to charges of indecorous exhibitionism. Given the disquieting sameness of their sex and the enrapt soul, is it any wonder that María de San Alberto and Cecilia del Nacimiento sought to veil the lyrical 'I'."

I am inclined to believe that the sisters' gloss of the allegorical dimension of San Juan's "Noche oscura," and Cecilia's commentary, the *Tratado de la transformación del alma en Dios*, was a mystical didacticism, the "mysticism of the exegete," as Etienne Gilson says. With a copy of the salacious "Noche oscura" at the convent, Cecilia and María set about to de-sensitize their convent sisters to the erotic fable and to sensitize them to its allegorical dimension. As if to say, "Tenéis aquí, queridas hermanas, en nuestros poemas lo que de verdad significa la "Noche oscura" de san Juan. And although Tomás de Jesús asked her to write a prose commentary of her poem, she may have also been prompted to do so because San Juan only explicated two stanzas completely and the third only partially, so that his commentary is completed via her own. But this is interesting because nowhere in her commentary does she mention San Juan, but does refer to Sta. Teresa five times.

The poems by the two sisters express a "mystic consciousness," a term that Bernard McGinn prefers (xvii-xviii). Sor Cecilia affirms this consciousness and the presence of God in

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her commentary and in other writings. My consideration of the sisters' poems is due to my concern over how they were using "Noche oscura," in other words, trying to come up with an explanation of the nature of the relationship. My investigation took me to the possibility of perceiving their poems in the tropological tradition of the response to the *Song of Songs*, one that might even apply to San Juan himself. But in their case, it is not the *Song of Songs* but the "Noche oscura" which serves as a basis for a tropological response in the form of contemplation, and via contemplation to mystical consciousness. If prayer can serve as a springboard to mystical consciousness, as it often did for Santa Teresa, "Estando en oración . . .," then a poem, which certainly can be experienced and used as prayer, can do the same.

With regard to definitions of mysticism, McGinn offers a definition of mysticism as a "process or way of life":

it is important to remember that mysticism is always a process or way of life. Although the essential note—or, better, goal—of mysticism may be conceived of as a particular kind of encounter between God and the human, between Infinite Spirit and the finite human spirit, everything that leads up to and prepares for this encounter, as well as all that flows from or is supposed to flow from it for the life of the individual in the belief community, is also mystical. (xvi)

By this definition, the poems the sisters wrote certainly are "mystical." They involve the sisters imaginatively in the experience of San Juan de la Cruz, their spiritual father, so that they can appropriate his "I" as their own and follow him in his way of intimacy with God (Astell, e-mail). On another level their poems are glosses on San Juan's poem that serve for the spiritual well-being of their community. The complexity of mystical texts, and San Juan's in particular, moved the sisters to write glosses of his "Noche oscura" and like his their texts are also performance, with which their *hermanas* interact, engaging them tropologically. Their texts work, as Janet Ruffing states:

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as texts by inviting the reader into the divine/human encounter. Their purpose is to bring the reader into an aliveness and a stance of receptivity toward God in which God can supply the meaning the text does not offer directly. Thus, these texts are oriented not simply to a meaning 'behind' the text . . . but toward the future of the reader and his or her potential encounter with God. The text, in other words, opens up the possibility of a new divine/human encounter for the reader. (15)

## Notes

<sup>1</sup>Ms. 3766, BNM. This ms. is a copy, indicating the date of 1603 as the date of completion of the commentary. The original was lost, which may explain why Estéban de San José, at Valladolid and 28 years later, requested her to write a second commentary, as Mother Cecilia writes in the dedication: "Padre nuestro: Treinta y tantos años ha que me inspiró el Señor estas liras o canciones, y como las iba dictando el espíritu interior, andando harto ocupada en lo exterior, las escribí para mí. Después, habrá veintitantos, me mandó nuestro Padre Fray Tomás de Jesús escribiese lo que me diese su Divina Majestad, y así escribí sobre ellas una declaración o glosa. Ahora me manda Vuestra Reverencia [Estéban de San José] lo vuelva a renovar, por si se ha perdido. Como no me ha quedado traslado y ha tantos años, casi nada se me acuerda; mas como aquella Fuente de Sabiduría eterna, de quien manan estos arroyos, no puede agotarse, puede dar ahora alguno, como entonces, le dio, pues El lo manda . . . [1631]" (Díaz Cerón 81).

<sup>2</sup>I have dealt with this affective phenomenon in other studies, particularly in relation to the conception of female religious of Christ's body as a female body, thereby perceiving Him in Her image, so that instead of repudiating their body—as male religious and mystics do—it becomes for them a somatic basis for mystical yearning (Olivares 1995); see note 4.

Counting the final stanza that sor Cecilia brother José wrote, and which she inserts, as an afterthought in her commentary, her's and sor María's poems have the same length: 85 lines. In her commentary of the "Canción décimasexta"—"Como es tan poderosa / la uferza de aquel bien con que stá unida / y ella tan poca cosa, / con darse por vencida / pierde su ser y en él es convertida"—Cecilia declares: "Es tan poderosa esta fuerza divina, que así deshce el alma y la consume, como lo quedaría una gota de agua en el mar. Y así va hablando en esta canción del efecto de la unión y declarando el poderío, grandeza y fuerza con que hace Dios en ella todas las cosas dichas, que como fuertísimo y poderísimo amador suyo, con tanto poder se apodera del alma que tiene consigo unida, que la deja mudada en sí por esta transformación divina" (124-25). I comment on this sensation of empowerment in a different context of somatization: "The somatization of women's religious experience and the conception of Christ as female are two fundamental characteristics of female piety that endured from the High Middle Ages, through the Renaissance and to the Baroque, and which were manifested in women religious throughout Europe. . . . Spanish women religious, like their kindred sisters, perceived Christ in their image, and identified and merged with His flesh, thereby not only dignifying their status as women, but also arriving at a mystical union through a unique and feminine mode of transcendence. Instead of perceiving body and soul dichotomously in their religious experience and mystic transportation, as [Carolyn] Bynum affirms, 'body is not so much a hindrance to the soul's ascent as the opportunity for it. Body is the instrument upon which the mystic rings changes of pain and of delight. It is from body—whether whipped into frenzy by the ascetic herself or gratified with an ecstasy given by God—that sweet melodies and aromas rise to the very throne of heaven'" [194] (*Image* 126).

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## Appendix

Cecilia del Nacimiento (1570-1647) and María de San Alberto (1568-1640) were sisters by birth and sisters in religion, and first-generation spiritual daughters of Sta. Teresa, professing in the Discalced Carmelite Convent in Valladolid, founded by Sta. Teresa. The sisters were the only girls among the nine children born to Antonio Sobrino, a Portuguese gentleman from Braganza, and his wife, Cecilia Morillas. Four of their brothers became Discalced Carmelites; Francisco became bishop of Valladolid and preacher to the king; José was a canon in Alcalá and chaplain to the royal house. It was he who gathered the writings of St. Teresa of Avila, as part of the beatification process, and saw that her works and letters were preserved. As a consequence, Cecilia and María were very familiar with the writings of Sta. Teresa. The convent also contain various manuscripts of San Juan's poetry and prose commentaries.

Cursives = correlations with San Juan, "Noche oscura"

Cecilia del Nacimiento Alberto	San Juan de la Cruz	María de San
<i>Canciones de la unión y transformación del noche oscura</i>	<i>Canciones del alma que se goza</i>	<i>Lira[s] sobre la</i>
<i>alma en Dios por la tiniebla divina de pura contemplación</i>	<i>de aver llegado al alto estado de la perfección...que es la unión con Dios...</i>	
<i>Aquella niebla oscura oscura</i>	En una noche oscura	<i>¡Oh dulce noche</i>
es una luz divina, fuerte, hermosa, tiniebla tenebrosa!	con ansias en amores inflamanda	que no pones
inaccesible y pura, espesura	¡oh dichosa ventura!,	mas antes tu
íntima, deleitosa, deleitosa,	salí sin ser notada	cuan ciega es
un ver a Dios sin vista de otra cosa.      5 oscura más hermosa.      5	estando ya mi casa sosegada.	y cuanto más
La cual a gozar llega negaciones,	A oscuras y segura,	Divinas
<i>el alma que de amor está inflamada, dulce sosiego,</i>	por la secreta escala disfrazada	<i>dichosa oscuridad,</i>
<i>y viene a quedar ciega, invenciones,</i>	¡oh dichosa ventura!,	secretas
<i>quedando sin ver nada, ciego      [male deictic]</i>	a oscuras y en celada	<i>dichoso el que está</i>
<i>la ciencia trascendida y alcanzada.      10 dichoso entrego.      10</i>	estando ya mi casa sosegada.	en tanta oscuridad,



Y cuando la conquista <i>mismo,</i> [male deitic]		En la noche dichosa,	<i>Negándose a sí</i>
del reino de sí misma es acabada, aquel que nunca niega,		en secreto, que nadie me veía,	por no negar
<i>se sale sin ser vista</i> abismo		ni yo miraba cosa,	entró en el dulce
<i>de nadie, ni notada,</i> ciega		sin otra luz y guía,	de aquella noche
<i>a buscar a su Dios dél inflamada.</i> 15 luz el que se entrega. 15		sino la que en el corazón ardía.	donde halla viva
<i>Y en aquesta salida</i> escondido		Aquésta mi guiaba	Y en lo más
<i>que sale de sí el alma dando un vuelo,</i> <i>oscuridad replandeciente,</i>		más cierto que la luz del mediodía,	<i>de aquesta</i>
en busca de su vida esclarecido		a donde me esperaba	habiendo
<i>sube al empíreo cielo,</i> [cf. l. 32] presente,		quien yo bien me sabía,	el sol que está
y a su secreto centro quita el velo. 20 <i>refulgente.</i> 20		en parte donde nadie me parecía.	<i>hace la noche día</i>
<i>Y aunque busca al amado</i> regalada		¡Oh noche que guiaste!	¡Oh noche
<i>con la fuerza de amor toda encendida,</i> favor ofrece		¡oh noche amable más que el alborada!	que con seguridad
en sí lo tiene hallado,		¡oh noche que juntaste	el alma enamorada
pues está entretenida adormece,		amado con amada,	que en ella se
en gozar de su bien con él unida. 25 noche le parece! 25		amada con el amado transformada!	tanto que el día
<i>Está puesta en sosiego,</i> <i>dormirse</i>		En mi pecho florido,	<i>Subió para</i>
ya todas las imágenes perdidas <i>escala y escondida,</i>		que entero para él solo se guardaba,	<i>por la secreta</i>

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y su entender ya ciego, sentirse,	allí quedó dormido,	y como sin
las pasiones rendidas, dormida,	y yo le regalaba,	al fin quedó
<i>con fuerza las potencias suspendidas.</i> 30 de la vida. 30	y el ventalle de cedros aire daba.	tocáronle los rayos
A tal gloria y ventura <i>reposo,</i>	El aire de la almena	<i>Escala de</i>
<i>subir por escalera la convino</i> Cristo regalados	cuando yo sus cabellos esparcía,	los misterios de
para venir segura, hermoso	con sus mano serena	el caminar
que por modo divino amados	en mi cuello hería	de los hijos
los misterios de Cristo fue el camino. 35 son hallados 35	y todos mis sentidos suspendía.	adonde mil tesoros
Y habiendo ya llegado <i>escalas</i>	Quedéme y olvidéme	<i>Al fin destas</i>
al deseado fin que fue su intento, volando mientras la dejaron	el rostro recliné sobre el amado,	llegó
tiene, quieta en su amado, alas,	cesó todo, y dejéme,	con dos hermosas
continuo movimiento, llegaron	dejando mi cuidado	mas luego que
<i>estando sosegada y muy de asiento.</i> 40 plumas se abrasaron. 40	entre las azucenas olvidado.	sus delicadas
Y cuando de contino <i>gozando</i>		<i>Y así quedó</i>
del verbo eterno el alma está gozando, <i>rayos del amado,</i>		<i>de los secretos</i>
su espíritu divino		y ya señoreando
<i>mueve un aire muy blando</i> cuidado,		sin fuerza ni
<i>que todo lo interior va regalando.</i> 45 moradores que le han dado. 45		la casa y

<i>En la noche serena</i> reposo		Durmiendo con
en que goza de Dios su vida y centro, la dejaron;		los moradores libre
sin darla nada pena, esposo,		abrió y entró el
le busca bien adentro, despertaron,		mas cuando
con deseos saliéndole al encuentro.      50 despiertos se quejaron.      50		de verse ya
<i>El amor la encamina,</i> favores		Gozó de sus
<i>metida entre tiniebla tan oscura,</i> vieron,		a solas, que al esposo no le
<i>y sin otra doctrina</i>		que los moradores
<i>camina muy segura</i> durmieron		del todo se
<i>a donde Dios la muestra su hermosura. 55</i> <i>ruido no la hicieron. 55</i>		<i>y ni un pequeño</i>
<i>Y yendo sin camino,</i> <i>esposa</i>		<i>Allí la dulce</i>
<i>sin que haya entendimiento ni memoria,</i> <i>convertida</i>		<i>transformada en su amado y</i>
la muestra el Rey divino		<i>en él vive y reposa,</i>
su virtud y su gloria,		<i>y dél recibe vida,</i>
como se puede en vida transitoria.      60 <i>suya consumida. 60</i>		<i>quedando ya la</i>
<i>¡Oh noche cristalina</i> vive,		Y mientras aquí
<i>que juntaste con esa luz hermosa</i> goza y se mantiene,		descansa, vive,
<i>en una unión divina</i> recibe		mas cuando ya
<i>al esposo y la esposa,</i> tiene,		la vida que ella

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*haciendo de ambos una misma cosa!* 65  
muerte se detiene. 65

llora porque la

*Gozando dél a solas,*  
ha llorado,

Mas después que

*y puesto un muro en este prado ameno,* [muro <almena> muro (*Cántico* l. 104; cerco (*Cántico* l. 203);  
llanto sus favores,

creciendo con el

*vienen las blandas olas* prado ameno < ameno huerto, *Cántico* l. 112]  
cuidado

ya no la da

*de aqueste aire sereno,*  
dolores

porque en sufrir

*y todo lo de afuera lo hace ajeno.* 70  
y sus amores. 70

tiene puesto su fin

Aquel rey en quien vive  
glorioso,

En este fin

*la tiene con gran fuerza ya robada,*  
y regalado,

este abismo divino

y como le recibe  
hermoso

está el abismo

de asiento en su morada,  
anegado

adonde se ha

*la deja de sí toda enajenada.* 75  
a otro ha invocado. 75

porque un abismo

Como es tan poderosa  
tiniebla,

La luz en la

la fuerza de aquel bien con que está unida,  
sin apartarse,

la tiniebla en la luz

y ella tan poca cosa,  
niebla,

la claridad en

con darse por vencida,  
mostrarse,

la niebla en luz

pierde su ser y en él es convertida. 80  
sin estorbarse. 80

en este abismo ya

[No porque jamás pueda  
tiniebla

Porque puso

ser que su esencia pierda la criatura,  
ser y esencia

en su divina luz su

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sino que como exceda  
niebla,

para que visto en

tanto en dios su hechura,  
asistencia,

con secreta

toda en él se convierte y transfigura.] 85  
su presencia. 85

acá pueda gozarse

Ms. 3766

Ms. K-10

81-85 Añadidos al margen

Esta estrofa es una reelaboración de una estrofa adicional que le escribió el hermano de la poeta, P. Antonio Sobrino, en una carta que dice: «En cuanto aquel punto de la transformación del ser de la criatura en el divino, yendo con Santo Tomás que tiene en la materia de gracia: que la gracia se recibe no en la voluntad inmediatamente sino en la esencia del alma, se puede muy bien decir que se convierte el ser de la criatura en el del Criador, entendiendo siempre esta conversión y mudanza, como V. R.<sup>a</sup> la entiende, ser hecha por gracia y participación. Y si me da licencia pondréle aquí lo que añadí al cabo de aquella su divina lira sobre el último verso della que dice: “Pierde su ser y en él es convertida.” Puse: “No porque jamás pueda / ser que su esencia pierda la criatura, / sino que como exceda / tanto en Dios su hechura, / toda en él se convierte y transfigura.” Adiós hermana, se acabó el papel» (Díaz Cerón 519-20). La reelaboración de estos versos en los mss., junto con el traslado de la lira nueve («Y cuando de continuo»), nos permite fijar una secuencia de los mss. El primero, Ms. 3766, que es una copia, tiene al final una lira adicional escrita al margen, sin que esta estrofa se comente en el *Tratado*, es decir, el comentario sobre el poema que sigue al texto poético. Nótese, además, que son estos versos los que se ponen al margen. En este ms. la lira nueve permanece en su lugar. El segundo, del Ms. K-23, que parece ser autógrafo, traslada la lira nueve a la trece; la estrofa adicional también está indicada al margen, ahora con unos leves cambios, como se indican en las variantes. Importa destacar que el último verso de la estrofa que le escribió su hermano se mantiene: «toda en él se convierte y transfigura». El poema del Ms. K-27, que también parece ser autógrafo, y como se ha reproducido, traslada—como el ms. anterior—la lira nueve a la trece. La lira adicional ahora se encuentra integrada al poema, para formar un poema de diecisiete liras, pero la poeta vuelve a retocarla,

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cambiando en el último verso «se convierte»  
a «se transforma.»

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## **Gender, Religion, and the State: Masculinity and Feminism in Spain Today**

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In 2004, a woman was murdered every five days by her domestic partner in Spain. To put this in perspective, we can look to California, which has 7 million fewer people than Spain and yet sees a woman murdered every three days by her partner. This translates into an intimate partner femicide rate that is twice that of Spain's.<sup>1</sup> The only acceptable rate is zero, of course, and the differential between the two situations is telling, as Spain has taken extraordinary measures to combat the problem. In December 2004, the Zapatero government passed the Ley Orgánica de Medidas de Protección Integral contra la Violencia de Género, which encompasses legal reform as well as housing and job assistance, a ban on sexist advertising, and an embrace of feminist language to describe gendered violence.<sup>2</sup>

The legislation was conceptualized and successfully passed thanks to a campaign that aimed to raise awareness of violence as a scourge for which the entire society should be held responsible. Feminist activists, philosophers, non-profits such as Amnesty International worked for years to convince politicians and the public to support the legislation. For its part, the PSOE (Spain's socialist party) issued its first draft of the law in 2001 and only succeeded in its implementation in 2004.<sup>3</sup> Non-politicians' involvement in the process involved educating legislators about the social, economic, and cultural causes of the problem. Similarly, activists and academics helped raise consciousness about the need to use the term "gendered violence" rather than "domestic violence."<sup>4</sup> Through this dialogue, the law came to articulate progressive ideas about the violence against women, as the law announces: "La violencia de género no es un problema que afecte al ámbito privado. Al contrario, se manifiesta como el símbolo más brutal de la desigualdad existente en nuestra sociedad" (I.1). This powerful language suggests that

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politicians indeed learned to conceptualize violence against women as an act motivated by gender disparities present in the broader culture, not as a domestic or private issue whose resolution should remain within family parameters.

The passage of this law speaks to the growing awareness in Europe and elsewhere that a progressive society must protect the rights of everyone. In terms of a feminist trajectory, as Victoria Camps and others would have it, the twenty-first century does indeed seem to promise to be “el siglo de las mujeres.”<sup>5</sup> As Mary Nash eloquently summarizes this imperative:

En el siglo XXI el reconocimiento del pluralismo de las culturas y de la diversidad de género tiene que devenir compatible con el compromiso con la igualdad y la implementación efectiva de los derechos de las mujeres concebidos desde la categoría de derechos humanos. (302)

At first glance, it seems that all are united on women’s right to non-violence as a basic human right. Almost everyone (from male cab drivers and clerks to professionals of both sexes) acknowledges the scourge of violence and applauds the legislation. Media and other public discussions of the matter generally focus on the need for women’s rights to be more fully respected by men. These discussions clearly are necessary, as gendered violence is the primary cause of death and disability for women ages 16-44 in Spain according to a recent report.<sup>6</sup> In this sense, the support for the law can be understood as a triumph of feminist theory and research—which has succeeded in linking cultural attitudes with violence against women—and, subsequently, as a success story about how activists made gender a rallying point for progressive politics.<sup>7</sup>

I would like to interrogate the boundaries of this progressive platform by probing the underlying reasons for the seemingly universal acceptance of the anti-violence law. Such an



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interrogation is only possible if we appropriately contextualize the legislation within the gender, racial, and religious politics of Spain in the twenty-first century. In the discussion that follows, connections between Spanish masculinity and the state serve as a touch point for an examination of the support for recent gender-based legislation. This line of questioning is validated by the language of the gendered violence law itself, as the document and its prior drafts mention a long trajectory of advocacy for women's rights that begins with political reform of the late 1970s, the 1993 United Nations declaration on the elimination of gendered violence, Peking 1995, and various European Union initiatives, including the declaration of 1999 as the Year against Gendered Violence (1/2004, II.2). By situating the law within a long history of attempting to eradicate violence against women in contemporary global political discussions, in other words, legislators implicitly raise the question of why 2004 became the year for such sweeping change.

In terms of feminist history, the recapitulation of that struggle begins with the first wave of feminism in the 1970s and, in the Spanish context, with the transition to democracy that later led to unprecedented democratic reforms. Yet the invocation of that history serves to highlight the failure of the Spanish state to take seriously the international calls for significant reform related to violence against women. In a sense, the language of the law draws attention to the failures of the state to protect women and, as such, begs the question of why Spanish legislators and the public gave their unfettered support to the progressive legislation in 2004. In addition to building on a decades-long push for reform, the law also draws on feminist theorists' concern with the social contract as sexual contract. The law, and its numerous counterparts to be discussed momentarily, attempts to dismantle the sexualized social contract by which women "son incorporadas a la sociedad civil no como individuos libres e iguales, sino como mujeres" (Puleo 141).<sup>8</sup> The consequences of the patriarchal social contract have been in plain evidence in

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contemporary Spanish culture and law, primarily due to the long duration of Franco's oppressive regime.

The question of why the anti-violence legislation, with its roots in this anti-sexual contract impulse, gathered such wide support becomes even more pressing when we consider that, until very recently, Spain had resisted identity politics on a broad scale. In particular, post-Franco Spain eschewed manifestations of identity politics except that of regionalist nationalisms. Returning to the stage after eight rather bleak years under Aznar and the Partido Popular (1996-2004), the socialists have initiated significantly innovative legislation that has affected everyone in the country. The degree to which the PSOE has been bolstered by the European Union and a strong economy cannot be overstated. Nonetheless, the gay marriage, anti-smoking, and gendered violence laws have helped Spain position itself, to the surprise of many commentators, as a progressive state even in comparison to its European neighbors.

In addition to the sweeping gendered violence law, Spain became the third European state to legalize gay marriage when the new law took effect on 1 October 2004.<sup>9</sup> Furthermore, 2005 saw a significant reform of divorce laws (15/2005, 8 July 2005). In addition to easing separation requirements and allowing one partner to file for divorce, the law also included a clause that gained international press attention for its new definition of partnership:

Los cónyuges están obligados a vivir juntos, guardarse fidelidad y socorrerse mutuamente. Deberán, además, compartir las responsabilidades domésticas y el cuidado y atención de ascendientes y descendientes y otras personas dependientes de su cargo.  
(Artículo 68)<sup>10</sup>

The British newspaper *The Guardian* responded to the law, for example, by mocking Spanish men for having to “learn to change nappies and don washing-up gloves” (Trimlett, “Blow to

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Machismo”). Pace such mocking responses, the reform clearly loosened divorce law in favor of women.

In combination with the gendered violence law, the two revisions of the marriage contract speak to a significant reconceptualization of masculinity at the state level. Both laws seek to insert women’s rights into the legal and political system in a way that previous legislation had simply failed to do. In this sense, the laws intend to overcome what María Bustelo Ruesta has described as the lack of coherence and structure related to the numerous gender equality plans implemented since 1978. In an extensive evaluation of these plans, Bustelo Ruesta concludes, “(N)inguna de las experiencias de evaluación de ha planteado como una evaluación más global de la política de igualdad, sino como una evaluación concreta de un determinado plano” (121).

The violence, divorce, and marriage equality laws of the past two years make headway towards redressing such significant oversights as those noted by Bustelo Ruesta. Rather than simply introducing a new plan for gender equality, the government has introduced legislation aimed at redefining marriage and interpersonal relationships. This new tactic has shifted the debate to state-sponsored discussions of masculinity, education, and social structures. On the whole, the new legislation shifts the discussion away from women and their individual behavior or merits and focuses attention on structural problems that continue to perpetuate women’s secondary status.

At the center of this reform movement is a new conceptualization of Spanish masculinity. Zapatero has pushed for a secularization of the state, and much of his social platform rests on masculinity-related legislation. Specifically, the past three years have seen substantial reform that has aimed to redefine masculinity to include, at its core, gender equality, respect for women and same-sex partners, anti-violence ideology, and responsibility for children and other

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dependents. These are issues that feminists have supported for decades. Now, with reform institutionalized at the state level, feminists examining the Spanish situation face an uncomfortable juxtaposition of nation(alism) and feminism. It is perhaps a unique position for feminists: we are so used to masculinist politics that it seems almost ungrateful to question the underpinnings of what Zapatero proposes as an emerging feminist state. Indeed, it is important to acknowledge his progressive model as one that others could follow. Indeed, as Nash, among others, has highlighted that change has been and will be possible only with the collaboration of a government that views women as fully participatory citizens (297-302).

The extent to which the language of the new socialist state has hinged on masculinity needs to be probed as a way of understanding the new participatory platform in which men increasingly are held accountable for women's secondary status. Whereas Zapatero defines himself as a secularist, I would argue that support for the Socialist reforms has been so positive because theirs is a specifically western, Judeo-Christian, interpretation of masculinity that is seen by many non-political Spaniards as a mechanism that has the perhaps unintended effect of closing the fences around the autochthonous population by institutionalizing new, progressive definitions of masculinity, femininity, and sexual and gender codes.

Negative responses to the gay marriage law speak in part to this underlying motivation. *The Economist* reported in April 2005 that conservative judges and mayors were resisting the marriage law, including the mayor of Valladolid, who remarked: "I intend not to exercise this authority [to marry gay couples] and not to delegate it to other municipal officials' [...] His counterpart in the town of Ávila has praised him for his 'manly stance'" (*Economist* 28 April 2005).<sup>11</sup> If José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero continues to have his way, reactionary posturing such as this will be considered the opposite of "manly" in the new Spain. Indeed, Zapatero deserves

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much of the credit for the revolutionary legislation related to gender and sexual equality. As Vice President María Teresa Fernández de la Vega put it in a recent interview with the *Washington Post*, “We have a prime minister who not only says he's a feminist—he acts like a feminist. ... In two and one-half years, we have done more than has ever been done in such a short time in Spain.”<sup>12</sup>

Fernández de la Vega did not invent this language herself. Indeed, Zapatero announced himself on the international scene as a pro-equality, pro-women Prime Minister when he gave his first speech to the United Nations in September, 2004. Among the goals stated in this international debut, Zapatero mentioned eradicating violence against women and discrimination based on sexual orientation.<sup>13</sup> This is a bold platform, and one that defines itself very explicitly as feminist. Yet the Socialist government has failed in one arena that often is separated from the feminist initiatives: immigration. Indeed, immigration figures as the single most important cultural change that has been left out of the consideration of the support for the charismatic Prime Minister's initiatives. Some might think it paradoxical that an environment propitious for liberal gender and sexual politics has arisen at the same time that African and Latin American immigration has brought a groundswell of anti-immigrant, anti-Muslim, and often racist rhetoric to the fore. Spain is Europe's first receptor of immigrants: last year alone it received 650,000 immigrants; as the second most popular immigration destination, Italy received only 50% of that number. Sixty percent of Spaniards polled in October, 2006, blame the Socialist government for an immigration situation they perceive as out of control.<sup>14</sup> At the October 2006 G6 meeting (involving France, Germany, Italy, Poland, Spain and the United Kingdom), immigration control ranked among the top three policy issues alongside terrorism and organized crime (Spongenberg, “EU Six Agree”).

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The dissatisfaction with the PSOE's handling of immigration is particularly visible with regard to African immigration, which receives dramatic press coverage that includes an endless barrage of images of dehydrated refugees arriving in droves to the Canary Islands, for example. As *The Economist* has put it, "Those turning up so telegenically in the Canary Islands are, at 21,000 over a year, just a detail. Most step off flights from Latin American countries and walk straight into jobs on building sites or as household helpers" (12 October 2006). The anti-African, anti-Islamic sentiment has been well-documented by others and often appears in the news as mosque-burning or other local, violent expressions of xenophobia.<sup>15</sup>

Notably, for the purposes of the current analysis, the widespread calls for more immigration controls contrast sharply with the strong support for the Gendered Violence Law. Whereas conservatives and moderates decry the government's handling of immigration, they nonetheless have been relatively supportive—or at least less vocally negative—of the various laws aimed at chipping away at the machista model of masculinity. For increasing numbers of women in Spain, the two issues overlap intimately: by December, 2005, some 46.6% of immigrants to Spain were women (Vallelano, "Un programa"). Female immigration has resulted in more children, as evidenced by low fertility rates (approximately 1.35 children in 2006) that have held steady in spite of Spanish women having few children.<sup>16</sup> Sexual slavery, in the form of forced prostitution for example, has come to the fore in recent years as well.<sup>17</sup> Similarly, the connection between immigration and violence against women has been made apparent by Amnesty International's 2005 report calling for more protections for undocumented immigrant women vis-à-vis intimate violence.<sup>18</sup>

Birth rates, prostitution, and immigrants' participation in the emerging underground economy are only a few of the issues that clearly link immigration to women's rights. As such,

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the issues connect the anti-immigrant sentiments with the new laws focused on gender equality. This connection is perhaps best understood as part of a larger conversation about the future of the country—and, indeed, the future of Europe. The lightning speed with which Zapatero's PSOE has been able to push through legislation related to gender and sexuality suggests that progressive politics increasingly finds support across a broad spectrum due precisely to many people's impression that basic "Spanish" values need to be bolstered as a way to clearly demarcate national identity before such an identity is "lost" to the melting pot.

Supporting evidence for such an interpretation can be found in the recent elections in Cataluña, during which José Montilla, candidate for the Catalan Socialist Party (Partit dels Socialistes), reacted to a proposal by Artur Mas and the CIU (Ciutadans-Partit de la Ciutadania) to require identity cards for all immigrants. As reported in *El País*, the socialist party wanted to avoid the impression that they were the party of "papeles para todos," so Montilla put "el debate migratorio encima de la mesa para pedir formalmente a los inmigrantes que respeten los 'valores básicos' de esta sociedad: la laicidad y la igualdad de las mujeres."<sup>19</sup> The CIU, which prevailed in the elections, supports a harder line against immigration; one that appeals to autochthonous values, but also, in Mas's words, to "la idiosincrasia de Cataluña por parte de los nuevos inmigrantes [...] que se integren en una comunidad como lo hicieron los 'llegados' desde el resto de España en la década de los sesenta."<sup>20</sup>

Nearly every corner of Spain has been radically altered by the influx of immigration in the last ten years. Predictably, the cultural anxiety about immigration ranges from the reactionary to the practical. As Mas's reference to the Andalusian migrants to Cataluña in the 1960s suggests, questions of assimilation and acculturation are on the table. All such questions lead back to cultural identity, and African immigration supposes a triple threat of religious, ethnic,

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and racial difference perceived by many as threatening that identity. So even as the PSOE institutionalizes sexual and gender equality, they may well be garnering support from the anti-immigrant camp more than might be comfortable for an emerging feminist state. The laws on gendered violence, gay marriage, and divorce reform reflect positively on that new state. Yet in the end, the very success of the platform to reconceptualize Spanish masculinity reflects the progressive impulse to modernize the state as well as the impulse to tighten the borders by radically redefining Spanish masculinity as a model to hold up to immigrants, regardless of their religious or cultural backgrounds. Whether such binding of gender codes to state policy and national identity will have any effect remains to be seen. As one 37-year-old factory owner put it in the *Washington Post*, “Just because Zapatero says by law men have to do dishes, men are not going to do dishes [...] That's ridiculous. It's totally absurd” (Moore A01).

For now, as Spanish men “learn to change nappies” and men and women become acculturated to the idea that gendered violence is a social (not personal) problem, feminists can continue to work for change while also continuing to question the whether the push for a new Spanish masculinity subtly is shoring up support for anti-immigration and anti-multicultural legislation in the future.<sup>21</sup> Feminism and the state make strange bedfellows in the new Spain of José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero. Yet while the signposts indicate progressives should proceed with caution, they also should continue to take advantage of the unprecedented climate that has allowed Spain to make leaps and bounds as a liberal—if not quite feminist—nation.

## Note



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# Feministas Unidas Panels at the MLA 2007, Chicago

## **Feminist Trajectories: desde las monjas to the New Left**

*Program arranged by Feministas Unidas. Presiding: Carmen de Urioste, ASU*  
[carmen.urioste@asu.edu](mailto:carmen.urioste@asu.edu)

Silvia Bermúdez, University of California-Santa Barbara. "We Are Not There Yet: Feminism/Post Feminism in Contemporary Galicia."

Íñigo Sánchez-Llama, Purdue University. "Galleguismo, género sexual y modernidad en la España finisecular: análisis de la polémica entre Emilia Pardo Bazán (1851-1921) y Manuel Murguía (1833-1923)."

Debra Ochoa, Trinity University. "Martín Gaité's *Visión en Nueva York*: Critique of the Postmodern."

María Elena Soliño, The University of Houston. "Moving Behind the Lens: Half a Century of Women Filmmakers in Spain."

## **Feminists aren't funny? Humor as a Pedagogical Tool**

*Program arranged by Feministas Unidas. Presiding: Candyce Leonard, WFU*  
[leonaca@wfu.edu](mailto:leonaca@wfu.edu)

María Elsy Cardona, Saint Louis University. "Autocrítica y autovalidación en las tiras cómicas de Maitena."

Sara E. Cooper, California State Univ, Chico. "Something to Laugh About: Issues of Gender and Sexuality in 1959-1960 Cuban Comics."

Lisa Amor Petrov, Muskingum College. "La risa feminista: Mexican Directors Teach Subversion."

Jennifer A. Zachman, Saint Mary's College. "Feminism on Stage and Beyond: The *Maria Guerreras* of Madrid."

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# Reviews/Reseñas

***Latin American Postmodernisms: Women Writers and Experimentalism.* Cynthia Margarita Tompkins. Gainesville, FL: UP of Florida, 2006. 226 pp.**

Tracing the understudied but decidedly significant feminist contribution to postmodern poetics in Spanish America, *Latin American Postmodernisms: Women Writers and Experimentalism* offers a uniquely gendered examination of transgressive literary fiction. Cynthia Tompkins' comprehensive criticism of contemporary female authors whose subversive works form a 'community of dissensus' addresses both their social engagement and their literary experimentation. Unveiling a counter hegemonic canon and formally dedicated to the *desaparecidos*, this critical text, in keeping with the fictional works analyzed, itself participates in an ethics of dissensus.

*Latin American Postmodernisms* opens with a brief reflection on women's literature in Latin America and a more detailed discussion of the specific authors under study. The first chapter then offers a theoretical overview that contextualizes Latin American postmodernism within the broader field of contemporary literary history. As with the individual textual analyses that follow, the introductory chapter delineates a tradition of literary experimentalism, linking postmodernism directly with modernism, la nueva narrativa, the Boom, the neobaroque and magical realism as well as surrealism and the Dada movement. Tompkins maintains that Latin American postmodern expression remains distinct in its need for social vindications and its quest for national identity.

The author succinctly articulates the primary objectives of her project when she states that "*Latin American Postmodernisms: Women Writers and Experimentalism* sheds light on a largely ignored contemporary tradition of female experimentalism as it maps out a hybrid, feminist, utopic, *engagé* postmodernism, which calls into question current dominant ideologies" (8). To this end, Tompkins analyzes the oeuvre of nine prominent female authors—namely Julieta Campos, Alicia Steimberg, Luisa Valenzuela, Albucía Angel, Brianda Domecq, Ana Teresa Torres, Alicia Borinsky, Diamela Eltit and Carmen Boullosa. The in-depth survey of experimental contestorial writing from across the continent results not from arbitrary choice as the author humbly suggests (2), but rather is the product of a well-conceived selection of texts that feature postmodern stylistic traits even as they denounce social injustices.

Each chapter opens with a short biography of the author followed by close readings that focus on the range of experimental narrative devices employed in their transgressive fictions. Tompkins shows that in subverting the conventions of realism, these hermetic novels share the salient features of aporia and indeterminacy, eschewing mimetic representation and often rejecting the notion of a unified subject. Common rhetorical devices include *mise en abyme*, intertextuality, linguistic play, typographical experimentation and self-reflexive narrative strategies. Tompkins further stresses the committed nature of Latin American women's postmodern literary production; in assessing the authors' sociopolitical critiques she notes a predilection for the historical novel (and by extension, historiographic metafiction) as well as a refusal to offer salvational metanarratives.

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*Latin American Postmodernisms: Women Writers and Experimentalism* offers a concise introduction for the initiate to postmodern fiction in Spanish America. At the same time, the insistent focus on ethically grounded postmodern literary works offers a fresh insight into contemporary literature for novice and expert alike. Tompkin's gendered approach, which makes visible previously overlooked interconnections between major women writers of the continent, makes this text especially valuable for students and scholars of feminist writing.

Janis Breckenridge  
Hiram College

**Sonia Montecino Aguirre, Bruna Truffa, Bernardita Llanos Mardone. *Territorio Doméstico/Cuaderno de Economía Doméstica I*. Santiago: Ediciones B, 2005.**

By Elizabeth Horan

At the core of this singular, utterly original hardcover artist's book are richly colored reproductions of images painted in oil on canvas, ceramic, and in mixed media boxes or collages. The images are the work of a talented visual artist, Bruna Truffa, who engages a thorough yet playful and incisive critique of the interrelations of domesticity and femininity, a topic of continuing interest even or especially among post-feminists and social scientists as well as humanists and artists. Her work ranges from doll-houses to calendars and the reworkings of multiple, previously familiar cultural icons, from the Virgin Mary to the friends of SpongeBob SquarePants and "Hello Kitty!" There is a narrative thread in the motif of pilgrimage through a territory that resembles Central and Northern Chile. These motifs are further unpacked in an extraordinary novella, by noted cultural anthropologist Sonia Montecino, which is related to the "Pilgrimage" calendar that appears at various points in the text.

Taken as a whole, *Territorio Doméstico* resembles a beautifully-made jewelry box. The rough-hewn, modest externals give way to multiple internal layers, with the various sections revealing intricately patterned workmanship. In the prose and in the visuals, diamond-like images shine out from wholly unexpected settings, a literature of the fantastic taken that locates the supernatural wholly within artistic transformations of the mundane. The text's cover art, from the "Pilgrimage" series, gives some suggestion of what's found within: an oil painting of a woman dressed as an ordinary housewife, on the cover of a composition notebook, wearing plain, unassuming clothes, including a spotless apron that is, as Bernardita Llanos points out, the only sign of her office. A halo crowns the protagonist's head while an enormous wind-up key protrudes from her back, a "key" to her existence in the modern world. Her semi-shadowed face, in profile, bears a mildly surprised expression. Her body, bent at almost a right angle, almost gives her away: she is stoic in prayer or perhaps in collapse from near exhaustion. Feministas, take note. Two appreciative, provocative essays on Truffa's work open the text. Sonia Montecino writes persuasively of how the artist's multiple representations of the domestic testify to the exhaustion or detention of the desire or impulse to nomadism. As Montecino indicates, when the house becomes a center, a place of belonging, this can offer up an alternative to the defacto masculine space of the city, and contest previous, limiting associations of the domestic with futility. As Montecino points out, Truffa's work

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effectively re-invents the house or home in contemporary terms, taking what has long been central aspect of the Chilean cultural imaginary, from the Mapuche “ruka” to the proliferating houses of Neruda and Donoso’s obsession, too, with domestic space. A perceptive and accessible essay by Bernardita Llanos further relates Truffa’s work to contemporary theorists of space and to current debates about modernization, Latin America and globalization. Deftly drawing on the theories of Giorgio Agamben, Llanos alludes to longstanding traditions of marginality in Chile, suggesting this country’s leading role in the refusal – evident not just in Truffa but in various contemporary artists and poets – to divide elite from popular practices. Such concerns are central to new conceptions of the Latin American city, as Llanos rightly points out. Particularly incisive are Llanos’ observations about the relation between fetichism, capitalism and the repudiation of passive consumerism.

The two essays and the sixty-five brilliantly-colored plates of Truffa’s fascinating work have a tremendous range of implication. Many are comic refigurations of seemingly familiar icons, from children’s toys – a stuffed rabbit bearing the Playboy brand, a ChéGuevara teddy bear – to ex-votos and an intricately embroidered garden full of flowers. The religious and botanical items reflect this volume’s deep commitment to continual, active reinterpretation of these longstanding folk traditions, traditionally women’s arts in Chile.

Apart from the wealth of arresting, comic, profound visual images in the text, perhaps the most seductive feature is the novella “*Cuaderno de Economía Doméstica I*” that appears the flip side of the text. The *Cuaderno* is a variety of crónica, the account book and diary of one “Bruma Montes...huerfana de una huerfana.” This still-life and self-portrait reveals an anonymous, newly married, miserable housewife residing in the periphery of an unnamed city. Her husband often leaves her alone, between his downtown job and his masonic gatherings. It isn’t that he doesn’t love her. Rather, his world is elsewhere. But as she observes, he confides his secrets to her, but not vice-versa. Only in the seemingly mundane details of the “notebook” does the heroism of the humble “Bruma” emerge, as she struggles to reconcile herself to her utter solitude by immersing herself in routines of cleaning, cooking, and keeping (above all) meticulous accounts of her spending on domestic matters. Miraculous intervention appears in the form of visits from a helpful female friend, gradually revealed as a manifestation of the Virgin, whose counsels begin in kitchen recipes, then move into suggestions for questions that “Bruma” might ask of the local priest, whose theological views are thunderingly patriarchal, and whose appetite for women’s artwork is substantial. Set in the form of a diary over the course of a month, the cycle’s conclusion is a remarkable reworking of popular mythology.

In all, this splendid volume, which showcases an extremely productive writer-artist collaboration, shows that Truffa, Montecino, and Llanos are indeed wonderfully well-matched. The wealth of intimate, intricate visual images would immediately engage audiences ranging from beginning language students up to and including advanced courses in art, politics, the city and literature, women’s studies. Had I the means, I would digitize the whole and use these to discuss representations of domesticity in classes involving any and all of the above. The novella by Montecino is a brilliant addition to contemporary urban crónicas. This book should spark vivid commentary and discussion in the classroom and other presentations combining visual and verbal modes.

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# Publications/Publicaciones

***Negras in Brazil: Re-Envisioning Black Women, Citizenship, and the Politics of Identity.*** Kia Lilly Caldwell  
Rutgers University Press, 2007  
\$68 hardcover, \$24.95 paperback

For most of the twentieth century, Brazil was widely regarded as a “racial democracy”—a country untainted by the scourge of racism and prejudice. In recent decades, however, this image has been severely critiqued, with a growing number of studies highlighting persistent and deep-seated patterns of racial discrimination and inequality. In *Negras in Brazil*, Kia Lilly Caldwell examines the life experiences of Afro-Brazilian women whose stories have until now been largely untold. This path breaking study analyzes the links between race and gender and broader processes of social, economic, and political exclusion. Drawing on ethnographic research with social movement organizations and thirty-five life history interviews, Caldwell explores the everyday struggles Afro-Brazilian women face in the efforts to achieve equal rights and full citizenship. She also shows how the black women’s movement, which has emerged in recent decades, has sought to challenge racial and gender discrimination in Brazil. While proposing a broader view of citizenship that includes domains such as popular culture and the body, *Negras in Brazil* highlights the continuing relevance of identity politics for members of racially marginalized communities. Providing new insights into black women’s social activism and a gendered perspective on Brazilian racial dynamics, this book will be of interest to students and scholars of Latin American studies, African diaspora studies, women’s studies, cultural anthropology, and politics.

***Gender, Sexuality, and Power in Latin America Since Independence.*** Ed. William E. French and Katherine Elaine Bless  
Rowman and Littlefield, 2007.  
309 pages  
\$75 hardcover, \$29.95 paperback.

This innovative volume of original primary research integrates gender and sexuality into the main currents of historical interpretation concerning Latin America. It argues that writings on gender and sexuality are central to the understanding of cultural, economic, and other phenomena in the region. Topics include dueling and the unwritten rules of public life in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century Uruguay.

***Cultural Erotics in Cuban America.*** Ricardo L. Ortiz  
University of Minnesota Press, 2007  
337 pages  
\$72 hardcover, \$24

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Miami is widely considered the center of Cuban-American culture. However vital to the diasporic communities' identity, Miami is not the only—or necessarily the most profound—site of cultural production. Looking beyond South Florida, Ricardo L. Ortiz addresses the question of Cuban-American diaspora and cultural identity by exploring the histories and self-sustaining practices of smaller communities in such U.S. cities as Los Angeles, Chicago, and New York. Ortiz argues for the authentically diasporic quality of postrevolutionary, off-island Cuban experience. Highlighting various forms of cultural expression, *Cultural Erotics in Cuban America* traces underrepresented communities' responses to the threat of cultural disappearance in an overwhelming and hegemonic U.S. culture. Ortiz shows how the work of Cuban-American writers and artists challenges the heteronormativity of both home and host culture. Focusing on artists who have had an ambivalent, indirect, or nonexistent connection to Miami, he presents close readings of such novelists as Reinaldo Arenas, Roberto G. Fernández, Achy Obejas, and Cristina García, the playwright Eduardo Machado, the poet Rafael Campo, and musical performers Albita Rodríguez and Celia Cruz.

Ortiz charts the legacies of sexism and homophobia in patriarchal Cuban culture, as well as their influence on Cuban-revolutionary and Cuban-exile ideologies. Moving beyond the outdated cultural terms of the Cold War, he looks forward to envision queer futures for Cuban-American culture free from the ties to restrictive—indeed, oppressive—constructions of nation, place, language, and desire.

***Women and the Medieval Epic: Gender, Genre, and the Limits of Epic Masculinity.***

Ed. Sara S. Poor and Jana K. Schulman

Palgrave Macmillan, 2006

299 pages

\$74.95

This collection of essays explores the place, function, and meaning of women as characters, authors, constructs, and cultural symbols in a variety of epics from the Middle Ages, including those of Persia, Spain, France, England, Germany, and Scandinavia. Medieval epics are traditionally believed to narrate the deeds of men at war. This volume draws our attention not only to the key roles women often play in these narratives, but also to the large implications they might have for the history of gender. Rather than invite simple cross-cultural generalizations about epic women, however, this book bears witness to the complex gender configurations molded by the rich epic literature of the medieval period.

- Resources from the Women's Studies Librarian at the University of Wisconsin System:

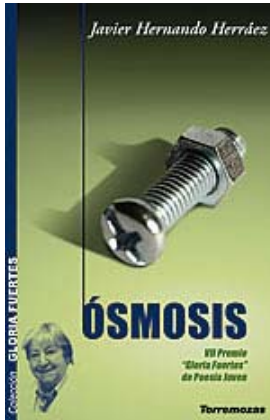
Weibard, Phyllis Holman, Ed. *Feminist Collections: A Quarterly of Women's Studies Resources*. 28.1 (2006).

---*Feminist Periodicals: A Current Listing of Contents*. 25.4, 26.1 (2006).



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## Algunas novedades de la Editorial Torremonzas en Madrid



Herráez, Javier Hernando. *Ósmosis*. Madrid: Editorial Torremonzas, 2007.

Ha obtenido el VII Premio "Gloria Fuertes" de Poesía Joven.

Lucas, Cecilia Quílez. *Un mal ácido*. Madrid: Editorial Torremonzas, 2007.

Nace en Algeciras (Cádiz) en 1965 y vive en Madrid desde que tenía cinco años. Ha participado en programas de radio y colabora habitualmente en revistas y periódicos especializados. Dentro de sus actividades literarias ha sido ponente en diversas jornadas y encuentros poéticos. Tiene publicado un libro de poemas "La posada del dragón" (Madrid, 2002).



Pont, Carmen Ana . *Vital*. Madrid: Editorial Torremonzas, 2007.

Nació en Bayamón, Puerto Rico en 1959. Es doctora en Literatura Francesa por la Universidad de Wisconsin, Madison (E.E.U.U.) y doctora en Estudios Hispánicos y Latinoamericanos por la Universidad de París III, Sorbonne Nouvelle. Ha sido profesora de francés y de español en los Estados Unidos. Actualmente reside en Bélgica y es investigadora en el Groupe Recherche Interdisciplinaire sur les Antilles Hispaniques et l'Amérique Latine (GRIHAL) de la Universidad de Cergy-Pontoise, Francia. Ha publicado la monografía *Yeux ouverts, yeux fermés: la poétique du rêve dans l'œuvre de Marguerite Yourcenar* y varios artículos acerca de la obra de esta escritora francesa. Poemas suyos han sido editados en revistas y antologías de Europa, Estados Unidos y Puerto Rico.

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# News/Noticias

## ▪ De Anita Vélez Mitchell

20 de febrero, 2005. La actriz, escritora y directora puertorriqueña recibió una proclama de honor de la Ciudad de Nueva York por sus contribuciones artísticas a la ciudad.

Anita también nos envía noticias del fallecimiento de Otilio Díaz, fundador de la Casa de la Herencia Cultural Puertorriqueña en el Bronx neoyorquino. Además de ser un centro cultural, La Casa también es un centro de bienvenida a los recién llegados a El Barrio. “Díaz, maestro retirado, acostumbraba decir que le daba especial satisfacción encontrarle empleo o guiar a alguna persona joven que acababa de llegar a la ciudad.” (El Diario/ La Prensa, miércoles 23 de agosto de 2006)

## ▪ Conferencias y congresos de interés

**Afro-Hispanic Literature and Culture Conference.** Quito, Ecuador. January 8-12, 2007

The theme was “New Configurations of Genders: The Political and Erotic Discourses in Hispanic and Afro-Hispanic Women Writers.” The guest speaker was Luz Argentina Chiriboga.

**LASA** (Latin American Studies Association) sponsored a series of conferences, including the following two:

**The Jewish Diaspora in Latin American and the Caribbean: A Multi-Disciplinary Conference.** Hostos Community College. April 17, 2007

This conference aims to foster conversation among speakers and participants who descend from different backgrounds and nationalities. It brought together academicians, writers, and artists who have produced or promoted bodies of knowledge pertinent to the presence of the Jewish culture in Latin America and the Caribbean. Plenary sessions, panel presentations, and round-table discussions in English and Spanish, explored history, tradition, ethnicity, and politics. Conferences and panel discussions explored the meaning of being Jewish, Latin American, and Latin American Jewish through its literature and artistic expressions. Writers, artists, and scholars from the U.S. and Latin America addressed such issues as language, exile, religion, and identity within the context of contemporary literary and artistic production. Also, U.S.-based Jewish Latin American writers, artists, and scholars from different countries took part in readings and conferences, thus underscoring the prominent role Jewish Latin Americans play in U.S. cultural life.

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**32<sup>nd</sup> Annual conference of the Caribbean Studies Association.** Salvador de Bahia, Brazil. May 28-June 1

According to conference leaders, their aim is to advance the dialogue among and between scholars and practitioners in efforts to chart a course for the practical engagement of academic researchers with the problems facing the Caribbean region. By hosting the conference in Brazil, they seek to challenge the popular understandings of the Caribbean by emphasizing the cultural, historical, and social spaces rather than the national and territorial in its conceptualization.

**MELUS** Fresno, California. March 22-25

The Society for the Study of the Multi-Ethnic Literature of the United States held its 21<sup>st</sup> annual conference in March. The theme was “Work, Migration, and Globalization: Contested Journeys in Multi-Ethnic US Literature,” and the keynote speaker was Luis Valdez.

**MLA 2007** Chicago December 27-30.

**M/MLA**

The 49<sup>th</sup> Annual Midwest Modern Language Association conference will be held November 8-11 in Cleveland, Ohio. The theme is “Revisiting Realism.” Possible topics include True Crime, Documentary Photography, Novels of Manners, Realism and Idealism, Correspondence Theories, Realism and Postmodernism, Realism and Science, and Magical Realism.

**NEMLA**

The North East regional affiliate of the MLA will hold their next convention April 10-13, 2008 in Buffalo, New York. The 2007 Convention in Baltimore featured more than 200 panels, covering all aspects of scholarship and teaching in the modern languages and literatures. Accepted panel topics will be posted in the Call for Papers in June, and chairs of these pre-approved panels should have received all abstracts for panel papers by Sept. 15. Panel chairs then submit information on panel participants to the Executive Director by Oct. 1. All panelists must be or become NEMLA members.

**RMMLA**

The 61<sup>st</sup> Annual Rocky Mountain Modern Language Association will be held in Calgary, Alberta Canada October 4-6, 2007. Guest speakers include Elizabeth George, Evelyn C. White, and Douglas Steward.

**SAMLA**

The South Atlantic Modern Language Association will hold their annual conference November 9-11, 2007 in Atlanta, Georgia. Featured speakers will be Lee Smith and Cynthia Tucker

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# Business Meeting at MLA 2006

TO: Cynthia Tompkins and the Feministas Unidas Officers  
FROM: Lisa Vollendorf  
RE: Minutes from MLA 2006 Meeting  
DATE: 3/19/07

Please find below my notes from our meeting at the MLA.

Meeting was scheduled for Cynthia Tompkins' room at the MLA Convention.

Meeting was called to order at 5:30pm on 12/28/06.

Feministas members present: Electa Arenal, Cynthia Tompkins, Candyce Leonard, Margarita Vargas, María Difrancesco, Roselyn Costantino, Magdalena Maíz-Peña, Dawn Slack and Debra Faszer-McMahon.

## **1. Discussion of MLA panels**

### *A. Panel discussion for MLA 2007*

After much discussion, during which all ideas proposed by members via email were discussed and during which we also considered other ideas from the floor, the group decided on the following two panels for 2007 in Chicago:

"Feminist Trajectories: Desde las Monjas to the New Left". Papers in English, Spanish, or Portuguese; all time periods and genres. Analyses of linguistic or visual texts, including art, cartoons, iconography, etc. Send abstracts to Carmen de Urioste ([carmen.urioste@asu.edu](mailto:carmen.urioste@asu.edu)) by March 15.

"Feminists aren't funny? Humor as a Pedagogical Tool". Papers in English, Spanish, or Portuguese; all time periods and genres. Methodological tools may include visual texts such as cartoons, video, You Tube, commercials, iconography, etc. Send abstracts to Candyce Leonard ([leonaca@wfu.edu](mailto:leonaca@wfu.edu)) by March 15.

### *B. Future Panels*

The group agreed during the discussion that panels should be open to people in different sub-fields (including different time periods) as much as possible. Ideas that the group liked for future meetings (after 2007) appear below:

- 
- Imaginarios feministas
  - Inmigrantes e inmigración: feminismos
  - Periodismo y medios de difusión: politics of representation
  - Feminisms and Fundamentalisms
  - Diálogos feministas: el feminismo en la historia hasta hoy
  - The Other F Word...Feminismos

## **2. Structure of MLA panels**

The group discussed whether we wanted to continue having one pedagogy and one theoretical panel, and there was 100% support for this continued structure of our MLA panels.

## **3. Adjournment and thanks**

The meeting adjourned at approximately 6:45pm since several attendees had sessions to attend at 7pm. Candyce Leonard was thanked by all for the generous provisions with which she provided us, as she had brought glassware, food, and drinks from her home for the event.

These minutes have not been approved.

Respectfully submitted,

Lisa Vollendorf

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# Treasurer's Report

May 2007 Treasurer's Report  
Submitted by Candyce Leonard

AN IMPORTANT NOTE: Our General Fund has grown quite healthy due to the generosity of **Illinois Wesleyan University** where our newsletter editor, **Carmela Ferradáns** teaches. IWU has paid the expenses of our newsletter for the Fall 2005, Spring 2006 and Fall 2006 semesters. We are grateful to both IWU and to Carmela for such generosity that has easily saved us well over \$2,000.

## A. GENERAL FUND

Previous Balance	\$ 8,984.00
Deposits (dues and bank interest)	<u>1,540.00</u>
Subtotal	10,524.00
DEBITS (1) Web page formatting	\$ 362.50
(2) MLA business meeting	35.00
(3) Office supplies; renewal letters	<u>69.50</u>
	\$ 467.00
<b>Current General Fund Balance</b>	<b>\$ 10,057.00</b>

## B. SCHOLARSHIP FUND

Previous Balance	\$ 2,930.00
Contributions	<u>105.00</u>
	3,035.00
<b>Current Scholarship Fund Balance</b>	<b>\$ 3,035.00</b>

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CHECK OUT OUR WEBSITE AT <http://www.asu.edu/languages/femunida/f02/index.htm>

New Member/Renewal Form for JAN-DEC 2007 \_\_\_\_\_ (year/s for which you are renewing/joining)  
JAN-DEC 2008 \_\_\_\_\_

Founded in 1979, Feministas Unidas is a Coalition of Feminist Scholars in Spanish, Spanish-American, Luso-Brazilian, Afro-Latin American, and U.S. Latina/o Studies. Our Coalition publishes a newsletter in May and December, and as an allied organization of the Modern Language Association, Feministas Unidas sponsors panels at the annual convention. As an interdisciplinary alliance, we embrace all fields of studies relating to Hispanic women.

- ☐ Professor (\$20)
- ☐ Associate Professor (\$20)
- ☐ Assistant Professor (\$15)
- ☐ Instructor (\$10)
- ☐ Graduate Student (\$10)
- ☐ Other (\$10)
- ☐ Institution (\$25)

For all International Airmail  
Postage, please add \$5

Name \_\_\_\_\_

(NEW ONLY) E-Mail (please print clearly) \_\_\_\_\_

(NEW ONLY) Preferred mailing address: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

I would like sponsor a young scholar or graduate student with membership in Feministas Unidas:

Individual that you are sponsoring \_\_\_\_\_

E-Mail name (please print clearly) \_\_\_\_\_

Preferred mailing address: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**SCHOLARSHIP FUND**—Your contribution to our Scholar Fund: \_\_\_\_\_

Send this form with a check in U.S. funds payable to **Feministas Unidas** to:

Candyce Leonard, Feministas Unidas  
Wake Forest University, PO. Box 7332  
Winston-Salem, NC 27109-7332  
(e-mail: [leonaca@wfu.edu](mailto:leonaca@wfu.edu) )

ADD OR REMOVE YOUR E-MAIL ADDRESS TO OUR LISTSERVE

- 1) send a message to [majordomo@lists.ithaca.edu](mailto:majordomo@lists.ithaca.edu).
- 2) in the body of the e-mail message, add yourself by typing "approve femuni.admin subscribe femuni  
[username@address.edu](mailto:username@address.edu)
- 3) in the body of the e-mail message, remove your name by typing "approve femuni.admin unsubscribe femuni  
[username@address.edu](mailto:username@address.edu)

# Spring 2007 Membership List

## *E-mail and Dues Expiration Date*

TO ADD OR REMOVE YOUR E-MAIL ADDRESS TO/FROM OUR LISTSERVE, FOLLOW THESE DIRECTIONS

- 1) address an e-mail message to [majordomo@lists.ithaca.edu](mailto:majordomo@lists.ithaca.edu).
- 2) in the body of the message, ADD your name by typing "approve femuni.admin subscribe femuni [username@address.edu](mailto:username@address.edu)
- 3) in the body of the e-mail message, REMOVE your name by typing "approve femuni.admin unsubscribe femuni [username@address.edu](mailto:username@address.edu)

In addition, please advise me if you find an error in your e-mail name or dues expiration date.

Thank you and best to all,  
Candyce Leonard, Treasurer and Membership Recorder

<i>Last Name</i>	<i>First Name</i>	<i>Email Name</i>	<i>Dec Expiration</i>
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Walas-Mateo	Guillermina	gwalas@mail.ewu.edu	07
Walker	Sandra	swalker@valdosta.edu	07
Wallace	Carol	wallacec@central.edu	07
Weissberger	Barbara	weiss046@umn.edu	07
Williams	Lorna V.		07
Yarmus	Marcia D.	mjcody@aol.com	07
Zeno	Ana	ajm89@cornell.edu and amzeno@caribe.net	07

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# Feministas Unidas Documents

## **FEMINISTAS UNIDAS BY-LAWS (1999)**

### **Article 1 - NAME OF ASSOCIATION**

The name of this association shall be:

FEMINISTAS UNIDAS, a Coalition of Feminist Scholars in Spanish, Spanish-American, Luso-Brazilian, Afro-Latin American, and U.S. Hispanic Studies.

### **Article 2 - OBJECTIVES**

The objectives of this coalition are: To create and sustain a national network of feminist scholars in the fields of Spanish, Spanish-American, Luso-Brazilian, Afro-Latin American, and U.S. Hispanic Studies who join to strengthen the intellectual environment in which they work by means of: exchange of ideas and information; cooperative research projects; organization of conferences; preparation and presentation of papers and panels; gathering and dissemination of bibliographical data; interchange of classroom materials and methodologies; assistance with publication; career counseling and mentoring; contacts with feminist scholars in Spain, Portugal, and Latin America; and other appropriate joint intellectual endeavors.

### **Article 3 - MEMBERSHIP AND DUES**

1) Membership. The membership of this coalition is open to all those with a professional interest in its objectives, employed or unemployed, of all academic ranks, including graduate students, creative writers, and those who are otherwise engaged in the fields related to Spanish, Spanish-American, Luso- Brazilian, Afro-Latin American, and U.S. Hispanic literatures, languages, and cultures.

2) Dues. The national annual membership fee shall be assessed according to rank and paid by calendar year January 1- December 31. Members who have not paid dues within six months of the start of the calendar year shall be put on inactive status. The monies from the collection of national dues shall be used to carry out the projects of the coalition, including the publication of a newsletter and the arrangements for the annual meetings.

### **Article 4 - STRUCTURE AND ORGANIZATION OF COALITION**

FEMINISTAS UNIDAS shall be organized on a national level by means of an Executive Committee consisting of a President, a Vice-president, a Treasurer, and a Secretary-Newsletter editor. The Executive Committee shall be responsible for initiating action to be carried out by the national membership as well as for implementing decisions taken by the national membership.

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## **Article 5 - ELECTION OF NATIONAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**

The President, Vice-president, Treasurer, and Secretary-Newsletter editor shall be elected for a two- year term by the general membership. A ballot for this purpose shall be distributed by mail, either with the Newsletter or separate from it, by April 30 in the year before term of office is to begin. If an office is unfilled at any time, elections may be held following a schedule determined by the Executive Committee.

Nominations for these offices shall be submitted in writing to the Secretary-Newsletter editor at the time of the Annual Meeting or by mail before 1 February of the year in which elections are to be held. Nominations from the floor at the Annual Meeting are accepted, as are self-nominations. A simple majority of votes shall determine the winner. In case of a tie vote, or if no one receives a simple majority, ballots shall continue to be taken until a winner emerges.

The term of office shall begin on January 1 and run through December 31. The Vice-president will automatically assume the position of President following the two-year term of office. The Secretary-Newsletter editor and Treasurer may be reelected to their offices. The out-going President may become a candidate for an office other than president immediately following her term.

## **Article 6 - DUTIES OF THE MEMBERS OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**

1) The President shall preside at the Annual Meeting and shall call meetings of the Executive Committee; shall have the authority to appoint ad hoc committees to carry out specific projects or resolve specific problems; shall delegate the work of the membership body and the Executive Committee. The President shall see that elections are called and carried out according to the provisions of these By-Laws.

2) The Vice-president shall act as president in the absence of the President; shall carry out directive tasks assigned by the President and/or Executive Committee; shall become the President in the year following the two- year term as Vice-president

3) The Secretary-Newsletter editor shall keep the minutes of the Annual Meeting of the coalition and of any Executive Committee meetings called; shall be in charge of arrangements for Annual Meeting; shall be in charge of the correspondence of the coalition and Executive Committee.

4) The Treasurer shall collect the dues, pay the bills, keep the accounts, and maintain the membership roster; shall be responsible for recruitment and publicity activities of the coalition.

## **Article 7 - DUTIES OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**

1) Carry out projects decided on by national membership.

2) Initiate action related to all activities dealing with the objectives of the coalition.

3) Recruit new members and keep the membership roster current

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- 4) Collect dues and keep the financial records of the coalition.
  - 5) Publish the Newsletter of the coalition.
  - 6) Keep the correspondence of the coalition.
  - 7) Seek out and maintain means of cooperating with other feminist organizations, including the Women's Caucus of the Modern Language Association, the Commission of the Status of Women in the Profession of MLA, etc.
  - 8) Seek out and maintain formal associated status with professional organizations such as the MLA, M/MLA, etc.
  - 9) Seek grants and other funding for the projects of the coalition.

#### **Article 8 - MEETINGS**

- 1) Annual Meeting. FEMINISTAS UNIDAS shall meet once a year at the same time and in the same place as the annual meeting of the Modern Language Association. Meetings of the Executive Committee may be called at any time.
- 2) The coalition has the right to convene a Conference separate from the Annual Meeting at Mu. but not in lieu of the Annual Meeting.

#### **Article 9 -VOTING PROCEDURES**

- 1) Voting on issues brought before the members at the Annual Meeting shall be by voice or show of hands. A simple majority is sufficient to carry.
- 2) Voting on issues brought before the Executive Committee shall be by voice or show of hands. A simple majority is sufficient to carry.
- 3) If a vote should be necessary other than at the time of the Annual Meeting. It shall be the responsibility of the Secretary-Newsletter editor to distribute and collect the ballots.

#### **Article 10 - PROCEDURES FOR AMENDING BY- LAWS**

Motions to amend the by-laws must be sent to the Executive Committee two months before the Annual Meeting. The Executive Committee shall send copies of the proposed changes to the members at least one month before the Annual Meeting.

The motions to amend the by-laws shall be discussed and voted on at the Annual Meeting and go into effect immediately upon adoption.

A majority vote shall be required to adopt the proposed amendments.

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**Article 11 - PARLIAMENTARY AUTHORITY**

When necessary to expedite the business of the meeting of FEMINISTAS UNIDAS, the President shall invoke Robert's Rules of Order as the parliamentary procedure to be followed by members.

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**Date:** March 22, 2007

**To:** The MLA Program Committee

**From:** Carmen Urioste-Azcorra, President, Feministas Unidas, Associate Professor,  
Spanish, Arizona State University

**Re:** Allied/Affiliate Organization Review by MLA Program Committee in May 2007

**Organization:** Feministas Unidas (Established 1980; allied status dates from 1986,  
last reviewed 2000)

**1) Brief history of the organization since the last review**

From the last review, Feministas Unidas has continued growing as a feminist coalition. During these years its executive committee has been as follows:

**Presidents:** Elizabeth Horan (2000-02); Beth Jörgensen (2002-04); Margarita Vargas (2004-05); and Carmen de Urioste-Azcorra (2005-07);

**Vice-presidents:** Beth Jörgensen (2000-02); Pat Greene (2002-03); Margarita Vargas (2003-04); and Carmen de Urioste-Azcorra (2004-05);

**Secretary:** Cynthia Margarita Tompkins (1996-Present);

**Treasurer:** Candyce Leonard (1999-present);

**Newsletter Editor:** Cynthia Margarita Tompkins (1996-2005); Carmela Ferradans (2005-present);

**Listserv moderators:** María Asunción Gómez (2000-06); Maria Di Francesco (2006-Present).

At the 2000, 2001, and 2002 MLAs, Feministas Unidas organized two panels, one on pedagogy—in the form of a workshop or roundtable—and the other one on research, dealing with issues of literary, critical, and cultural theory. We changed this approach during the 2003 and 2004 MLAs. During those years FU hosted a Business Meeting at the time of a regular session as a recruitment tool. Since this strategy did not appear to work, FU decided to go back to the old format and use both slots for panels at the 2005 MLA. As in the past, we arranged the business meeting in a hotel room and scheduled it right before the Presidential address. Calls for proposals, papers, and roundtable presenters related to the two Feministas Unidas MLA sessions are always issued in the Feministas Unidas listserv, the Newsletter (which appears twice a year), and the website (<http://www.asu.edu/languages/femunida/>) as well as in the Winter and Spring issues of the MLA newsletter.

In 2006 we celebrated the organization's 25th anniversary with the edition of a collection of essays of feminist readings in the five areas the organization represents: Spanish, Spanish-American, Luso-Brazilian, Afro-Latin American, and U.S. Hispanic Studies. The edition of such collection was in *Letras Femenimas* (see enclosed volume). The volume was edited by former presidents Beth Jörgensen (2002-04) and Margarita Vargas (2004-05).



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Starting with volume 26.2 (Fall 2006), the Feministas Unidas Newsletter has an ISSN for the print issue (1933-1479) as well as for the on-line issue (1933-1487). Feministas Unidas Newsletter is part of the permanent collection of the Library of the Congress.

In 2002 Feministas Unidas established the Feministas Unidas Essay Prize competition, aimed at promoting feminist scholarship on women writers by those who are entering our profession. The Feministas Unidas Essay Prize is awarded for an outstanding unpublished essay of feminist scholarship on women writers in the areas covered by our organization's mission: Spanish, Spanish-American, Luso-Brazilian, Afro-Latin American, and U.S. Hispanic Studies. Graduate students, instructors, and untenured assistant professors are eligible to submit essays. The prize is the product of collaboration between Feministas Unidas and the Asociación Internacional de Literatura Femenina Hispánica insofar as the outstanding article is published in the Winter issue of *Letras Femeninas*. The recipient received a \$200 award. The selection committee is drawn from officers and members of Feministas Unidas and the editorial board of *Letras Femeninas*. The call for submissions is distributed via the listserv and in the Newsletter (See appendix for the fliers on the Call for Submissions).

Feministas Unidas normally organizes a panel at the Twentieth-Century Literature and Culture Conference, which takes place in Louisville.

At the 2007 MLA, Feministas Unidas is going to hold a cash bar with WCML, WIG, and WIF. As Feministas Unidas' President, I hope this will be the first step for new collaborations between the associations.

## **2) Evidence of ongoing activity since the last review**

FU publishes a newsletter, which appears twice a year. Up to December 2005 the editor was Cynthia Tompkins, Arizona State University. From January 2006, the new editor is Carmela Ferradans, Illinois Wesleyan University. Also, the newsletter is published in e-form: for the Arizona issues the address is <http://www.asu.edu/languages/femunida/> and for the Illinois Wesleyan issues the address is <http://titan.iwu.edu/~hispanic/femunidas/> (under construction).

Feministas Unidas has a listserv, established in 1998. From April of 2000 to January 2006, the Feministas Unidas listserv was housed in Florida International University, where it was moderated by María Asunción Gómez. In January 2006, it moved to Ithaca College, where it is being moderated by Maria Di Francesco. (See report of the listserv moderator in appendix).

The minutes of the Business Meetings are published in the Newsletter. (See enclosed minutes for the 2000 MLA, the 2001 MLA, the 2002 MLA, the 2003 MLA, the 2004 MLA, and the 2006 MLA).

The essays awarded in the Feministas Unidas Essay Prize were:

2002: "From the Bottom of My Pain:" Living Dangerously in *El aire tan dulce* of Elvira Orphée" by Aldona Pobutsky, Wayne State University;

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2003: “Razing Their Voices: Carmen de Burgos’s Subtextual Revisions of the Works of José Zorrilla and Gustavo Adolfo Bécquer in *El veneno del arte*” by Amy Bell, Texas Wesleyan University;

2004: “Finally Free: The Female Artist and the City in Dulce María Loynaz’s *Jardín*” by Jana Francesca Gutiérrez, Auburn University;

2005: “De Rosario Castellanos al hombre ilustre, o entre dicho y hecho hay un problemático pecho” by Emily Hind, Wyoming University;

2006: “Women and the Discourse of the Underdevelopment in Rosa Chacel’s *Memorias de Leticia Valle*” by Debra A. Faszter-McMahon, University of California, Irvine.

### **3) Evidence of involvement**

Prior to each business meeting, nominations and suggestions for the following year’s MLA session topics are solicited from the membership via the organization’s listserv. Feministas Unidas panels and roundtables have always involved broad representation from the diverse constituencies embodied by the MLA. In addition to a wide array of ranks, from graduate students to full professors, the membership of Feministas Unidas is extremely diverse, including scholars from many different kinds of institutions, from small state colleges and liberal arts colleges, to private and public research universities.

The following list of members (with their academic affiliations) who have presented in Feministas Unidas programs at the MLA over the past seven years attests to the diversity and inclusiveness of our membership activities:

- 1) Elizabeth Rosa Horan, Arizona State University
- 2) Elizabeth C. Martínez, Sonoma State University, California
- 3) Rosalía Cornejo-Parriego, Penn State University, University Park
- 4) Nancy Gutierrez, Arizona State University
- 5) María Asunción Gómez Silva, Florida International University
- 6) Alicia del Campo, University of California, Irvine
- 7) Rosemary G. Feal, State University of New York, Buffalo
- 8) María Claudia André, Hope College
- 9) Patricia Greene, Michigan State University
- 10) Mary Jane Treacy, Simmons College
- 11) Ivette Romero-Cesareo, Marist College
- 12) Amy K. Kaminsky, University of Minnesota, Twin Cities
- 13) Laura J. Beard, Texas Tech University
- 14) Alexandra Alopea, Vassar College
- 15) Eva María Woods, Vassar College
- 16) Cristina Ferreira-Pinto, Austin
- 17) Debra Ann Castillo, Cornell University
- 18) Beth Jörgensen, University of Rochester
- 19) Lisa M. Vollendorf, Wayne State University

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- 20) Lourdes María Álvarez, Catholic University of America
  - 21) Alice A. Weldon, University of North Carolina, Ashville
  - 22) Gresilda Tilley-Lubbs, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University
  - 23) Elizabeth Rodríguez Kessler, California State University, Northridge
  - 24) Amanda Holmes, McGill University
  - 25) Janis Breckenridge, Hiram College
  - 26) Ángela Pérez Mejía, Brandeis University
  - 27) Patricia V. Greene, Michigan State University
  - 28) Patricia Klingenberg, Miami University
  - 29) Debra D. Andrist, University of St. Thomas
  - 30) Adriana Rosman-Askot, The College of New Jersey
  - 31) Deanna Mihaly, Emory and Henry College
  - 32) Maria Van Liew, West Chester University
  - 33) Peggy Sharpe, University of Mississippi
  - 34) Joyce Lynn Tolliver, University of Illinois, Urbana
  - 35) Patricia N. Klingenberg, Miami University, Oxford
  - 36) Anna Klobucka, University of Massachusetts, Dartmouth
  - 37) Catherine Connor (Swietlicki), University of Vermont
  - 38) Roselyn Costantino, Penn State University, Altoona
  - 39) Michelle Joffroy, Smith College
  - 40) Ann Sitting, Metropolitan Community College, Nebraska
  - 41) Dara Goldman, University of Illinois, Urbana
  - 42) Sara E. Cooper, California State University, Chico
  - 43) AnaLouise Keating, Texas Women's University
  - 44) Mikko Tuhkanen, East Carolina University
  - 45) Suzanne Bost, Southern Methodist University
  - 46) Juanita Heredia, Northern Arizona University
  - 47) Emma R. García, Colby College
  - 48) Joanna Bartow, St. Mary's College of Maryland
  - 49) María Elena Soliño, University of Houston
  - 50) Margarita Vargas, (SUNY-Buffalo)
  - 51) Joyce Baugher, Tulane University
  - 52) Meghan Gibbons, University of Maryland
  - 53) Julián Olivares, University of Houston
  - 54) Valerie Hegstrom, Brigham Young University
  - 55) Cynthia Tompkins, Arizona State University
  - 56) Magdalena Maíz Peña, Davidson College
  - 57) Dawn Slack, Kutztown University of Pennsylvania

#### **4) Organization's purpose**

Feministas Unidas is a coalition of feminist scholars in Spanish, Spanish-American, Luso-Brazilian, Afro-Latin American, Caribbean, U.S. Hispanic and Latino Studies. The coalition was formed as a result of two meetings held December 28 and 29, 1979 at the MLA Convention in

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San Francisco, growing out of the consolidation of interested members from “Women in Spanish,” the Women’s Caucus of the MLA, and the Women’s Caucus on the Modern Languages. After successfully holding meetings and panels at MLA sessions over the following seven years, Feministas Unidas became an allied organization of the MLA in 1985.

The objectives of the Feministas Unidas coalition are: To create and sustain a national network of feminist scholars in the fields of Spanish, Spanish-American, Luso-Brazilian, Afro-Latin American, and U.S. Hispanic Studies who join to strengthen the intellectual environment in which they work by means of: exchange of ideas and information; cooperative research projects; organization of conferences; preparation and presentation of papers and panels; gathering and dissemination of bibliographical data; interchange of classroom materials and methodologies; assistance with publication; career counseling and mentoring; contacts with feminist scholars in Spain, Portugal, and Latin America; and other appropriate joint intellectual endeavors.

### **5) Bylaws**

After its formation in 1979, the first official meeting of FU took place on December 28, 1980 at the MLA convention in Houston, TX, where the by-laws for the coalition were adopted. For a complete copy of the bylaws see appendix.

### **6) Membership numbers**

Our current membership is 213 members. See appendix for a current membership application.

### **7) Description of dues structures**

Due to the increase in postage and printing cost, Feministas Unidas decided to raise its membership dues (+ \$5) at the Business Meeting of December 2001. From 2002 to present Feministas Unidas dues have been as follows:

Professor and Associate professor \$20.00; Assistant professor \$15.00; Instructor, graduate student, and other \$10.00; Institution \$25.00. For international airmail postage, a supplement of \$5.00 is added.

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<sup>1</sup> California repeatedly has been said to have the highest intimate violence murder rate against women in the United States. *Murder at Home*, the 2005 Executive Report of the California Women’s Law Center notes that the average intimate murder rate of women in California is 124 per annum (Fukuroda 1).

<sup>2</sup> The law is catalogued as the Ley Orgánica 1/2004 de 18 de diciembre (*Boletín Oficial del Estado*, núm. 313 de 29 de diciembre). A brief history of advocacy for its passing, as well as full text in English and Spanish can be found online at <http://www.redfeminista.org/laley.asp>. Also see Falcón, *La violencia que no cesa*, and Bosch Fiol and Ferrer Pérez for discussions of the consciousness raising efforts of the 1980s and 1990s that led to the law.

<sup>3</sup> To put the trajectory in perspective, it pays to note that the first version of the proposed legislation was published by the PSOE on 21 December 2001, a full three years before the law

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passed. See *Boletín Oficial de las Cortes Generales, Congreso de los Diputados, VII Legislatura* (Serie B, Propositiones de Ley, 21.XII.01, núm. 183-1).

<sup>4</sup> Similar laws on the books prior to the 1/2004 law referred to domestic violence rather than gendered violence. See 1/2004, Sec. I.2, which references 11/2003, 15/2003, 27/2003, all of which refer to “violencia doméstica” in their titles.

<sup>5</sup> See Camps’ *El siglo de las mujeres*. For a more cynical take on Valcárcel and others’ hopeful feminist predictions about the century, Falcón (in *Las nuevas españolas*) decries, “Ninguno—políticos y politólogos, sociólogos, economistas, moralistas, y hasta bastantes feministas—se cansa de repetir que el siglo XXI será el de las mujeres. [...] Los datos que podemos sobre salud, educación, amor, sexualidad, empleo, paro, vivienda, calidad de vida, matrimonio, embarazos prematuros, suicidios y abusos sexuales no parecen ratificar [esta idea]” (25-26).

<sup>6</sup> Amnesty International cites the European Council’s statistics on mortality and morbidity to get derive this statistic: “De acuerdo con el Consejo de Europa, la violencia intrafamiliar es la principal causa de muerte y discapacidad de mujeres entre 16 y 44 años en la región. Provoca más muertes y daños a la salud que el cáncer o los accidentes de tráfico”

([http://www.es.amnesty.org/nomasviolencia/actua\\_esp\\_oct06.php](http://www.es.amnesty.org/nomasviolencia/actua_esp_oct06.php)).

<sup>7</sup> Part of the advocacy that made the law successful included an onslaught of publications on gendered violence, including: For more on violence against women in Spain, see Varela, *Íbamos a ser reinas*; the city of Barcelona’s publication, “Campanya contra la violència de gènere”; Falcón, *La violencia que no cesa*; and Rodríguez Ortiz, *Historia de la violación*.

<sup>8</sup> Similarly, Bosch Fiol and Ferrer Pérez call for “actuaciones a nivel social que impliquen un nuevo contrato social, con nuevas medidas legislativas, modificaciones los programas educativos, etc., para afrontar el problema y superar sus consecuencias” (18). Also see Mohanty for similar discussions of feminism in the transnational world.

<sup>9</sup> *Boletín Oficial del Estado* 21 enero de 2005, núm. 18-1 (121/000018).

<sup>10</sup> *Boletín Oficial del Estado* 9 July 2005, núm. 163. For international response ridiculing the proposed law, see Risi, “Lavar platos por ley,” and Trimlett, “Blow to Machismo.”

<sup>11</sup> Print and online edition 28 April 2005.

<sup>12</sup> Moore, A01.

<sup>13</sup> “Nuestros objetivos son la firme ratificación del Protocolo facultativo a la Convención contra la tortura, la abolición universal de la pena de muerte, la lucha contra la discriminación de la mujer y la violencia de género, el fin de la discriminación por motivos de orientación sexual, la protección de los menores y la lucha contra los abusos y explotación a los que son sometidos, y la estricta observancia de los derechos humanos en la lucha contra el terrorismo y la delincuencia” (Rodríguez Zapatero 6).

<sup>14</sup> “Huddled against the Masses,” *Economist* 12 October 2006, print and online edition.

<sup>15</sup> In 2006, for example, Easter saw numerous incidents. See Trimlett, “Burning of sanctuary stokes fears of Islamophobia in Spain.” Also see, “Islamofobia de altos vuelos” by F. J. Pérez. and Villena Rodríguez, *Demografía, mercado de trabajo y política de inmigración*.

<sup>16</sup> Statistics show increasingly percentages of children being born to foreign born parents In 1996, only 4.54% of children had one foreign parent; by 2004, that percentage had climbed to 16.16% as per the Ministerio de Trabajo, *Boletín estadístico de extranjería e inmigración* 8 (Abril 2006): 3. The fertility rate of 1.35 is taken from *The Economist* (“Huddled against the Masses”). Other rates vary slightly: between 1.2 and 1.4, depending on the region and the source of the estimate for 2006.

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<sup>17</sup> A recent study on prostitution rings by Victoria Virtudes involved 200 foreign prostitutes in Madrid, of which 40% were from sub-Saharan Africa, 40% from Eastern Europe, and 19% from Latin America (Planelles 36).

<sup>18</sup> See Amnesty International, *Inmigrantes indocumentadas*.

<sup>19</sup> “Montilla pide a los inmigrantes que respeten los valores básicos de Occidente,” *El País* (23 octubre 2006): 23.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> For example, Amnesty Internacional issued a call for shoring up the Gendered Violence Law in 2005. See *Más allá del papel*.