

escritoras de literatura infantil en relación con la promulgación de la Ley Moyano (1857). Esta ley abrió un campo de trabajo a la mujer como maestras y difusoras de opinión sobre el nuevo estado monárquico liberal. Además de la experiencia personal, en la línea de Kirsty Hooper, Rødtjer relee algunos de los géneros literarios tildados de femeninos y denostados por la crítica patriarcal, como el drama romántico o la novella historiográfica, como géneros con posibilidades contestatarias. Así lo demuestra en el capítulo tres, dedicado al estudio de la novella histórica “El encubierto” de Asensi.

El formato empleado en los capítulos sobre Asensi se reproduce en los designados a Blanca de los Ríos. En los capítulos cuarto, quinto y sexto, Rødtjer analiza la situación familiar y académica privilegiada de la autora y cómo las utilizó para proporcionar visibilidad a la mujer. Su contribución se produjo principalmente desde su trabajo como crítica literaria en la recuperación de la obra de Tirso de Molina con un enfoque de género y con sus publicaciones en volúmenes prestigiosos como la Biblioteca Mignon. Al igual que en Asensi, Rødtjer destaca el valor contestatario de su preferencia por géneros desprestigiados por la crítica, como sus novellas históricas, publicadas en la revista *El Cuento Semanal*. Es especialmente estimulante el capítulo sexto, centrado en la novella *Madrid goyesco* de Ríos, por su enfoque en personajes femeninos creadores de falsos pedigrís genealógicos concebidos como mecanismo de inclusión en la construcción imaginaria de la nación y por su lograda intertextualidad con la pintura. Este acercamiento interdisciplinar se extiende a los capítulos octavo, noveno y al epílogo, dedicados respectivamente a las obras *La que quiso ser maja*, *Los anticuarios* y *Los huesos del abuelo* de Carmen de Burgos, en los que Rødtjer estudia el papel desempeñado por los museos y las reliquias en la construcción de la nación y la contribución de la mujer a esta labor.

Para comprender la totalidad del libro debemos tener en cuenta que Rødtjer considera que el concepto de feminismo utilizado hoy en día no es aplicable a la época de la Restauración, lo cual ha determinado qué escritoras han sido recuperadas para el canon y cuáles han sido largamente ignoradas. Como explica Rødtjer en el séptimo capítulo, a diferencia de Asensi o Ríos, Carmen de Burgos ha sido objeto de múltiples estudios en los últimos años porque su postura ideológica de izquierdas y promulgadora del feminismo coincide con una visión más actual. Precisamente, las principales contribuciones del libro de Rødtje al campo consisten en repensar el concepto de feminismo desde la Restauración; en la revisión de las agendas de autoras que encajarían dentro de un concepto de feminismo mucho más amplio; y en la interpretación contestataria de los géneros literarios desprestigiados al ser clasificados como femeninos.

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Sellers-García, Sylvia. *The Woman on the Windowsill: A Tale of Mystery in Several Parts*. Yale UP, 2020, pp. 281.

In this fascinating and original book, historian Sylvia Sellers-García takes the readers through the streets, living quarters, churches and hospitals of Guatemala City in year 1800 in an investigation of a gruesome crime that shook colonial Guatemala at the dawn of the nineteenth century. When severed body parts and mutilated female bodies started to appear

in public places around Guatemala City beginning on July 1, 1800, colonial authorities employed their newly acquired zeal for policing crime to apprehend the culprit. Sellers-García follows the traces of that investigation through the archives, acquainting her readers with the complexities of archival research and delving into the realities of late eighteenth-century Guatemala as the foundations of its transformation into a modern nation-state were being laid through the reforms instituted by the Bourbon dynasty.

It is not an easy task to write a book of scholarly research that can be of interest and value to readers with no professional knowledge of the field while still holding its own as a significant scholarly contribution to the study of history. On the one hand, the author runs a risk of offering too much historical background and personalizing the account to the point where specialist readers would find the narrative of little value. On the other, if the text becomes too laden with professional jargon and assumes that the readers have too sophisticated a knowledge of the relevant time period, it will lose its capacity to appeal to a wider audience. Sellers-García masterfully overcomes these challenges, creating a narrative that can appeal to readers with different degrees of understanding of the history of colonial Central America. She does not overload the text with scholarly references, tucking the bibliographical information into endnotes that are often quite long and always very informative. The book features thirty-two illustrations that offer the readers images of archival texts, drawings, and artwork that facilitate the journey through the fascinating material discussed in *The Woman on the Windowsill*.

The crime that lies at the heart of Sellers-García's investigation is gruesome in nature but the historian discusses it with great sensitivity and tact. As she details her emotional reaction to the dismemberment of an unknown woman's body, Sellers-García offers an enlightening discussion on the differences in what was perceived as horror in late eighteenth century and what we see as horrifying today (4-6). This discussion appears early in the book and sets the tone for the entire narrative. One of the overarching themes of *The Woman on the Windowsill* is the importance of approaching history on its own terms. This is what makes the book particularly useful as an educational tool as it teaches the readers not to fall into the fallacy of judging the beliefs, behaviors and moral norms of the past from the vantage point of today.

One of the most valuable aspects of this enlightening volume is the discussion of the complexities and limitations of archival research. Sellers-García details the difficulties she ran into while conducting her investigation, yet she does that in a way that does not needlessly center her own hardships as a scholar of history who often fails to encounter the archival documents she needs. Instead, Sellers-García invites the readers to ponder how the exclusion of certain kinds of knowledge from historical records is in itself an important facet of the past and the present (151-53).

The titles of the book's introduction, eight chapters, and epilogue are modeled on what in his 1742 novel *Joseph Andrews* Henry Fielding referred to as "those little spaces between our chapters [that] might be looked upon as an inn or a resting place" where readers can stop and reflect on what they are reading. "Strangers in the Valley: In Which Don Cayetano Díaz Opens His Window," for instance, is the title of the first chapter. The habit of providing short summaries in the chapter titles that had been part of the Western literary tradition since the times of early Christian scribes was mostly abandoned in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Today's readers associate this type of chapter title with eighteenth- and nineteenth-century novels, which allows Sellers-García to set the tone for the reading of each chapter from the start. Less justified, in my view, is Sellers-García's decision to place a quote from

Arlette Farge's *The Allure of the Archives* (1981) between the title and the body of each chapter. Farge's book is undoubtedly a foundational text for today's historiography, yet the tone of Farge's writing clashes with Sellers-García's way of narrating the fascinating story she unearthed in her research.

The overabundance of quotes from Farge, however, is the only defect of an otherwise brilliantly constructed and meticulously researched volume. I would greatly recommend it to those who teach courses on colonial Guatemala as well as scholars who offer introductory-level courses in history or Hispanic civilization. *The Woman on the Windowsill* teaches that history should be approached with tact, intelligence, and respect, and there are few lessons that are more important than this one.

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