

KATHLEEN MCNERNEY

**Drago, Margarita. Sor María de Jesús Tomelín (1579-1637), concepcionista poblana: La construcción fallida de una santa. Pliegos, 2018. 298 pp.**

Even coming from a time and place in which *Vidas* of religious figures were commonplace, the nine biographies of Sor María seem excessive, until Professor Drago explains the insistence of the Mexican hierarchy on having this visionary nun canonized. All nine of the hagiographies were based on the work of two contemporaries of Sor María: her disciple and secretary, Sor Agustina de Santa Teresa, and her confessor, Miguel Godínez. The three works that Drago chooses to examine are those of Francisco Pardo from 1676, Diego de Lemus from 1686, and Félix de Jesús María from 1756. Pardo, the closest in time and space, has a New World outlook as he parallels the nun's life with developments in New Spain; the other two published their works in Europe with clear Old World perspectives.

Sor María's Puebla was something of a model city, planned with both agriculture and commerce in mind, and the convent in which she lived was prestigious, with its hierarchy based on the position and wealth of the families of its inhabitants. The religious model to be followed was Saint Ignatius Loyola, whose precepts of chastity and humility included the imitation of Christ's sufferings and led to the destruction of the female body. Cases of extreme fasting, flagellation, and other self-inflicted punishments were not uncommon, but Sor María's were exaggerated even by standards of her era. Her visions, with incidents of prophecy and telepathy, were very much appreciated by her contemporaries, including cases of nuns who feared her for piercing their minds too deeply. Miracles were attributed to her, sometimes narrated in the style of novels chivalry.

Professor Drago clarifies the practice of nuns writing down their confessions at the behest of their confessors, whose prestige was augmented by the work of the nuns in their charge. But visions could be dangerous, and the watchful eye of the Inquisition was quick to scrutinize anything that might be considered heretical. Sor María's words caused her confessor to search for a "helper" to copy down her outpourings, and to keep an eye on her. In the biographies that followed, based on Sor Agustina's observations, it was usually the visions, rather than her behavior, that kept Sor María from achieving sainthood—the only criticism of her personally was that she wasn't humble enough. There were few female saints to emulate; Saint Gertrude the Great of Helfta, mystic from the 13th century, and the much closer in time and culture Saint Teresa of Avila, canonized in 1622 and proclaimed a Doctor of the Church. Drago argues convincingly that the visions of these women so controlled by an unrelenting patriarchy represented their striving for a voice, for who can argue with a vision? They even had visions to explain and interpret their visions. The struggle of women to have a voice through the only outlet they had was brought to the attention of scholars in *Untold Sisters* (Arenal and Schlau 1989), a groundbreaking study of convent writing in the Hispanic world.

For all those familiar with this time and place, the tribulations of Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz will come to mind. Born a decade or so after the death of Sor María, her troubles began when Manuel Fernández de Santa Cruz, Bishop of Puebla, induced her to write a response to sermons, forty years previous, of Antonio de Viera. The same Fernández de Santa Cruz persuaded Diego de Lemus to write about Sor María, in advocacy of her beatification, much desired by the Mexican authorities, both ecclesiastic and secular. Drago's analysis of the politics of the day greatly enhances the understanding of this subject: she discusses the New

World inferiority complex, the rise of Marianism, the church's belief in Purgatory and the Immaculate Conception in contrast to the rising Protestant movement, and the expulsion and dissolution of the Jesuits during the long period of efforts to canonize Sor María.

Professor Drago's writing is clear and straightforward. The Appendix is most helpful since it includes some of the visions and spiritual exercises of the would-be saint, additional information about the role of Sor Agustina, and excerpts from the three biographies analyzed. An index would have been useful as well.

Kathleen McNerney  
Professor Emerita  
West Virginia University

## AURÉLIE VIALETTE

**Godón, Nuria. *La pasión esclava: Alianzas masoquistas en La Regenta*. Purdue University Press, 2017. 224 pp.**

Una pensaría que ya no se puede publicar nada revolucionario sobre una obra tan canónica como *La Regenta* de Clarín. Pero una se equivocaría. El libro de Nuria Godón, *La pasión esclava: Alianzas masoquistas en La Regenta*, es la prueba de que incluso la literatura más estudiada ofrece caminos de interpretación nuevos. La autora propone estudiar esta novela bajo un ángulo muy concreto, nunca estudiado hasta ahora: el de la adopción de mecanismos masoquistas, que sirven como “dinámica defensiva y vehículo de safo ante la imaginaria establecida sobre la concepción de roles genéricos” (3). Si bien se publicaron numerosos estudios sobre la importancia de la religión y del género en *La Regenta*, así como sobre el adulterio en relación con la mujer, Nuria Godón insiste en que el masoquismo y el erotismo desde un punto de vista feminista no son temas que hayan sido explorados. Según ella, un estudio de la dinámica masoquista permite entender de qué manera la parte sumisa, en este caso la mujer, puede expresar su agencia y creatividad para a su vez adoptar un rol de dominación; es lo que denomina “el masoquismo transgresor como estrategia subversiva de dominación” (6). El masoquismo transgresor permite la manifestación de un lugar de resistencia gracias al cual se redistribuye el poder y se renueva y reestructura el yo. Asimismo, y en el caso de Ana en la novela de Clarín, el masoquismo transgresor es una manera de rechazar la pasividad, la sumisión y la abnegación de la mujer del discurso de la domesticidad. Por tanto, el masoquismo transgresor renegocia la condiciones del poder establecido (6).

Nuria Godón plantea de manera excelente un marco teórico para todo el libro (capítulo Uno “Reconsiderando el masoquismo”) gracias al cual el lector puede entender en qué consiste el masoquismo subversivo. La autora discute tanto la literatura como la crítica acerca del masoquismo (Sacher-Masoch, Krafft-Ebing, Sartre, Deleuze, de Beauvoir, Reik) los discursos científicos, en particular psiquiátricos, entorno a la sexualidad y a la aparición de los términos masoquismo y sadismo. Pone a discutir episodios de *La Regenta* que iluminan las ideas de la crítica y de la ciencia de la época sobre el masoquismo. Por ejemplo, el capítulo explica la particularidad del contexto decimonónico a la hora de establecer el contrato masoquista: en ese contexto, es la sumisa, y no la parte autoritaria (como es el caso en Sacher-Masoch) quien hace firmar las reglas, lo cual permite la creación de agencia, libertad