

Mujer y sociedad en la literatura del Siglo de Oro. Edited by Francisco Domínguez Matito, Juan Manuel Escudero Baztán, and Rebeca Lázaro Niso. Madrid: Iberoamericana; Frankfurt: Vervuert, 2020. 326 pp. €44.00. ISBN 9788491921738.

This new installment in the Biblioteca Áurea book series edited by Ignacio Arellano (director, Grupo Investigación Siglo de Oro), takes the series in a good direction. As the foremost series copublished in Spain and Germany dedicated to critical studies of early modern Spain, it enjoys a rare platform for leadership in this scholarly field. This book is a good start; arguably, however, it does not go far enough in the right direction—defined here, for the purposes of this journal, as attending to early modern women.

The essay collection is divided into seventeen chapters with a perfunctory “preliminary note.” Roughly half of these chapters are written by female scholars. According to its introduction (regrettably, only two pages long), the volume seeks to offer a panoramic survey of the most recent work in Spanish on the role of woman in Spanish Golden Age literature, whether as writer, reader, or heroine. Laudably, the book takes a wide view of what counts as literature, engaging with such non-canonical sources as epistolary correspondence and nuns’ colloquies, as well as standard literary genres like picaresque novels, and stage plays.

The chapters are not arranged in any discernible order; there are no subdivisions within the book to guide the reader. What we have here is an assortment of essays of somewhat variable quality, all fairly conservative, none employing the most recent theoretical work available in the field of gender studies. This is in fact my most potent criticism of the book; given its own stated goals, it fails to engage with much Anglophone scholarship and does not come anywhere near questioning received gender binaries in the mode of Judith Butler’s “Performative Acts and Gender Constitution” (1988) or *Gender Trouble* (1989). Let me be clear—I am in no way advocating for these approaches. But at this point their influence has been

too pervasive to simply be ignored. They must be engaged and grappled with, if only to refute or disagree with them. Otherwise, this scholarship cannot be considered truly cutting-edge.

Take as an example the essay that comes the closest to engaging with Anglophone scholarship in gender studies, only to critique it ferociously and then dismiss it out of hand. I am speaking here about Emmanuel Marigno's "Estudios de género y demás extravíos. El caso de la mujer en *La vida es sueño*, de Pedro Calderón de la Barca." As readers of Spanish will immediately intuit from the title, the author considers current work in gender studies to be *extravíos*, a pejorative word for "getting sidetracked" or "going off on a tangent" that stems from the same root as the English word *extravagant*. The truly remarkable thing is that the author's straw man—or in this case, straw woman—is an American scholar, Carolyn Morrow, who published her work a full twenty years ago! (Indeed, Morrow is now retired.) This fairly mean-spirited attack seems rather hopelessly belated, at best.

The content of the rest of the chapters is mostly standard and predictable but useful to find all collected together in one place. Specific topics treated include theatrical portrayals of the Old Testament villainess Jezebel by playwright Tirso de Molina; a lost mystical autobiography by one of Saint Teresa's acolytes, Cecilia de Nacimiento; some more playful theatrical works produced for Spain's viceregal court in Mexico by Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz than the more serious work we normally associate with her; Amazons and other warrior women in eighteenth-century theatrical productions; more *mujeres varoniles* (manly women) in the works of understudied dramatist Álvaro Cubillo de Aragón; conventual "colloquies" written by nuns for their designated recreation time; an important female character named Marcela in *Don Quijote* and her afterlives in the Spanish theater; the female dedicatees of sonnets by the king of culteranismo, baroque poet Luis de Góngora; the roles of mothers and wives in a classic work of picaresque fiction, Mateo Alemán's *Guzmán de Alfarache*; treatises by Spanish humanists Fray Luis de León and Juan Luis Vives on women's education and the "perfect wife" as refracted in contemporaneous stage plays; contrasting theatrical versions of the traditional adultery tragedy "solved" by uxoricide, or wife murder; the Old Testament hero Esther as model for playwright Lope de Vega, made somewhat problematic by Spain's anti-Semitism at that moment; and the roles of clever servant girls (*graciosas*) as performed by specific, named actresses in plays by Agustín Moreto.

These studies are by and large competent, but none of them is going to change the world. Much more interesting, to my mind, is the treatment by Juan

Manuel Escudero Baztán of female criminals—including serial killers—described in gory detail in the epistolary correspondence known to early modern Hispanists as the *Avisos de Barrionuevo*. A manuscript volume of breezy news items written by Jerónimo de Barrionuevo to his friend, the dean of Zaragoza, between the years 1654 and 1658, these letters form a veritable treasure trove of juicy gossip.

But unfortunately, this highly suggestive essay appears in this volume without any type of scholarly apparatus—no bibliography whatsoever, and only one lone footnote. Even the first name of Barrionuevo is missing! Only the initiated can possibly know what he is talking about or guess where to go for more information on this fascinating figure. If Hispanists are to get out of their echo chamber where they are isolated, only talking to themselves, they will need to do better than this. Early modernists in other countries would be extremely interested in establishing a dialogue with this scholar and others like him, but the impression given is that of a closed insiders' circle.

The other essays do include separate bibliographies printed after each respective essay, but I daresay a composite bibliography at the end of the volume would have been a good idea. Instead, the volume closes with short contributor biographies, which at least do give us a sense of who is working on topics related to gender in Spain (although some are Spaniards teaching at universities in other European countries). It is to be hoped that they—and perhaps a younger generation of scholars inspired by this volume to see a new willingness in the Spanish university system to consider questions of gender—will continue the work begun here in this fruitful field.

HILAIRE KALLENBORG
TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY