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Elena Deanda-Camacho, *Ofensiva a los oídos piadosos: Obscenidad y censura en la poesía española y novohispana del siglo XVIII [Offensive to pious ears: Obscenity and censorship in eighteenth-century Spanish and New Spain poetry]* (Madrid: Iberoamericana; Frankfurt: Vervuert, 2022). Pp. 272. €46.00 cloth.

This book provides a fresh approach to the topic of obscenity and the Inquisition in the Spanish-speaking eighteenth century. Comparing texts that were deemed “offensive to pious ears” in New Spain (colonial Mexico) and Spain, Elena Deanda-Camacho puts together a culturally relevant cluster of texts that have been extensively studied by *dieciochistas* but not paired in this way. In this rich context of interpretations, the originality of Deanda’s approach lies in the comparative/transatlantic perspective and the archival work related to inquisitorial practices across the Atlantic that she deftly employs for her reading. As Deanda states, her book is written from the vantage point of Transatlantic Studies, since “Spain, in the eighteenth century, was not only the [Iberian] Peninsula but a whole Empire” (15, my translation here and elsewhere). Deanda’s writing style is elegant and sassy at the same time, entertaining, not afraid of polemic, and very contemporary, so the book is a pleasure to read even if one does not agree with some of her propositions regarding classical texts, such as the brutal medieval *Carajicomedia* or Meléndez Valdés’s delicate *Besos de amor*.

Deanda reviews foundational inquisitorial texts and the changing ideas surrounding the role of the inquisitor. Exploring reactions to canonical texts like Fernando de Rojas’s *Celestina* or King Solomon’s *Song of Songs*, Deanda offers an eye-opening discussion of the modus operandi of inquisitorial censors. Especially interesting is the review of the different indexes of forbidden books and the process by which books ended up there. Deanda situates in the *Index of Sandoval* the first connection of the notion of the sacred, love, and obscenity, and notes how texts such as Ovid’s *Ars Amatoria* were allowed in Latin “due to their elegance” (53) since that was the language of the inquisitorial reader. The same text was censored in Spanish. This introduces the fundamental question of class and race as factors

that are attached to the notion of obscenity in early modern Spain and the colonial territory of New Spain. Deanda argues that “lascivious propositions” were the most prosecuted from then on.

Chapter 1 is an utterly brilliant introduction to the notion of obscenity and another enlightening discussion of the notion of censorship. Following Deleuze’s *The Fold*, Deanda states that “obscenity and censorship exist in a relationship of fold, they are the two faces of the same coin . . . I argue that obscenity and censorship, even when they appear to be opposites, are inherently defined by their relationship to the other term” (28). Deanda traces the alliance established between the monarchy and the Inquisition and describes the professionalization of the “calificadores inquisitoriales” (31). Creating a case study that illuminates these processes, Deanda chooses to analyze the *Estragos de la lujuria* by Antonio Arbiol, a guide for newlyweds that “synthesizes the expression and repression of the sexuality of the Spanish people in the premodern era” (55). Deanda demonstrates how in Arbiol’s text the female body and its sartorial accessories were the incarnation of “lujuria” (56). Women were considered repulsive and offensive and surrounded by sensorial elements that provoked disgust in the reader. Deanda connects this discussion involving gender to broader issues such as the polemic surrounding theater, but she also returns to the texture of the inquisitor’s text to claim that “[w]hen analyzing the *Estragos de la lujuria*, the fear of Arbiol appears like the undergarment of his desire . . . He conjures with morose delight the fragrant cleavage, the luciferin foot, the daring dance, only to expel them from himself, to make them go away and protect himself from their power” (64).

In chapter 2, Deanda approaches the anonymous *Carajicomedia* (1519) from three vantage points: the pornotopia, the prostibularian census, and the genital war between penises and vaginas (70). Deanda discusses the myth of the “excedente libidinal” (73) of men and proposes to frame the text from the notion of “erotic capital.” She argues that there was a transmission of knowledge between women prostitutes that created a female community versus the “predatorial Capitalism” surrounding the sex work business. I did not find the capitalism argument convincing for pre-modern texts but Deanda uses it in many parts of her book, concluding that “la *Carajicomedia* is not antagonistic to the status quo” (81) and, turning to Nicolás Fernández de Moratín’s *Arte de putear* (1775–77), that “[p]olitically, there is nothing subversive in the *Arte*, because it is a misogynistic and phallogocentric text that dominates men and women by prescribing their sexuality, by usurping female agency and by vilifying the female body” (114).

Chapter 3 discusses New Spain’s version of the pornotopia seen in the previous texts, providing a valuable introduction to such interesting texts such as the *Décimas a las prostitutas de México* (1782). While Deanda values the humor present in this text, she fails to find the same humor in the previous ones, which are clearly humorous as well, despite their brutality. Deanda ties the use of subversive humor to the fact that the *Décimas* came from a colonial context. She states that in the *Décimas* the poet focuses on each individual prostitute, but I would argue that the same catalog was present in Moratín’s Spanish *Arte de las putas*. Despite this, the close reading of the vocabulary employed by the author of the *Décimas* is brilliant and the contextualization in the genre of the Mexican *albur* and the use of mexicanisms are truly enlightening and original, as is the analysis of the “coloniality of the *Décimas*” (130).

Chapter 4 focuses on texts where sex and the sacred coalesce in the figure of the lascivious priest, such as in parts of Samaniego’s *Jardín de Venus* (1782)

and the *sones* from New Spain “Chuchumbé” (1766) and “Jarabe gatuno” (1802). Deanda argues that the texts from colonial Mexico do not present the violence that Samaniego’s texts display. I find this comparison insufficiently documented, even when the analysis of the Mexican texts is very relevant to scholars of the Spanish-speaking eighteenth century. Deanda’s wish to portray the texts from the colonies as ethically superior or more subversive or more humorous or nuanced than those of the Spanish authors gets in the way of a more accurate description of how the texts from Spain work. A similar shortcoming can be observed in chapter 5’s comparison of two Spanish texts, *Perico y Juana* (1804) by fabulist Tomás de Iriarte and Juan Meléndez Valdés’s rococo work *Besos de amor* (c. 1780). Deanda’s claim that they demonstrate the difference between erotic and pornographic literature, what she labels “dysphemism” and “euphemism,” fails to be convincing, especially as it applies to her reading of the *Besos de amor*, a text that manifestly describes feminine pleasure and non-normative sexuality in revolutionary and aesthetically exquisite ways.

Deanda’s book will be of interest to students of the history of sexuality, and especially pornography and obscenity, in the Spanish-speaking eighteenth century. Deanda discusses, on one hand, texts that were labeled as obscene by their contemporary readers, exploring why some texts were deemed offensive from an intersectional perspective that considers coloniality, gender, and race. On the other hand, Deanda emphasizes texts that were banned by the Inquisition. In this sense, the book allows the reader to understand the changing definitions of obscenity and to explore from an insider’s perspective the curious history of Inquisitorial reading practices across the Atlantic. The Inquisitorial archive that Deanda uses includes texts such as “denuncias, sumarias, correspondencia, notas o censuras teológicas, dictámenes, edictos e *Índices de Libros Prohibidos* (de 1559 a 1873)” (15). Scholars of the Spanish-speaking colonial eighteenth century will benefit from the consideration of these texts in the context of inquisitorial practices. Thanks to this book, one can learn a great deal about contributions from New Spain such as the “Chuchumbé,” the *Décimas a las prostitutas de México* and the “Jarabe gatuno,” to name a few. Deanda is a solid scholar with enlightening insights about colonial and Spanish texts, the history of inquisitorial practices, and theories of obscenity applied to the Spanish-speaking eighteenth century.

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