

teatrales (el absurdo, el teatro ceremonial –heredero de las teorías del teatro de la crueldad–, la tragedia griega, la comedia y el teatro bufo cubano), todo siempre bajo una constante “visión poética que rodea a los personajes y que se funde al contexto sociocultural” y político de Cuba. La pieza antologada es el monólogo (en “dialeto cubano” y donde la presencia de “las religiones afrocubanas”, de la “santería” cumple un rol esencial) de un mulato, Heriberto Fonseca, un ser marginado por su pobreza y demencia, que al dar su testimonio de vida busca en los receptores las respuestas que le indiquen si “cruzar el puente” o no, si “abandonar por completo la realidad” o no.

Como se puede apreciar a través de este mínimo sumario que articula las piezas dramáticas y lo que sus críticos dicen/informan de ellas –y de la obra en general de los dramaturgos–, todos los textos tienen como “tema común” a “Latinoamérica” y que hablan de ella “principalmente a comediantes y públicos latinoamericanos dondequiera que se hallen”. (Mario Yepes) Hay, no obstante, otro tema común que no se ha de pasar por alto: cada década (simple referente), a su manera y de forma progresivamente inquietante, ve navegar a América Latina en un mar de dudas, temores, conflictos (armados), traiciones. (auto)negaciones, etc., pero sin perder (todavía) lo que la distingue, su juventud y su arte de vivir, cosas que el teatro, en especial el breve, como el retrato de un dibujante callejero, denuncia y celebra de una pincelada, rápida, cortante y mágica (por cierto, no siempre este adjetivo tiene que estar ligado al *realismo* en estas tierras). Ésta es una muestra, por lo tanto, de nuestros duelos y nuestras fiestas en las calles y en las tablas. Y es, además, una buena e imprescindible guía para seguir la pista del desarrollo teatral de los tres últimos decenios, en especial porque éstos son los herederos del renacimiento del arte escénico ocurrido en los años cincuenta y sesenta, principalmente ligado al quehacer universitario de aquellos decenios y a los movimientos estéticos y sociales. También ha de verse en estas décadas finales del siglo un indicio de lo que puede ser el teatro en los inicios del próximo milenio. En este sentido esta *Antología crítica* cumple una función pública del todo indiscutible. Sin embargo, se echan de menos dentro de su notable rigor académico algunas secciones suplementarias que la habrían enriquecido aún más. Faltan otros instrumentos: una bibliografía final, una cronología, un índice de nombre y otro temático, una sección fotográfica que ilustre diferentes aspectos de la historia reciente del teatro hispanoamericano y, sobre todo, un estudio introductorio comprensivo que defina el dra-

ma breve, sus orígenes y su historia en Hispanoamérica –aunque las palabras iniciales de Mario Yepes tocan algunos de estos puntos, pero como él mismo señala para entenderlas correctamente, “no es el de crítico el papel de este editor”, tampoco el de este reseñador.

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**Kathryn Joy McKnight,
The Mystic of Tunja:
The Writings of Madre Castillo
1671-1742.**

Amherst: The University of Massachusetts Press, 1997.

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The last fifteen years have witnessed, as an aspect of feminist scholarship, the discovery of convent life as an integral part of the making of colonial Spanish America culture. Josefina Muriel's *Conventos de monjas en la Nueva España* (1946) appears as a lone precursor of the scholarship that both historians and literary critics would develop under the full swing of Women Studies. Muriel followed with *La indias caciques de Corpus Christi* (1963) and *Cultura femenina novohispana* (1982). Interest in the lives of nuns and the social and economic structure of convent life did not really take off in the North American academy until the work of Asunción Lavrin began appearing in various journals and collections during the decade of the 1970's. Feminist efforts centered on the recovery of a women's tradition in writing and the arts. It did not take long to rediscover both the Spanish mystic Saint Teresa de Avila as well as the Mexican polymath Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz. Both published writers had long ago received the sanction and literary canonization of the patriarchy. Their names figure prominently in the rosters of the great writers of the Spanish language.

But the attention now focused on Saint Teresa and Sor Juana has been driven by a feminist inquiry interested in questions of subject formation and the possibility of a voice of their own within the prevailing discursive conditions in both the Spain of the Counter Reformation and the Colonial Baroque in Mexico. Georgina Sabat de Rivers (1995), and Stephanie Merrim (1987, 1991), in different ways, opened the world of Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz to multiple considerations. Unknown aspects of her life came under close

scrutiny. Sor Juana appeared acting in a multiplicity of social roles, inside and outside the convent. This new feminist scholarship recovered Sor Juana as the author of texts in a panoply of genres and also as a public intellectual, a role specifically repressed by the ideology of the Counter Reformation.

The apparently contradictory situations of conventual life, in which silence is prized above all other attitudes and behaviors, and the emergence of strong female voices – voices capable of engaging and even challenging the patriarchal order –, demanded an explanation which present discursive theory seemed unable to offer. There was a need for meticulous historical studies which could explain the dynamics of monastic orders and the life of female subjectivity. Electa Arenal's (1983) path breaking study examined how the convent worked as a catalyst for feminine autonomy. In *Untold Sisters: Hispanic Nuns in Their Works* (1989) Arenal and Stacey Schlauf, established the boundaries of the field well beyond Sor Juana. The nun, poet, musician, theologian, the genius of her period, now appeared as the crowing glory but not any longer as the singular and exceptional case of women's learning, writing and struggling in the arena of colonial public life. This shift in focus also marked a departure from the critic's practice of showing how the writings of the Spanish American nuns followed or drew from the peninsular models of *vidas* and mystical texts which they were encouraged to emulate. Instead there appeared a determinate need to write their difference in order to explore new spaces for knowledge. Nevertheless and despite all the differences between the work of feminist scholars and Octavio Paz's Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz o las trampas de la fe (1982) one cannot help but ask, to what extent the life and works of nuns like Sor Juana, Mother Castillo and the other nuns who have left us their *vidas* do not constitute, as Paz claims to be the case with Sor Juana, exceptional monuments to solitude: the solitude of the phantom lovers, the solitude of life in religious communities, the solitude of the struggle to exercise a passion for knowledge (in Merrim, 15).

McKnight sees her study of the life and works of Josefa de Castillo y Guevara Niño y Rojas (1671-1742) as an effort to push further the frontier of feminist scholarship by examining, in a theoretical frame founded on the work of Felicity Nussbaun's *The Autobiographical Subject: Gender and Ideology in Eighteenth-Century England* (1989) and Paul Smith's *Discerning the Subject* (1988), the question of feminine subjecthood and agency. *The Mystic of Tunja* integrates, in a single and exhaustive study

of the life and writings of the Mother Castillo, detailed and intelligent textual interpretations with a rich historical reconstruction of the political and intellectual climate of the period. This book chronicles the individual life of Francisca de Castillo. It relies in the nun's own autobiography, the *Obras Completas* (1968) edited by Dario Achury Valenzuela and on archival sources unearthed by McKnight. The study pieces together a fascinating tale of convent politics. The usual conventual jealousies and struggles for power are set against the even more controverted economic and political relations of the Clarisas order with the criollo elite of Tunja. The role of Francisca's powerful and enabling family and confessors takes on paramount importance for our understanding of Francisca's motivation to write as well as her ability to evade censure from the Church.

During the course of her long life Mother Castillo authored various texts at the request of her confessors (115-125). McKnight studies minutiously and with superb originality the close intertextual making of *Su vida* (1713-24?), *Afectos espirituales* (1690-1728?) and *Cuaderno de Enciso* (1694?-1728). McKnight believes that the texts construct Mother Castillo as subject and that they "reveal a community of mutual readership among nun writers that spans centuries and oceans" (2).

In order to place the writings of Mother Castillo in their full intellectual and political context, McKnight delves deeply into the set of holy archetypes offered to her by the spiritual tradition of the Catholic Church of the Counter Reformation (Chapter VII). The mixing of autobiographical mysticism with doctrinal knowledge developed in Spain by the avid students of the "castillo interior" (170) is brought to bear in a close exegesis of the *Afectos espirituales* (Chapter VIII). The inevitable comparison with Saint Teresa's situation, shows how the spiritual journey of each woman was deeply entangled with the specific modes in which the Church, their own order and even their families and class, dovetailed with the society in general. The ideological currents of the different periods in which they wrote leave distinctive traces in the *vidas* and in the kind of mystical texts authored by the Spanish and their Spanish-American counterparts. While women religious attempted to live the Counter Reformation ideal of the "Glorious Sepulchre" (198) and renounce the world, in an attempt to truly "morir en vida", McKnight's study shows that the walls of the convent, as well as the souls and bodies of the women who sought refuge away from the distractions of the world (215), were indeed porous (97).

Intrigued by the impact of gender on genre (27) McKnight engages in a thorough retrospective study of the writing of *vidas* as a spiritual autobiographical genre (Chapter II). Here she deals with questions of agency. She draws strongly on Foucault's ideas on the intersection of knowledge and power. This approach is particularly useful in view of the fact that his own work on the construction of subject is based on the world of the confessional. McKnight does well in bringing to bear upon North American feminist discourse the fact that the writing of *vidas* is always already interpellated by the confessional. What needs to be stressed here, and is unfortunately overlooked, is that not only nuns are interpellated by the confessional. The entire Iberian colonial world is born at the cross roads of conquest and the confessional.

This study shows that Mother Castillo's subjecthood emerges as subjection. But it doing so it also appears as a negativity, a negativity which, paradoxically, enables her separation as self and as agent (27). However, this emergent agency is complicated, if not paradoxically placed in yet another instance of the Catholic Church's capacity to respond to challenges to its hegemonic ideology. One is not to forget that both the writing of *vidas* and mystic discourse fall under the shadow, in fact were sponsored by the Counter Reformation's emblem of *desengaño*. Within this horizon all subjecthood is, again paradoxically, at once asserted and transcended (22). It is therefore not surprising that while Mother Castillo sees herself as an individual reader of the Scriptures capable arriving at her own production of knowledge, she nevertheless claims her thought and writing as merely that of God's amanuensis (39).

Gender does indeed have an impact on genre but the picture that emerges in this book is closer to a Baroque design than to simple assertions of feminine subversion and agency in the colonial patriarchy. What little has remained of Mother Castillo's correspondence with her confessors shows that they were powerful members of the Jesuit order with whom she felt comfortable (Chapters III and IV). They lent their support and even admiration to Francisca as an exceptional intellectual and leader. Her confessors were crucial allies in defending her from the accusations made against her—greed and political ambition—by other nuns. And it was in part due to the support of these powerful men and the weight of her family that she was repeatedly elected Abbess of the convent (Chapter V). As in the case of Saint Teresa, and despite McKnight's demonstration of the possibly subversive engagement of

the Song of Songs by Mother Castillo, the pedagogical writings that she authored, no doubt destined to be used in her training of the novices in the Clarisa convent, "left her followers within tight walls" and very much "made in Spain [and] safe for the Counter Reformation" (Arenal and Schlauf quoted in McKnight 67).

Mother Castillo seems most successful in creating a feminine hermeneutic authority and in the "subtle sabotage of dominant male discourse" (171) when she mixes her autobiographical mysticism with doctrinal knowledge in her *Afectos* (Chapter VIII). McKnight's command of the Spanish mystical tradition is most effective in guiding the reader into an understanding and an appreciation of Mother Castillo's experience of the presence of God as a moment when the intellect is not necessarily incapacitated, as established by Saint Teresa and Saint John of the Cross. For Castillo God's presence occurs in the encounter with God's words. "It is this word that releases the discursivity of the Scriptures into the explanations of the knowledge she receives" (171). Differing from the Spanish mystics, for Castillo the mystic encounter "fuses feminine mystic knowledge with the masculine scriptural commentary. Sacred Scripture centers her texts, they provide her language, they fill her voice and most importantly, they are the space of her primary encounter with God" (171). The central role that the Scriptures play in the *Afectos* allows Mother Castillo to enter the "no-woman's land of scriptural hermeneutics" (172).

In her illuminating study of the *Cuaderno de Enciso* (Chapter IX) McKnight details the strict relation of Mother Castillo's writing to the theology of humiliation. In her guide for novices the mystic of Tunja elaborates the great maxims of the Counter Reformation: this world and everything in it will pass. The only reality is the promise of final rest and quiet in the glorious sepulchre that is the wound in Christ's side (201). True understanding of the ephemeral world and its passing brings the soul to wisdom. Tribulation, fear and suffering are God's greatest gifts and humiliation at the hands of our tormentors are the waters which bring us God's consolation. Acceptance of suffering brings us God's love.

McKnight considers that with the writing of *Cuaderno de Enciso* Mother Castillo makes inroads into the "male exclusivity of the apostolic privilege" (206). This feminist claim on agency and self writing leaves with the reader multiple and vexing questions for which answers are not readily forthcoming. Three are worth stating here: 1) Inclusion in the club of dominant (alpha) males, at what

price? 2) Would any feminist want her daughters's subjecthood formed under the teachings –apostolic privilege– of Madre Castillo? 3) If we would not want our elite daughters instructed into such theology of humiliation, what could the feminist imagination say of any such pedagogy for the rest of the colonial subjects who, by virtue of the established pictocracy, could expect a pedagogy which demanded unquestioned integration in the politics of humiliation?

Despite the meticulous appreciation of the institutional history of the different orders and different historical periods, the comparison between Teresa's political and intellectual practices with Francisca's own fails to bring out sufficiently the colonial situation which permeates Francisca's life in Tunja. This simple fact, often obscured in the filiation made between Spanish and Spanish American cultural formations, could account more directly for the important public role that the convent, as a major real estate holder (98), had to play or was able to exert in Tunja, at best a secondary colonial town. Such colonial situatedness may also explain why other readers have found in the writings of the criollo nuns an incipient elaboration of the American identity which the emancipation period brought to bloom (69). To appreciate the colonial situation which defines the lives and writings of intellectuals such as Sor Juana and the Mother Castillo, it is not enough to point out that the convent, like the society which engenders it, is inhabited by women of different skin colors organized in a tight racial hierarchy. Perhaps it would be more appropriate to think that the criollo elite was extremely small in relation to both the colonial population that it attempted to control and the Spanish administration that controlled it back in Europe. In a colonial economy in which the spiritual was intimately intertwined with the economic –conquest, encomiendas and evangelization– control of institutions, in as much as they are both discursive and economic machines by means of which the extended family maintained status and power, proved crucial to the survival and reproduction of the colonial elite. Educating daughters in convents and sustaining the leadership of members of prominent families and even elevating them to sainthood –the public face of the ideology of humiliation– were productive tactics for citizens defined and made subject by the coloniality of power. The detailed narrative of the involvement of Mother Castillo's family with the Poor Clares convent (85), the fact that more than nine members of her immediate family professed during her life as a choir nun,

underscores the particular place that convents occupied in the colonial power structure in which the subjecthood of being female was modified and enhanced by being white or by possessing other criollo legacies.

To her credit as *The Mystic of Tunja* draws to a close McKnight asks bluntly: "What is the message conveyed by this teaching voice?". The answers that she furnishes spell out a series of paradoxes. They stand in sheer contrast with the confident feminist objectives stated in the introduction. McKnight recognizes that in Mother Castillo's writings on humility and humiliation there is a description of the absolute impossibility of human achievement of good. Further, if human relations are to be shunned for the love of God, then what can the possible nature of human communities be? Her understanding of purification by means of torment inflicted by other human beings destroys the idea of solidarity. In an atmosphere of holy suspicion the possibility of autonomous female community would seem rather utopian.

Further, the Mystic's doctrine of humility could have in fact strengthened the control of the Counter Reformation over its subjects (214). In this rather dark and paradoxical panorama, McKnight sees a ray of light and finds that the voice of Mother Castillo does at times coincide with the spirit of Erasmus. Nevertheless, the author of this exemplary book, guided by the light of intellectual integrity and respect for the limits of interpretation, concludes with a series of questions as the most appropriate way of bringing to a close the portrayal of a contradictory auto-biography, a Baroque intellectual tradition inserted in the re-inscription of the coloniality of power and the full display of the Counter Reformation in which the lust for power found its best mask in the traits of humility and self abjection. Perhaps the most that can be claimed in answer to the question of agency is that Madre Castillo wrote in her "*papeles* a message of submission and yet [lived] in those papers an experience of subtle subversion" (221).

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Biographical Entry

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Flor Romero *Malitzin, la princesa regalada*

Bogotá, Uneda, 1999, págs. 254

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A menudo uno se pregunta qué puede decirse de nuevo de Malinche, en forma historiográfica o novelada. Se la ha mencionado tanto, desde *Ceremonias del alba* o *El naranjo* de Carlos Fuentes hasta *La Malinche, sus padres y sus hijos*, colección editada por Margo Glantz sobre las escritoras descendientes de la tradición de esa mujer indígena. En artículos interdisciplinarios desde la antropología a la historia y pasando por la ficción, esta indígena excepcional que aparece ocho veces escasamente mencionada

en el *Códice Florentino*, establece un puente con el pasado éxotico de la Mesoamérica conquistada. Precisamente, es este documento, el de Sahagún, el que Flor Romero tomará como base de su relato para recrear una vez más esa historia de rivalidades.

Allí aparece como la intérprete de la costa veracruzana que en 1519 abrió la interpretación que cambiaría el curso de la cosmología y políticas indígenas, para cerrar su paso por la historia preguntando por el oro, dónde está el oro de los vencidos? (*Códice Florentino*, cap. xli). Los textos de Totonacapan y Tlaxcala ponen gran énfasis en Cortés y Marina, así como en el mapa de Tepetlán muestra el barco donde los dos llegaron. En los relatos de Bernal Díaz del Castillo es la mujer hermosa y valiente, en los relatos del presente es el ícono, la sometida, la violada, la mujer que asume condiciones metafóricas para otras tantas interpretaciones y discursos de la actualidad. Para expresarlo quizás de una manera más completa es, al decir de Georges Baudot: "l'Irréguliere", una mujer que asume muchos ángulos, incluso los de la traición y el erotismo novohispano.

Por esta misma atención que ha recibido dentro y fuera de México, Malinche surge como un centro magnético que problematiza todavía más la posible originalidad de una obra sobre su persona, porque la "lengua" (como llamaban a los intérpretes en Mesoamérica) fusiona y entrecruza dos imaginarios, revierte el concepto de la transparencia —en la medida que su traducción cultural es un acto opacado por el mismo objetivo de la Conquista— y se abre a las páginas históricas como símbolo inagotable de múltiples intereses y estudios diversos. Con el interrogante de qué podía ofrecernos esta Malitzin, la de Flor Romero, se comienza la lectura de esta novela de la autora colombiana, novela que toma con fidelidad los acontecimientos ocurridos con la llegada de los españoles.

Los capítulos están designados en números romanos como en los antiguos documentos, aunque se presenta inmediatamente una característica atípica al comprobar el lector que Malitzin comienza en el capítulo IV a hacer entradas en su diario personal, imitando la costumbre de Cortés, quien reconstruye alfabéticamente la territorialidad conceptual y espacial de un mundo nuevo para un rey remoto. Sus entradas son personales (he aquí la mujer renacentista, no la indígena grupal) separada del grupo, regalada, traicionada por su propia gente, que sin embargo nunca puede ver el revés de esas emociones. Tampoco el escribir un diario constituye un acercamiento más rico —por tanto más ambiguo a su persona— ni cobra la