

A COMPANION TO LATIN AMERICAN WOMEN WRITERS



EDITED BY BRÍGIDA M. PASTOR AND LLOYD HUGHES DAVIES

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A COMPANION TO
LATIN AMERICAN WOMEN WRITERS

Tamesis

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Edited by
Brígida M. Pastor
and
Lloyd Hughes Davies

TAMESIS

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Introduction: The Feminine Voice in Latin American Literature

BRÍGIDA M. PASTOR and LLOYD HUGHES DAVIES

Historical Overview

No se trata solamente de leer a las escritoras para (re)descubrirlas y promoverlas, sino de preguntarse de qué manera el poder se ejerce o se tolera, se sufre o se transgrede, en el espacio textual. (Araújo, 1997a: 11)
[It is not only about reading women writers' texts in order to (re)discover and promote them, but about questioning to what extent power is exercised or tolerated, is suffered or transgressed, in the textual space.]

In the text of many Latin American women writers, the Word is a space for women's self-representation, a new territory to map their self-defined image, to sign with their own voice. (Medeiros-Lichem, 2002b: 211)

This *Companion to Latin American Women Writers* introduces the reader to an overview of the socio-historical context that has shaped the voice of these women. The diverse range of writers covered in this volume offers an exposure of feminine literary discourse, which is of great relevance to understanding the 'matriheritage of founding discourses,'¹ revealing the rich textual examples of a wide range of women writers in Latin America, from those well-established to the lesser known and forgotten. The female writer has been largely absent from the literary canon with the exception of a few isolated examples² (Díaz-Diocaretz, 1990: 104–5). It is in the recent past that women writers have gained recognition, filling a vacuum created by

¹ Myriam Díaz-Diocaretz (1990: 104–5) defines the 'matriheritage of founding discourses' as a diversity of strategies that make the gendered voice and perspective the focal point of most Latin American women writers.

² Luis Sáinz de Medrano in his *Historia de la literatura hispanoamericana* (1989) does not mention any women writers in his long index of writers in the last one hundred years' (Medeiros-Lichem, 2002b: 110, note 2).

their exclusion, allowing the exploration of the transgressive and revolutionary import of their writings. This volume constitutes a representative sampling of women writers through Latin American literary history, such as the seventeenth-century Mexican writer, Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz, and the nineteenth-century Cuban, Gertrudis Gómez de Avellaneda, but focuses primarily on writers from the twentieth century. These women and their work represent a 'network of relationships', which reveal 'the strategic discursive consciousness' of Latin American women authors (Díaz-Diocaretz, 1990: 91–92). They were bonded by their common desire to sensitize their audience to 'the voices of the silenced, of resistance, of domestic or political violence, of women's experience in the private and public space' (Medeiros-Lichem, 2002b: 2).³ Their texts were designed to awaken awareness and prevent attempts at concealment of their cultural conditioning as the Other. An eloquent example of giving voice to the silenced is Poniatowska's *Hasta no verte, Jesús mío* (1969) [*Until We Meet Again, Jesus*] in the characterization of Jesusa Palancares. Luisa Valenzuela offers an insightful description of the feminine creative act of writing: 'Escribimos para descubrir, para develar, pero también para señalar aquello que por comodidad preferimos olvidar' (Valenzuela, 1986: 81) [We write in order to discover, to disclose, and also to point out that which is easier to forget].

Strategic Feminine Discourse and Patriarchal Culture

The importance of writing as a subversive vehicle is emphasized when we consider that many women writers were victimized because of their 'sin' of writing. The woman writer had to challenge the image of 'monster' that she herself represented to the patriarchal order, since 'for a woman to attempt the pen was monstrous and presumptuous' (Gilbert and Gubar, 1979: 32). Most women in patriarchal culture must have experienced their gender 'as a painful obstacle, or even a debilitating inadequacy' (Gilbert and Gubar, 1979: 50). In spite of having been successful writers, they suffered much discrimination in their male-dominated world. Even early women writers 'challenged patriarchal norms and saw self-knowledge as the stepping stone towards expressing and consolidating a feminine voice' (Medeiros-Lichem, 1999: 23). Overall, they were advocates for their own rights, as women, irrespective of class or race, thus corroborating Myriam Y. Jehenson's view

³ The term 'voice' is used 'as a trans-individual expression of the cultural, social and political circumstances and interprets the feminine voice as the result of a dialogical interaction between the forces of patriarchy, the monological voice that has dominated within literature, and the submerged and silenced voices of the Other – of women or the marginalized – those previously excluded from the territory of the Word' (Medeiros-Lichem, 2002b: 204).

of Victoria Ocampo's position, that 'privileges of fortune do not change at all the injustices to which women [are] subjected' (Jehenson, 1995: 33).

Before the emergence and effect of the late nineteenth century's social movement, 'a transnational, often multilingual network of print culture blossomed among elite and educated women of America and Europe' (Bergmann et al., 1990: 174). This represented a threat to patriarchal ideologies as it meant women producing in the public arena, making visible women's unacceptable conditions. The impact of the print culture during this period provided infinitely greater possibilities of gaining an audience among the growing elite classes of women. However, the standard of education available to women⁴ proved to be a limiting factor as the potential readers able to gain access to literature were confined to the middle and upper classes; this was combined with the restricted forms of literature they were allowed to read and the media they could access. By the mid-nineteenth century reading was beginning to gain ground, as indicated by an increasing volume of printed literature for women. The growing number of female readers led to an awakening of women's consciousness to the unacceptable situation of their sex in their culture and encouraged the creation of a solidary but individual feminine voice, also called – as already noted above – a 'matri-heritage of founding discourses' (Díaz-Diocaretz, 1990: 92).

Several types of literature were produced for this emerging feminine readership: moral and religious; educational but also recreational; and 'escapist',⁵ the latter revealing the female stereotypes of the period and the passive roles women had in society.⁶ These genres were used as vehicles for the covert expression of their unconventional and feminist ideas. Susan Kirkpatrick observes: 'It was this reading that not only inspired them but also provided them with a language of poetic subjectivity' (Kirkpatrick, 1989: 70). In addition, poetry – the traditionally acceptable feminine genre – was not only a path open to women but an avenue for self-expression. Poetry became a focal point in women's writing to combat the oppressive

⁴ As Brígida Pastor points out: '[I]n so far as women were educated, what they were taught was intended not to broaden their minds or personal horizons, but to fit them for a "proper" role as perhaps amusing but compliant wives and devoted mothers' (1995a: 179).

⁵ Each of these forms of literature was available in magazines and journals and, of course, novels. Some of these publications, mainly edited by men, were devoted to women's interests such as serialized novels, fashion, etc. But there were also periodicals edited by women, 'devoted principally to demands for female emancipation and a voice in national debate' (Bergmann et al., 1999: 175). For instance, Cuban Gómez de Avelaneda, who divided her time between Cuba and Spain, published the *Álbum del Bello Sexo* in Spain in 1840 and the *Álbum Cubano de lo Bueno y lo Bello* in Havana in 1860.

⁶ These conformist texts, in Jehenson's view, 'focus on copying mechanisms rather than on specific strategies for change' (1995: 23).

role imposed on them in patriarchal society. As Alejandra Pizarnik notes: 'La poesía es el lugar donde todo sucede. A semejanza del amor, del humor, del suicidio y de todo acto profundamente subversivo, la poesía se desentien de lo que no es su libertad o su verdad' (1993: 367) [The poem is a place where anything can happen. Like love, laughter and suicide, poetry is a profoundly subversive activity that has nothing to do with anything other than its freedom or its truth]. (See below, pp. 15–22, for more on women's writing and genre.)

Unquestionably most women writers attempted to create a language that could express the reality of the repression that they suffered in their culture. Their voices acquired a purposeful quality in strategic confrontation with dominant power and symbolic discourse, using discursive strategies to 'inscribe the language of the forbidden, of the repressed, or in other words, of women's experience' (Lanser, 1992: 6). From a very early stage the Latin American feminine texts – in Lucía Guerra-Cunningham's view – reveal various strategies ranging from 'intertextuality and a position of subordination in the early works of Avellaneda or Parra, a mimic process that masks subversion in Allende's *La casa de los espíritus* (1982) [*The House of the Spirits*], to a belligerent discourse of rebellion and sexuality in Rosario Ferré's *Papeles de Pandora* [The Youngest Doll] (1976)' (quoted in Medeiros-Lichem, 2002b: 45–46).

This (feminine) writing emerged as a sophisticated and strategic system of words; in Pizarnik's terms, 'signs' that 'hint at things, [that] suggest things' (in Bassnett, 1990b: 45). Medeiros-Lichem refers to the written 'word' as a powerful tool for empowering the feminine: 'In the text of many Latin American women writers, the Word is a space for women's self-representation, a new territory to map their self-defined image, to sign with their own voice' (2002b: 210–11). This strategic usage of the written word emerged as 'un modo particular de apropiación y transformación de la realidad, del lenguaje para expresarla y construirla, y de la forma de estructuración de un texto' (Sefchovich, 1983: 15) [a particular mode of appropriation and transformation of reality, of the language to express and construct it, and of the form of structuring the text]. In agreement with this, Jean Franco and Francine Masiello emphasize that feminine activity is 'a path to construct power and to transform the process of enunciation, to create a new definition of womanhood and of feminine discourse' (Franco, 1986: 42). Irigaray also proposes a feminine space 'as a different mode of enunciation, based on the creation of a language that breaks away, that "disturbs" the univocal phallocratic conception of truth' (Irigaray, 1985: 78). These theoretical observations echo the Latin American woman's voice. As Luisa Valenzuela observes, this writing attempts to articulate a *lenguaje hémblico* – a feminine language, standing in open confrontation with patriarchy that would emerge when women 'surmount the barriers of self-censorship, the borders marked by society that

have determined what they are supposed to do with their bodies, and say with their mouths' (Medeiros-Lichem, 2002b: 169).

In her attempt to articulate her authentic (feminine) voice, the woman writer was trapped between a censorious patriarchal society and her need, as a woman, to become a speaking subject in her own right. Gilbert and Gubar explain how the woman author was forced to resort to a complex use of metaphors, not only to reflect, but also to challenge the misogynist structure of Western culture. Thus, as Pastor observes: 'the woman writer has to be feminine whilst denying her femininity; she creates a woman's world within her novels, but, at the same time, rejects that world by the very act of "becoming" a novelist – by taking up the pen, an object to which Gilbert and Gubar refer as the "metaphorical penis" – an essentially defined male "tool" which has been considered not only inappropriate but also alien to women' (Pastor, 2003: 8; and Gilbert and Gubar, 1979: 7–8). The fiction of many female writers can be read as a 'double-voiced' discourse, containing a 'dominant' and a 'muted' story (Showalter, 1986: 264). An eloquent example is Clarice Lispector's *A Paixão Segundo G.H.* (1964) [*The Passion According to G.H.*], which contains a 'double-voice', 'an anticlimactic reverse discourse of truth and beauty that inscribes a feminine voice liberated from fear' (Medeiros-Lichem, 2002b: 84).

From Marginalization to Empowerment

According to Gilbert and Gubar (1979: 12): 'Lacking the pen/penis which would enable [women] similarly to refute one fiction by another, women in patriarchal societies have historically been reduced to *mere* properties, to characters and images imprisoned in male texts because generated solely [...] by male expectations and designs.' Although many Latin American feminine texts use several different types of characterization to portray the position of women in patriarchal culture, they also contain portrayals of frustrated wives, fallen women versus virginal women, among others, creating different forms of women's oppression. However, as Toril Moi states:

To study 'images of women' in fiction is equivalent to studying *false* images of women in fiction written by both sexes. [...] Writing is seen as a more or less faithful *reproduction* of an external reality to which we all have equal and unbiased access, and which therefore enables us to criticise the author on the grounds that he or she has created an *incorrect* model of the reality we somehow all know. (Moi, 1985: 44–45)

In Gilbert and Gubar's discourse, these false images of women are embodied in the constructs of the 'angel in the house' and the 'madwoman in the attic'. Furthermore, these critics conclude that 'such stereotypes have become fixed in the characterization of both female and male writers' (Pastor, 2003: 8).

Nonetheless, the situation has changed consistently in recent decades and there exists a considerable and influential corpus of women writers who have succeeded in making their voices heard in the public sphere, rejecting the inherited female stereotypes and thus assuming a position in language. Francine Masiello sees this as a 'formal transgression' in the frames of reference, a defiance of dominant masculine powers: 'De ahí que la novela femenina exponga dos tendencias subversivas: la primera indicada en el proceso de fragmentar un mundo coherente tal y como viene descrito en el discurso del patriarcado; la segunda, en su deseo de destruir la unidad del sujeto como proyección de una lectura específicamente masculina' (1985: 808) [The feminine novel displays two subversive tendencies: the first is shown in the process of fragmenting the coherent world as described in the patriarchal discourse; the second, in its desire to destroy the unity of the subject as a projection of a reading which is specifically masculine].

By deconstructing the patriarchal restrictions of the (feminine) voice, authors such as Luisa Valenzuela questioned the traditional feminine representations in the dichotomy of monster/beauty or *femme fatale*/virgin, stereotypes that validate the culturally negative images of women. The Argentinian author casts light on the subject in her essays *Mis brujas favoritas* (1982) [*My Favorite Witches*] and *La mala palabra* (1985) [*Dirty Words*]. Laura Esquivel, in *Como agua para chocolate* (1989) [*Like Water for Chocolate*], also challenges logocentric discourse by creating characters such as Tita and Gertrudis. Both protagonists, though ambiguously coded, play against existing stereotypes, rejecting inherited masculine values and social conditioning (though critical attitudes to Esquivel are not wholly positive, as we shall see). This was the point of departure for a more overt transgression of the repressive cultural norms and the beginning of self-definition for women writers, re-constructing their own feminine identity, even to the degree of voicing and celebrating their own desires and bodies. Luisa Valenzuela's use of language gives voice to the unrepresented desires of female eroticism within the context of the political turmoil in Argentina during the 1970s and 1980s (see below, pp. 153–54). Rosario Ferré, in her essay 'La autenticidad de la mujer en el arte' ['Woman's Authenticity in Art'], also examines women's eroticism and 'how to derive from their own sexuality a latent and rarely exploited vitality' (Ferré, 1995b: 259).

This evolution of female expression provided an alternative discursive proposal, as Francine Masiello points out, a language of resistance, which is 'to be found in association with other periphery groups to confront power and generate a place from where to speak' (Masiello, 1986: 54). This discursive practice in the writing of Latin American women with their association with the margins can be seen as a medium of empowerment (Medeiros-Lichem, 2002b: 62, note 34). Their own marginality as women allowed them to produce anti-marginal discourses which are textually distinct from other

anti-marginal narratives written by male authors. This feminist relationship with periphery groups, or the identification with the Other, is seen 'as a specular image of the feminine condition' (Guerra-Cunningham, 1979: 150). The personal tragedy of the marginalized highlights the collective tragedy of the female sex (Picón Garfield, 1993: 54). Sara Castro-Klarén argues that the Latin American woman faces discrimination on two fronts: the cultural repression of women and racial disadvantage: 'porque es mujer y porque es mestiza' (in González and Ortega, 1985: 43) [because she is a woman and because she is of mixed race].

The theme of marginalization has been seen as a powerful political tool for women writers, as they can articulate the voice of the marginalized and the difference between the culturally defined dominant and the subaltern Other.⁷ As Debra Castillo states: 'Marginality is a tool for both marking and masking very real differences, as well as for creating false differences out of the cultural, economic, philosophical, and ideological exigencies of an antagonistic politics' (1992: 61). Many of the texts by Elena Poniatowska, Laura Valenzuela, Rosario Castellanos, even the nineteenth-century Cuban Gertrudis Gómez de Avellaneda, seem to reveal women's affiliation with the marginalized and oppressed, thus inscribing the discourse of the margins into the literary canon. Gómez de Avellaneda, in her pioneering novel *Sab*, resorts to the anti-slavery theme simply to establish an analogy between the position of women and that of slaves, thus highlighting her main concern, which is feminist in intent; Mexican journalist and writer of fiction Elena Poniatowska blends her feminist ideology with the voices of the marginalized, as can be seen in her critical texts 'Mujer y literatura en América Latina' ['Literature and Women in Latin America'] and her novel *Hasta no verte, Jesús mío*; Argentinian Luisa Valenzuela's collection of short stories, *Cambio de armas* (1981) [*Other Weapons*], deals with the issue of oppression under patriarchy and political power; Laura Restrepo of Colombia also explores the relationship between race and class. Her novel *La novia oscura* (1999) [*The Dark Bride*] encapsulates the extreme marginalization and exploitation of the indigenous people, creating a counter discourse that emphasizes such issues as class, race and gender; the Chilean Nobel Laureate, Gabriela Mistral, in her essay 'El grito' (1922) ['The Cry'], and her book *Tala* (1938) [*Destruction*], identifies herself with the Indians and openly defends their rights in Chile; *Balún-Canán* (1957) [*The Nine Guardians*], by the Mexican writer Rosario Castellanos, gives voice to the 'Other' indigenous peoples to reveal the lack of dialogue between them and the dominant Ladinos, strategically reversing master/slave relations.

⁷ Edward Said refers to this relationship as 'communities of interpretation' (1983: 7–32).

It was not until the second half of the last century that Latin America witnessed an emerging and influential corpus of women writers, who have undoubtedly left an authoritative legacy through their literature. Many voices in the feminist literary movement attempted the unthinkable, building a more egalitarian society, engaged in a 'fight for legislation and reform in order that they might take up their rightful and "equal" places in the linear (masculine) time of project and history' (Kristeva, 1986: 193). Feminine writing was awakening social consciousness, destabilizing the traditional foundations of dominant literature and redefining the cultural role of women in an uniquely Latin American style. According to Medeiros-Lichem:

In a new culture of inclusion, a voice is granted to those who come in from the margins. We have lived the end of colonialism of ideological and military dictatorships, and – relatively – of patriarchy. Otherness, once dreaded is now recognized as an asset. (2002b: viii)

Despite the notable emergence of women's writing, many of their works remain unread or have limited critical acclaim. From the 1980s onwards the Latin American woman writer seems to have severed ties with the paradigms of textual tradition, fashioning new modes of feminine expression. Medeiros-Lichem notes that although initially this generation of writers is inspired by the Anglo-American and French feminist ethos, a contemporary feminist literary debate emerged to shape the main preoccupations of the Latin American critical discourse (2002b: 51–53).⁸

After centuries of developing strategic literary tactics in order to express their own subjectivity, but at the same, attempting to avoid social punishment for their transgressive attempt to take up the pen, women writers now contested their historically-marginalized role, deviating starkly from the traditional narrative and phallogocentric norms. Furthermore, they had awakened to a different vision of reality, and had overcome the restriction of patriarchal discourse. In contrast with earlier texts, women authors were addressing readers who had not 'internalized the values of the dominant masculine ideology' (Guerra-Cunningham, 1979: 35). Nonetheless, the arduous project of the feminist writer continued to be an ongoing process, since feminism, as Asunción Lavrin points out, had had a poor reception in Latin American societies as a whole:

⁸ Among the most relevant studies that have contributed to the Latin American debate are Amy K. Kaminsky, *Reading the Body Politic: Feminist Criticism and Latin American Women Writers* (1993); Myriam Yvonne Jehenson, *Latin American Women Writers: Class, Race, and Gender* (1995); Debra A. Castillo, *Talking Back: Toward a Latin American Feminist Literary Criticism* (1992).

In the past – and perhaps even today – feminism in Latin America has not always been a popular cause. Deprecated by some intellectuals – male and female – it has received a tepid or outright cold reception among the majority of the population. [...] The tension resulting from the desire to gain rights while at the same time preserving femininity and respectability is a constant topic in the works of male and female writers, feminist and antifeminist, and one that offers fascinating implications for cultural history. (1978: 320)

Those who attempted to change the discriminatory norms of society became victims of it. Nonetheless, there exists a substantial and influential body of women writers who succeeded in making their voices heard in the public space. Their writing, or better their language, constitutes a means of inscribing a woman's perspective as a central element in the understanding of Latin American literature. In the words of Medeiros-Lichem:

The feminine voice in Latin America is alive and broadly represented through a community of writers who have explored the multiple layers of feminine experiences, who have gradually developed a means of challenging patriarchy in their social surroundings of the home and later on in the public space. (2002b: 206)

Critical Reception

Indeed, this has been a gradual process: as already indicated, Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz in the seventeenth century, together with nineteenth-century Gertrudis Gómez de Avellaneda, are major precursors of contemporary women's writing. Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz has been considered 'the heroic foremother of feminist writing in Latin America' (Merrim, 2003: 39). Similarly, Gertrudis Gómez de Avellaneda's writing has direct implications for feminism. Through her writings and life experiences she advocated changes in the situation of women, a stance that made her a pioneering figure in Hispanic feminism. As Miller states: 'Avellaneda wanted [...] to survive [...] as a feminist' (1974: 181).

Despite the historical distance of their seventeenth- and nineteenth-century writing respectively, both Sor Juana's and Gómez de Avellaneda's feminist proclivities appear strikingly modern: their strong aversion to marriage, their atypical lives for women of their class and time, their defiance of conventional patriarchal culture, and their repudiation of established social canons. Such attitudes found eloquent expression in their powerful writings. These attitudes are, of course, associated with modern feminism: politically aware women are still thinking much along the same lines as Sor Juana and Gómez de Avellaneda. Luisa Valenzuela, for example, portrays married life as the most extreme form of exploitation endured by Clara, the protagonist of *Hay que sonreír* (1966) [translated as *Clara*] who is

manipulated by a series of men (see below, p. 150). While we marvel at Sor Juana's stunning precocity and Gómez de Avellaneda's feminism and cultural sophistication, we also regret that limited progress has been made since their time. Such slow progress is not peculiar to Latin America or to the Hispanic world: 'in the past 150 years, women's status in the Western world has improved enormously [...] but the revolution (or evolution) that would make women and men truly equal has not yet occurred' (Lorber, 2000: 80). The lack of practical political advancement is complemented by a corresponding deficit in feminist theory: 'there is a "missing revolution" in feminist thinking, a missing debate about the form of feminist theory, about how it could, or perhaps even should differ from mainstream theory' (Stanley and Wise, 2000: 263). There is a similar perception of theoretical deficiency in the Latin American context: thus Sara Castro-Klarén notes that 'there now exists a good number of texts written by Latin American women, but we still have not elaborated theoretical positions derived from the reading of *those* texts'. She also believes, however, that despite this theoretical impasse, feminism has brought 'irreversible changes in our ways of learning, thinking and acting in both the halls of the academy as well as the world in general' (Castro-Klarén, 2003: 263). In her chapter on Alfonsina Storni, Jo Evans refers to Queirolo's assertion that the accelerated modernization and social changes that took place in turn-of-the-century Argentina had a significant effect on gender relationships and Latin American feminists were in many ways ahead of their European counterparts (see below, p. 79). Indeed, as Evans notes (p. 79), Alfonsina Storni was claimed to be fifty years ahead of her time in her ironic treatment of gender-based double standards: her poem 'La loba' ['The She Wolf'], published in 1916, has been acclaimed as 'early evidence of a critical attitude to the traditional passive feminine role' (p. 72). Another notable precursor of modern feminism was Silvina Ocampo, whose *cursi* [affected] and anecdotal tendencies undermined received moral and aesthetic standards (see below, p. 85). She often plays with gender, masking the gender of her narrators (p. 89), and in one short story, 'Jardín de infierno' ['Winter Garden'], she re-genders the story of Bluebeard, Barbazul becoming Bárbara, who dominates her timid husband and drives him to a voluntary death (pp. 90–91).

Despite such merits, women writers as diverse as Allende and Lispector have been reluctant to assume – at least openly – the mantle of feminism, typically describing themselves as simply writers who also happen to be women. Such downplaying of their status as women writers may be attributed in part to their gender-related marginalization. Marting remarks that 'merely being taken seriously as a professional artist or writer was difficult enough for a (Latin American) woman until very recently' (2003: 200), while Lambright notes that the situation of Peruvian women writers remains as negative as ever it was, since their writing 'is rarely translated

for foreign markets, is not read in Peruvian schools and is not given serious critical attention in or out of Peru' (2007: 61, note 4). Women's writing, she remarks, is typically associated with the second-class status of the romance novel: 'too obviously gendered, too quickly written and too easily read' (p. 100). Some feminist critics would not demur from such a demeaning assessment: Jean Franco, for example, while conceding that *La casa de los espíritus*, *Arráncame la vida* and *Como agua para chocolate* [*The House of the Spirits*, *Tear this Heart Out*, *Like Water for Chocolate*] of Isabel Allende, Ángeles Mastretta and Laura Esquivel respectively, are superior to the romantic novel, notes that their narrative forms, 'en las que domina el relato lineal, la construcción de caracteres típicos y el énfasis en temas como la sentimentalidad femenina, el amor o el matrimonio, refuerzan el status quo en lugar de cuestionarlo' (Reisz, 2003: 333) [in which linear narrative, the creation of typical characters and emphasis on themes such as feminine sentimentality, love or marriage reinforce the status quo instead of questioning it]; (see below, p. 19 and pp. 184–93 for further discussion of the popular romance as genre). Marcelo Coddou refers to perceived gender-based differences in the use of language but concludes that 'la clave no reside en que el lenguaje mismo [...] no le sea apropiado a la mujer, sino que ella no ha podido todavía apropiárselo' (Coddou, 1986: 45) [the central issue is not that language has no relevance to a woman but rather that, to date, she has been unable to appropriate it]. He refers to Rosa Minc's claim that female language is less sophisticated and evocative than its male counterpart and to Lucía Guerra's observation that female language, suffused in an insulated search for self-fulfilment, is removed from an alien external reality (pp. 46, 48) (see below, pp. 96–97, for further discussion of language and gender). Coddou notes that while María Luisa Bombal's truncated female characters imply negative social comment, they are ultimately passive, resorting to fantasy as a means of escape and showing no meaningful social awareness (1988: 74–81). The real change, according to him, comes with the work of such writers as Rosario Castellanos in the 1960s that places women in their social context, anticipating thereby the broad social vision of Isabel Allende in which feminism complements the desire for social justice. What distinguishes her from her experimental peers is not her failure to use relevant narrative techniques but rather their relative lack of visibility in her work: 'el novelista actual exhibe con frecuencia sus recursos y llega hasta convertirlos en motivo. Isabel Allende se limita a usarlos' (1988: 109) [the contemporary writer frequently displays his techniques and even turns them into a theme. Isabel Allende restricts herself to using them]. There is often, however, a neat consonance between theme and technique, as in Luisa Valenzuela's *Cuarta versión* [*Fourth Version*], where – as Magnarelli points out – the account offered, based on love, exile and political asylum,

might not be the definitive one since there have been others and there may be more (see p. 154).

Susana Reisz acknowledges her personal disillusionment with some writers 'que saludé entusiastamente hace poco más de una década' (2003: p. 331) [that I saluted enthusiastically not much more than a decade ago] and endorses Franco's division between 'los bestsellers con su encantadora simplicidad y su feminismo de progreso paulatino, de la lucha por la igualdad social o de la exaltación de la diferencia, y al otro lado del espectro literario, la neo-vanguardia con su disrupción del significado, su rechazo de los discursos hegemónicos, su afán por trabajar en los bordes del orden simbólico y su negativa a separar lo femenino del ancho espacio de lo marginal y subalterno' (2003: 331–32) [best-sellers with their simple charm and their feminism based on gradual progress, on the struggle for social equality, or on heightening of difference, and on the other side of the literary spectrum, the neo-avant-garde with their disruption of meaning, rejection of hegemonic discourses, their eagerness to work on the borders of the symbolic order and their refusal to remove the feminine from the open spaces of the marginal and the subaltern]. For her part, Castillo notes that neither polarity can be deemed superior, each having relative gains and losses: 'Damiela Eltit is privileged (in the traditionally theoretical realms of the academy) and marginalized (in popular terms); Laura Esquivel is also privileged (in popular culture and in popular culture studies) and marginalized (in the academy) in precisely the opposite configuration' (2003: 368). Castillo's stance owes something to her support for Poniatowska's dictum that 'la literatura de mujeres es parte de la literatura de los oprimidos' [women's literature forms part of the literature of the oppressed]: it is, after all, so-called 'lite literature' that is most accessible to the oppressed female (1992: 28).

Women with Attitude: Challenging the Symbolic Order

Although denied an overt voice in publicly sanctioned media, some early exceptional Latin American women writers, such as Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz and Gertrudis Gómez de Avellaneda, sought, through their writings, to promote emancipatory ideas, rebelling against the conventions of their rigid society. Having suffered the discrimination and inequality of being women, not surprisingly they imbued their writings with the attitudes and sentiments which had led them to take such an unconventional path. As Brígida Pastor points out: 'Avellaneda often thrusts women characters to the centre of her work, thereby exploring, revealing and detailing the difficulties of the female subject in a male-dominated world' (2003: 1). Gómez de Avellaneda, like Sor Juana, 'articulates eloquently her dilemma as a writer seeking alternative voices through which to express her identity as a woman' (Pastor, 2003: 1). Interestingly, their writings reveal an apparently paradoxical use

of language – an apologetic and self-deprecatory tendency – reflecting the male censorious attitude towards women's writing (eloquent examples can be found in Sor Juana's *Respuesta a Sor Filotea* [*Reply to Sor Filotea*] and Gómez de Avellaneda's autobiographical writings and prologues to her novels).

The writer who most skilfully combines incisive social criticism with a degree of literary experimentation (or, at least, of self-consciousness) is Laura Restrepo: while gender is of critical import in all her works, its portrayal is enriched by treatment in a diverse range of contexts including the postcolonial and magical realist, familial and national violence, shifting identities, displacement and madness. While her work is vibrant and ultimately positive despite its frequent concentration on bleak human realities, the writing of Alejandra Pizarnik, focusing on cultural displacement and the unhappiness of loving (see below, pp. 144–45), is based on an introspective quest and a personal crisis of identity which led to her suicide at the age of thirty-six (p. 139). In Pizarnik's poetry, the reader finds unrelieved disillusionment – with the world in general, with other people who cannot provide love and with language which hinders rather than facilitates communication. Gabriela Mistral's work is more positive: while the possibility of personal fulfilment appears to have disappeared with the suicide of her lover (see below, p. 56), she is still able to devote herself to the cause of justice for children, a dominant theme in her poetry (Ocampo too was drawn to the world of children, having a preference for child protagonists, who enabled her to explore the passage from innocence to sexual knowledge (see below, p. 85)). Mistral uses the essay form to denounce the exploitation and marginalization of indigenous people (p. 64): in *Poema de Chile* (1967) [*Poem of Chile*] she protests against the country's unjust land tenure system (p. 66), presenting the downtrodden Mapuche as the real founders of Chilean nationhood (see below, p. 67, for further discussion). Unlike Pizarnik, she is able to relate closely to others – as Crow points out in her commentary of Mistral's poem, 'Beber' ['Drinking']: 'her face and the face of the Indian become one, as they drink from the same water, for they belong to the same Indo-American culture' (p. 64).

It is, of course, gender oppression in its various guises that constitutes the main thematic strand in the texts treated here. The root of the problem is to be found in the 'patriarchal' organization of society, as we have seen. As Tierney-Tello states, 'feminist scholarship of the past several decades suggests that what patriarchal discourse most works to naturalize, to render "clear" and beyond interrogation, is women's roles, the family structure, and sexual relations – in other words, the sex/gender system'. She goes on to highlight the role of a 'patriarchal *sexual* economy in which (male) desire is construed as the desire to possess [...]' (1996: 5–6, 13). Patriarchy is often seen as ahistoric, eternal, invisible and unchanging (Lerner, 1986: 37) and,

as many critics have pointed out, women have themselves internalized patriarchal values (see, for example, Coddou, 1986: 30–31; Medeiros-Lichem, 2002b: 33). But despite its aura of infallibility, the patriarchal symbolic order is merely an historic construct that increasingly appears to have run its course (Lerner, 1986: 228). Laura Esquivel's *Como agua para chocolate* has been criticized for its portrayal of conventional roles for women: Tita's mother internalizes the values of the patriarchal order (see below, p. 187); by contrast, Valenzuela contests the 'vested nature of the versions of reality we have internalized' (p. 149). Lerner remarks that stepping outside patriarchal thought implies 'being sceptical toward every known system of thought; being critical of all assumptions, ordering values and definitions' (Lerner, 1986: 228). A writer such as Lispector would, of course, approximate more closely to such a philosophy than would, for example, Allende. As Stephen Hart points out, Lispector's 'A Menor Mulher do Mundo' ['The Smallest Woman in the World'] serves as an allegory of the insignificance of womanhood within patriarchal discourse (see p. 99). By contrast, Poniatowska offers a more explicit response to gender inequalities through her deflation of male national heroes including Pancho Villa (see below, p. 130) and of national icons such as Diego Rivera (pp. 132–34). The cornerstone of patriarchy is marriage, an institution predictably portrayed negatively by feminist writers, notably by Castellanos (1971) in her story 'Lección de cocina' ['Cookery Lesson']. The home is seldom a place of refuge or control within texts by women. In the works of Ferré, for example, the rebellious woman is a familiar figure and is often contextualized as a 'rebel-against-her-family' (p. 173). Nonetheless, women's lives outside the family seem even less enviable: in Castellanos, the unhappy figure of the housewife is only surpassed in adversity by the desperate *soltera*, while Esquivel's Gertrudis repudiates the domestic domain by becoming a *soldadera* and then a prostitute, so reinforcing gender stereotypes. The poignancy of Alfonsina Storni's insight into sexual inequality in a largely male, well educated, middle-class literary world derives from her own status as an unmarried mother (p. 71). Such women writers have made a difference, inflecting Latin American writing with their own distinctly feminine voices, all contesting, in their diverse ways, the patriarchal status quo. However, the journey for the woman writer has not yet been completed. Elena Poniatowska's observations about the woman writer in Mexico can be similarly applied to the situation of the Latin American writer in general:

To be a woman writer [...] is still an arduous conquest; the public and the social sanction weighs on women's shoulders, and until very recently it seemed that one could count with the fingers those who believe that women's mind and creativity is intrinsically valuable and therefore an essential part of our civilization. It is even more: without it, ours cannot be

called civilization. (Inaugural Speech at the conference, 'Literatura Mexicana', 1993, in Medeiros-Lichem, 2002b: 211–12)

Women's Writing and Genre

The concepts of 'canon' and 'genre' are closely linked, whether in the context of a specific national literature or in the grander scheme of the West, the focus of a seminal study by Harold Bloom (1994). The canon can be defined broadly as a body of writings that enjoys status and prestige in the academic and literary establishment, having gained the broad acceptance of critics and anthologists.⁹ This body of writings can be categorized with varying degrees of clarity into types or genres according to its broad structures or features. But while such a procedure may appear to be straightforward, it is worth bearing in mind Guillén's observation that 'the matter of literary genres is an essentially contested concept', largely because genres 'are the most obvious manifestations of the crisscross and superposition of continuity and discontinuity that mark the peculiar itinerary of literature' (1993: 109, 112). Women's writing has contributed centrally to those discontinuities that undermine any notions of stability in recent Latin American literature.

Both canon and genre are sometimes associated with stability. Fowler notes that the official canon is 'usually spoken of as quite stable, if not "totally coherent"' (Fowler, 1982: 137). Similarly, according to Derrida, genre 'establishes a limit with norms and interdictions not far behind' (Derrida, 1980: 203). Duff notes that 'to the modern ear, the word genre – in the sphere of literature at least – carries unmistakable associations of authority and pedantry' (Duff, 2000: 1). However, in both cases, such notions of stability and coherence prove to be a mirage. While Borges developed the view – as Bloom notes – that 'canonical literature is more than a continuity, is indeed one vast poem and story composed by many hands through the ages' (Bloom, 1994: 470), it is clear that such a story is subject to constant modification and rewriting since it acts, as Bloom also notes, as a 'gauge of vitality' (p. 134). Similarly, while genre theory has its uses, forcing us to 'formulate our own notion of the informing principle of texts – texts we might otherwise leave at the level of vague enjoyment or unexamined antipathy' (Gerhart, 1992: 28)¹⁰ – genres themselves offer little

⁹ The history of canon formation is, of course, both complex and controversial – not least because of the application of European canons of criticism to writings determined by other contexts and conditions, such as the Latin American. For detailed analysis, see Gorak (1991).

¹⁰ Culler makes a similar point: 'a genre, one might say, is a set of expectations, a set of instructions about the type of coherence one is to look for and the ways in which sequences are to be read' (1975: 255).

stability: Bakhtin makes the point that ‘genre is reborn and renewed at every stage of the development of literature and in every individual work of a given genre’ (Bakhtin, 1981: 106). Derrida goes further as he calls into question not only the stability of genre but its status as a meaningful category: despite the injunction not to get mixed up in mixing genres, ‘the possibility of genre limits is always already undermined by the impossibility of maintaining those very limits’; for him, the mixing of genres, or what might be termed inter-genre contamination, is inevitable – and undermines any law of genre (Derrida, 1980: 204). Not only do the women writers considered here have recourse to a wide variety of genres (in the case of Gertrudis Gómez de Avellaneda and Rosario Castellanos, for example, novels, short stories, poetry, drama, essays, letters, and autobiography) but their texts often defy clear generic classification: Restrepo refused to accede to the request of her English publisher to indicate whether her second publication, *La isla de la pasión*, was a novel or mere reportage, thus affirming her independence with respect to generic boundaries (Vignolo, 2007: 60). Gómez de Avellaneda’s letters addressed to her unrequited love, Ignacio de Cepeda, were posthumously published under the title of *Autobiografía y Cartas* [*Autobiography and Letters*]; Isabel Allende’s *Paula* is a ‘pseudo-autobiography’ (see below, p. 165) while Valenzuela’s *Novela negra con argentinos* [*Black Novel (with Argentines)*] is a ‘type of detective story’ (p. 213).¹¹ Though classified by critics as ‘literatura light’, Esquivel’s *Como agua para chocolate* [*Like Water for Chocolate*] reworks several mass genres, traditionally coded feminine, such as the *novela por entregas* [serial novel]. Such texts display not a clear genre affiliation but rather ‘anti-genres’ as antitheses to existing genres (Fowler, 2000: 237); or ‘out-law genres’ which facilitate the deconstruction of the ‘master’ genres (Kaplan, 1992: 119); and ‘reverse discourse’ as a mode of resisting the dominant power (Weedon, 1987: 109). As Duff points out, genre has undergone a striking transformation: the word ‘genre’, once regarded as archaic, has been described (by Günther Kress) as encapsulating ‘all the uncertainties and confusions of the post-modern era, whether in the cultural, intellectual or political domains’ (Duff, 2000: 15). Those uncertainties and confusions have been linked to woman as figure of modernity’s suppressed irrationality, an important focus of postmodernism. According to Nelly Richard, the fact that the position of women is structurally and politically inscribed in the marks of ‘absence, the periphery, the Other’ has convinced several theorists that ‘feminism is the paradigmatic political discourse of postmodernism’ (2004: 149–50). It is not insignifi-

¹¹ Meyer discusses the difficulty of classifying Campobello’s *Cartucho*, indicating that critics have referred to it ‘as autobiography, first person historical narrative, testimonial chronicle, and episodic novel’. She concludes that this text has a “‘borderlands quality” of resistance to definition by the dominant culture’ (1996: 47).

cant that Latin American women writers have been absent from the literary canon, that they occupy 'the empty centre within the literary canon' (Condé and Hart, 1991: viii).

Significantly, women are associated with double-talk: Gilbert and Gubar note that Jane Austen's consistent evocation in *Northanger Abbey* of two generic frameworks, the *Bildungsroman* and the burlesque, enable her to express an indictment of patriarchy (Gilbert and Gubar, 1979: 128). Critics have commented on her duplicity, for example, in her 'happy endings' that bring couples 'to the brink of bliss in such haste [...] that the entire message seems undercut' (Gilbert and Gubar, 1979: 169). As Taylor points out, Esquivel resorts to parody to de-stabilize the *novela por entregas* format (see below, pp. 184–85) while the male national romance is undermined by such writers as Ferré, Lispector and Mistral, as we shall see.¹² Pastor too argues that 'Gómez de Avellaneda's fiction can be read as a double-voiced discourse, containing a "dominant" and a "muted" story, termed a "palimpsest"' (2003: 8).¹³

For Isabel Allende, the restrictive character of literary genres, which she sees as having the effect of a straitjacket, is wholly destructive, while the best literature is written by minority groups – 'mujeres, negros, chicanos, indios, emigrantes' (Lindsay, 2003: 117–18). Richard expresses a similar sentiment by applying the Deleuzian notion of 'becoming minority' to a feminine discourse that 'operates as a paradigm of deterritorialization of the regimes of power and of captured identities, centred and regimented by the official culture' (Richard, 2004: 22).

According to Catherine Davies, attention to the significance of gender has resulted in a sea-change in the way the Latin American novel is perceived, interpreted, valued and produced' (2005: 183). It is significant that in Spanish, 'género', the word for (grammatical) gender, has long been established as the term for genre in literature, and that in English, 'genre and gender come from the same root word' (Lindstrom, 1998: 128; Gerhart, 1992: 44). Discussing the need for women to take advantage of 'decanonizing' voices, Richard observes that reframing the canon implies modifying gender boundaries 'in both senses of the word – of literary genres and sexual genders': the urgent task is to shift masculine biases 'according to which official culture designs and reserves compartmentalized territories for each sex: domestic and familial interiority for women, social and political exteriority for men' (Richard, 2004: 25).

¹² There is a connection here with the Mexican writer Elena Garro: Franco notes that her use of romance in the first part of *Recuerdos del porvenir* [*Memories of the Future*] satisfies the desire for a happy ending which the second part of the novel disappoints (1989: 135).

¹³ See Elaine Showalter, 'Feminist Criticism in the Wilderness' (1986), p. 264.

Testimonial writing is seen as a new 'interstitial' genre (Maier, 2004: 4), closely associated with women and other marginalized groups: Román-Lagunas describes it as 'the most explicit example of an expanded notion of feminism' (2004: 114). Significantly, it provides a nexus between the personal and political (2004: 117) and dissolves – as González-Stephen observes – limits and boundaries: 'a las estructuras de autoridad textual (rígidas, herméticas, elitescas) opone un sistema comunicacional flexible, llano, claro, abierto, comprensible para todos' [to the structures of textual authority (rigid, hermetic, elitist) it opposes a flexible, plain, clear and open communication system accessible to all]. It also exposes 'el carácter falso y prejuiciado del esquematismo que opone *oral/popular/analfabeto/espontáneo/no literario a escrito/burgués/alfabeto/codificado/literario* (1991: 89) [the false and prejudiced nature of schema that oppose the oral/popular/illiterate/spontaneous/non-literary to the written/bourgeois/literate/codified/literary]. According to Kaplan, *testimonio* is an outlaw genre that facilitates the deconstruction of the 'master' genres by, for example, challenging the hallowed categories of singular authorship, literary aesthetics and the elite cultural construction of masterpieces (Kaplan, 1992: 119, 123). Or, in Guillén's terms, testimonial writers fight against the genre they are using 'by injecting it with antibodies' (1993: 138): in this case, expression deriving from the popular and spontaneous rather than the literary and cultured (see below, pp. 123–30, for discussion of Elena Poniatowska as testimonial writer).

The novel is undoubtedly the genre most closely associated with women's writing.¹⁴ Double-voiced discourse is important in Latin American women's fiction, as we have seen, and it is no coincidence that this well-known concept was first enunciated by Bakhtin, who exalted the novel at the expense of other genres (Duff, 2000: 9). But such reverence was exceptional: Gerhart notes that the novel has been seen as a substandard genre and systematically associated as such with feminine traits (Gerhart, 1992: 29–30). In Latin America, the relationship between the woman writer and this genre has been complicated by the novel's status as a national allegory: 'women's attempts to plot themselves as protagonists of the national novel became a recognition of the fact that they are not in the plot at all but definitely somewhere else' (Franco, 1989: 146).

¹⁴ Virginia Woolf observes that women writers have been predominantly novelists (1963: 69). Mary Eagleton notes that typically female forms – letters, diaries, and journals – contributed to the novel and refers to Woolf's remark that older forms of literature were 'hardened and set' whereas the novel was open and malleable, 'young enough to be soft in [their] hands' (2000: 254).

This is not to say that the conjunction of woman writer and novel has been unproductive; on the contrary, it was women's fictional output above all else that underpinned their writing and, in particular, its emergence as the most significant phenomenon in the Post-Boom period of Latin American literary history (Shaw, 1998: 71). Evelyn Picón Garfield presents a convincing analysis of Gómez de Avellaneda's *Sab* 'as a novel from which different discourses of marginality emerge, such as race, gender, social and geographical isolation and political exclusion' (1993: 54). Similarly, Medeiros-Lichem observes that 'through the novels of Castellanos, Mastretta and Poniatowska a new awareness for the voice of the marginalized and the involvement of women in the construction of the discourse of the nation broadens the boundaries of women's narrative activity' (2002b: 108). It is also arguable that such innovative writing enriches the form of the novel itself, which, as Bakhtin points out, 'is the sole genre that continues to develop, that is as yet uncompleted' (1981: 3). The historical novel is undoubtedly the prevalent genre among contemporary women writers: 'of late, contemporary Spanish American women writers have devoted themselves almost entirely to the historical novel' (Tompkins, 2006: 77). But, as many commentators have noted, the historical novel gravitates towards opposite poles: on the one hand there are Allende's novels, 'upbeat sentimental romance' consisting of a 'blend of love and politics from a woman's perspective coupled with semi-exoticism and easy reading'; and, on the other, the vastly different novels of Diamela Eltit, whose challenging experimental works appeal to an elitist public (Catherine Davies, 2005: 196). For Davies, Allende and Eltit represent the extreme polarities of women's novel writing in Latin America today: 'popular/historical romance on the one hand and neo-avant-garde experimentation on the other' (2005: 196–97). Lindsay argues that Allende's choice of the short story genre challenges 'the predominantly patriarchal nature of the critical establishment, which values above all [...] novels of the politically engaged, experimental type' (Lindsay, 2003: 119). Romance as a 'genre in process, one that is able to change' (Davies, 2005: 135) is confirmed by Allende's short story, 'Niña perversa' ['Wicked Girl'] which celebrates the mother-daughter relationship rather than the female child's submission to the Law of the Father (2005: 135). Allende conceives of this genre as a feminine challenge to patriarchal literary discourse (2005: 136).¹⁵ Franco's view of romance is more traditional: she refers to Gilbert and Gubar, who describe how Charlotte Brontë

¹⁵ Noting popular romantic fiction as the genre to have most intrigued feminist criticism in recent years, Eagleton remarks that its conservative values can offer little subversive potential except in terms of the genre's exposure of unfulfilled female desire that exceeds the socially possible or acceptable (2000: 254–55).

and Emily Dickinson felt themselves to be slaves of the romantic plot and of the patriarchal structures that plot reflected (1989: 135). She admires the trenchant and incisive style of writers such as Eltit and Mercado, who show that ‘nation’ and ‘community’ cannot be rethought without ‘exposing the limits of a system in which gender has been implicated in social control. At those limits the Enlightenment narrative disintegrates into the language of the mad, the outcast, or the child’ (1989: 141). (Allende implicitly repudiates such a stance by the reference at the end of *Zorro* [Fox]: ‘no hay nada tan insatisfactorio como un final con cabos sueltos’; see below, p. 166). Lindsay approximates to Franco’s position in her discussion of the irony of Rosario Ferré, whose short story ‘Amalia’ repudiates Mármol’s national romance of the same name: ‘in her neo-colonial, island contact zone, a foundational, metropolitan, male-authored fiction appears to have undergone a process of transculturation whereby it has become transformed into a provocative, postmodern feminist version of the original’ (2003: 71). Similarly, Lispector’s *A hora da estrela* [*The Hour of the Star*] as an allegory of the nation, incorporates and subverts Alencar’s *Iracema*. As Paulo de Medeiros points out, Lispector offers us a failed love story and ‘that failure is as important for Lispector’s project as the successful seduction of Martim by Iracema can be said to have been for Alencar’s’ (2002: 150). In her *Poema de Chile* [*Poem of Chile*] Mistral’s setting is rural, ranging from the Atacama Desert in the north to the glaciers of the south. Crow remarks that ‘by narrating the nation in this way – a poetic journey through Chile’s natural landscape, on which the “great” events and supposed “fathers” of national history had no bearing – *Poema de Chile* deviated considerably from the traditional epic form’ (see below, p. 65).

Many feminist writers have advocated the creation of a feminine language, perceiving language in its current form to be a male construct. Kaminsky notes that ‘grammatical formations refuse women’s participation in certain activities’ and observes that there is no elegant term for ‘woman critic’ – ‘*la crítica* is criticism itself and *el crítico* clearly is a man, a case of grammatical gender ratifying historical precedent’ (Kaminsky, 1993: 6). Some writers, such as Luisa Valenzuela and Clarice Lispector, claim to identify a ‘feminine’ language whose peculiar characteristics underpin a distinct identity. For Valenzuela, it is closely based on the female body ‘with its flows and pulsions, with the womb and the splitting of self enacted in sexuality and childbirth, with menstruation, the moon, and the defeat of phallic “insemination”’ (Kantaris, 1995: 37), while Lispector’s style is marked by her use of bodily metaphors: in fact, she conceives of an independent – albeit inchoate – language, ‘Lalande’, redolent of its prelinguistic origins and wholly removed from man-made language (see below, pp. 96–97). Luisa Valenzuela describes Lispector’s *A Paixão Segundo G.H.* [*Passion According to G.H.*] as using a special form of subversive language specific