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SOR JUANA'S GENDER TRANSGRESSIONS IN THE WORKS OF ANA CLAVEL AND CRISTINA RIVERA GARZA

Abstract

Although the Sor Juana archetype seems to be a constant in recent works by Mexican women writers, this essay examines the works of Ana Clavel and Cristina Rivera Garza, for their engaging discussion on gender matters. In their writings, Sor Juana behaves like a man or becomes one, explores the world of masculinity, and places women and men on the same continuum, regardless of sex, sexual orientation and behavior. Under their fictional scope, Sor Juana stops being a *rara avis* and "presents" herself with the worries of any and every woman and man, disconnected for an instant from her intellectual quests. By virtue of these intertextual dialogues, we can successfully revive Sor Juana today, even if every study of her life and works is, to a certain degree, a creation of our own, inevitably influenced by the world we live in, the books we read and the theories that shape our imagination.

Keywords: Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz, Ana Clavel, Cristina Rivera Garza, Rewriting, Gender, Transgression.

Resumen

Aunque el arquetipo de Sor Juana aparece constantemente en los trabajos de distintas escritoras mexicanas, este ensayo examina las obras de Ana Clavel y Cristina Rivera Garza, por sus sugerentes discusiones de género. En sus escrituras, Sor Juana se comporta como un hombre o se transforma en uno, explora el mundo de la masculinidad y sitúa a las mujeres y a los hombres en una misma línea, independientemente del sexo, la orientación o el comportamiento sexual. Dentro de sus respectivos ambientes ficcionales,

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Sor Juana deja de ser *rara avis* y se “presenta” con las preocupaciones de cualquier hombre y mujer, desconectada por un instante de sus pasiones intelectuales. Gracias a estos diálogos intertextuales, hoy podemos revivir a Sor Juana, aunque el estudio de su vida y obras sea, hasta cierto punto, una creación nuestra, inevitablemente influenciada por el mundo en el que vivimos, por los libros que leemos y las teorías que forman nuestra imaginación.

Palabras clave: Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz, Ana Clavel, Cristina Rivera Garza, reescritura, género, transgresión.

“Este, que ves, engaño colorido”
 (This object which you see—a painted snare)¹
 —Sor Juana—

At least within the walls of our academic community, everyone seems to know how this story goes. The verbal portrait that Sor Juana crafts for the Bishop of Puebla in her autobiographical *Respuesta a Sor Filotea de la Cruz* (Answer to Sister Filotea de la Cruz) clearly belongs to a woman that struggled, since early childhood until her premature death at the age of forty-four, to disintegrate the gender boundaries that separate men from women. In short, it is the story of a child who begged her mother to dress her up like a boy to be able to attend the university with other men. Unable to make her dream come true, she consoled herself invading the masculine world of letters at her grandfather’s personal library. A few years later, already at the viceregal palace of Mexico City as one of the vicereine’s companions, she surprised the most knowledgeable nobles of her society with logical arguments that, supposedly, could only be produced by men. When she entered the convent of San Jerónimo in 1669, she did it to escape marriage, to read and write, to live by herself without the company of any man, and definitely not because of religious vocation. Despite the numerous discrepancies in regards to her pious conversion or her absolute determination to continue with her studies at the end of her life, Sor Juana enters this new century as a living tale or popular legend that defied gender differences and produced the best literature of Colonial America, unmatched by any male figure.

It is well accepted among critics that Sor Juana used her writing to create a multifarious image of her male and female counterparts, an androgynous combination that, as we have seen over the past two decades of sorjuanine studies, challenged gender roles during her lifetime. Therefore, readers of today can find in her work the historical individual, the writing subject, and the textual self that emerges from a multiplicity of voices, or ventriloquist reproductions of different literary discourses. As Frederick Luciani illustrates in his eloquent *Literary Self-Fashioning in Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz*, the nun uses her poetic voice to construct distinctive images of herself in her love and portrait poems, her letters and essays, her plays and even her *villancicos* (carols) written for religious ceremonies. This artifice is especially noticeable when she speaks through the voice of Leonor in *Los empeños de una casa* (The House of Trials), when she becomes Isis, the Goddess of Wisdom, in her *Neptuno alegórico* (Allegorical Neptune), and also when she uses Teseo's speech in *Amor es más laberinto* (Love is More Labyrinth) to declare that human beings "fall into two basic categories: not male and female, but the wise and the foolish."² The poet's ability to borrow the language of others,³ employing emblematic and metaphysical artillery,⁴ even when composing *letras sacras* (sacred lyrics),⁵ in order to invent several versions of herself—as a woman, man, or neutral individual—rejects the "feminine" convention of silence and breaks gender boundaries.⁶

Considered "masculine" by a few or "feminist" by others, Sor Juana continually appears as a vibrant woman in the artistic productions that focus on her multifaceted figure. The acclaimed Mexican actress Ofelia Medina, for instance, has traveled all over Mexico, Europe, and the United States with *Sor Juana Hoy* (Sor Juana Today) (1991–2003), a theatrical production that incorporates Sor Juana's life, her poetry, her philosophical worries, and her desire for a world where a woman can speak. Produced more than fifteen years ago, María Luisa Bemberg's film *Yo, la peor de todas* (I, The Worst of All) (1990) still seduces its viewers suggesting a lesbian relationship between the famous nun and the lady who protected her, the Countess María Luisa de Paredes. Counterbalancing the antique portraits where Juana Inés is always wearing her immense religious gown with an emblematic badge on her chest, and a long rosary with an unflinching cross, Jorge Sánchez gives us a provocative

painting of her with long hair, a sensual neck and a torso that reveals her female attributes.⁷ Others, like Southwest artist Marta Arat, would rather sanctify her with a crown of roses over her black veil, making her look like a close relative of Santa Rosa de Lima (1995).⁸ Musicians, on the other hand, cannot resist the temptation to put music to her words.⁹

These sorts of dialogues with Sor Juana are also present in contemporary literature. Not only has she been quoted left and right by many Latin American writers, including Rosario Castellanos, Carlos Fuentes, and Rosario Ferré, but she now appears as the main protagonist in the novel of Chicana writer Alicia Gaspar de Alba, *Sor Juana's Second Dream* (1999), and also in the monumental piece recently created by the Canadian scholar Paul Anderson, *Hunger's Brides* (2005). Although the Sor Juana archetype, as Emily Hind points out, seems to be a constant in recent works by Mexican women writers, from Asunción Izquierdo Albiñana to Ángeles Mastretta and Laura Esquivel, in this essay I examine the works of two authors, Ana Clavel (Mexico, 1961) and Cristina Rivera Garza (Mexico, 1964), who go one step beyond those rewritings that often emphasize female infertility and "divorce the female intellectual or artist from biological maternity."¹⁰ In their writings Sor Juana seamlessly emerges from the ashes of history, behaves like a man or becomes one, explores the world of masculinity, and places women and men on the same continuum, asserting one more time, in a metaphorical sense, that deep down we are all the same, regardless of our sex, sexual orientation and behavior.

Cuerpos a la deriva (Drifting Bodies)

Even though it is possible to find hints of Sor Juana in the invisibility of Soledad, the protagonist of Ana Clavel's first novel, *Los deseos y su sombra* (Desires and Their Shadow) (2000),¹¹ the author communicates explicitly with the seventeenth century poet-nun in *Cuerpo náufrago* (Shipwrecked Body) (2005).¹² Starting *in medias res*, this recent novel tells the story of Antonia, a 27-year-old woman who wakes up transformed as a man. The physical changes that go along with her magical and rather unexplainable metamorphosis are evident at once: her round breasts have been replaced by a

flat chest; her back is considerably wider; her arms and legs have substantially grown more hair; she now has a very pronounced jaw line, an Adam's apple and a penis, as the undoubting symbol of a male body. Naturally, Antonia's transformation surpasses the limits of verisimilitude, but her analysis of the situation immediately creates an intertextual connection with Sor Juana's story. In search of a logical answer to this dramatic sex change, Antonia is forced to revisit her almost forgotten childhood, when she wished to become a man. "Cierto que desde pequeña había deseado ser hombre," explains her narrator, "no porque se creyera varón atrapado en el cuerpo de una mujer, sino porque la intrigaba la naturaleza de esos seres que, suponía, eran más completos y más libres que ella" (It was true that she had desired to be a man since she was little, not because she believed to be a man trapped in a woman's body, but because she was intrigued by the nature of those selves that, she supposed, were more complete and had more freedom than her).¹³ Surrounded by a masculine culture that relegated women to the outskirts of knowledge, Sor Juana faced the same dilemma as a child.

The modern connection between Antonia and the nun becomes more evident when the narrator of *Cuerpo naufrago* reconstructs an anecdote that seems to have been taken directly from Sor Juana's *Respuesta* to the Bishop of Puebla, Manuel Fernández de Santa Cruz. As we know, in that letter she recalls how at the age of six or seven:

Sabiendo ya leer y escribir, con todas las otras habilidades de labores y costuras que dependen las mujeres, oí decir que había Universidad en Méjico; y apenas lo oí empecé a matar a mi madre con instantes e importunos ruegos sobre que, mudándome el traje, me enviase a Méjico, en casa de unos deudos que tenía, para estudiar y cursar la Universidad.

([Since I] already knew how to read and write, along with all the other skills like embroidery and sewing that women learn, I heard that in Mexico City there was a University and Schools where they studied the sciences. As soon as I heard this I began to slay my poor mother with insistent and annoying pleas, begging her to dress me in men's clothes and send me to the capital, to the home of some relatives she had there, so that I could enter the University and study).¹⁴

The now popular and often quoted autobiographical passage that underlines Sor Juana's hunger for knowledge undergoes a slight transformation in the work of Ana Clavel. The author eliminates any intellectual inclinations from Antonia but implants in her personality the seed of gender transgression: "En más de una ocasión, ya adolescente, se había disfrazado en su recámara, jugando a relamerse el cabello y probarse la ropa de sus hermanos. . . . Fingía entonces poses varoniles y descubría con qué facilidad podría hacerse pasar por un muchacho" (In more than one occasion, as an adolescent, she had dressed up in her bedroom, pulling her hair back and trying on her brothers' clothes. . . . She used to adopt masculine poses and discovered how easy it would be to pass as a guy).¹⁵ The potential advantages to gender transformation are numerous for teenager Antonia, ranging from being able to play soccer in public to walking around the city without fear of physical and verbal aggression, and the apparently remote possibility of getting grease on her hands and pants while fixing a bike. All of these obviously unacceptable activities or unavailable opportunities for a woman who lives in a patriarchal society, such as Mexico's, address the fallacy of gender construction.

On one hand, Antonia's desire to become a man and the sudden consummation of her physical alterations rejuvenate old and current debates regarding male and female in Western philosophy. Even though much research has been done to demonstrate that "gender is a cultural idea rather than a biological fact,"¹⁶ today we can still find "the dichotomy between male as rational and capable of universally valid thought and female as emotional and tethered to the particularity of her body and situation."¹⁷ Also in the midst of this argument, it is possible to uncover a portrait of Sor Juana, who resolved this issue with poetic justice, over three hundred years ago. Unable to obtain a position of equality for her and other women of her world, the nun empowers herself throughout her work and creates a strong female community reigned by Saint Paula, the Queen of Saba, the Virgin Mary, and Saint Catherine of Alexandria. Nonetheless, her once ignored question regarding women's rationality, "¿no tienen [las mujeres] alma racional como los hombres?" (don't women have rational souls like men?),¹⁸ faces in Clavel's narrative new complications regarding individual identity: "¿había dejado de ser Antonia por el hecho de haber cambiado de

sexo de la noche a la mañana?" (Had she stopped being Antonia because she had a sex change overnight?).¹⁹

This inquiry raises a new set of variables to determine the validity of a theoretical postulate that proposes that "natural" women and men act in very distinctive ways due to biological factors, as opposed to the gender argument that identity is a role, and "character traits are not autonomous qualities but functions and ways of relating."²⁰ Antonia may have the body of a man, but she has no clue of how to act like one. If, according to Judith Butler, we become subjects "from our performances and the performances of others towards us,"²¹ what Antonia needs is a role model to internalize her new gender. Since her father is already dead and her two brothers live abroad (one in London and the other one in Oregon), she looks for a *script*²² in the most famous medieval book of chivalry that managed to cross the Atlantic from the Iberian Peninsula to the New World in the heart of every Spanish conquistador: *Amadís de Gaula* (Amadis of Gaul). The occurrence entertains us for its obvious anachronism, exaggeration and intentional comic break within the narrative. At the same time, however, Antonia's excursion through those pages of enhanced masculinity, reveal the secondary and/or passive role that a patriarchy assigns to women:

Vaya, de modo que en vez de ser rescatada he de ser yo la que rescate. ¿será posible que los hombres crean que tienen el deber de salvar a alguien? Se mordió el pensamiento—por no decir la lengua—pues pronto reconoció que, aunque ella misma gozaba de cierta autonomía, todas sus relaciones amorosas habían fracasado porque, de alguna forma, siempre había esperado ser salvada, elegida, rescatada, vista, apreciada, descubierta, en un uso irracional y desmesurado de la voz pasiva.

(So, instead of being rescued, I should be the one rescuing. Is it possible that men think that it's their duty to save someone? She bit her thoughts—rather than her tongue—for she soon realized that, although she enjoyed a certain degree of autonomy, all of her amorous relationships had failed because, in some way, she had always waited to be saved, elected, rescued, seen, appreciated, discovered, making an irrational and disproportionate use of the passive voice).²³

The social separation between men and women becomes more palpable during Antonia's first outing to the city as a man. It is there that the protagonist finally notices that because she is a man (or because people perceive her as a man), she receives a different type of treatment from the girl who sells newspapers in the corner or from the middle-age woman who makes her fall on the sidewalk spilling a bucket of soapy water. Throughout the novel, Antonia will continue to experience the effects of gender differentiation as she goes to bars, bath houses, strip joints, and men's restrooms, where, at least momentarily, men take off their masks, reveal their insecurities, their fears and failures. Her physical excursions to the male world and her almost awkward obsession with the shape of urinals, as well as the problematic association of these objects with mouths or female genitalia, have little or nothing in common with Sor Juana's genuine quest for knowledge. But just as Sor Juana is well aware of the fact that she is invading a world made for men, therefore lamenting: "¿qué acción hago sin temor? ¿Qué palabra digo sin recelo? Las mujeres sienten que las exceda; los hombres, que parezca que los igualo" (what do I do without fear? ¿What word do I say without distrust? Women mind that I exceed them; men fear that I'm their equal),²⁴ Antonia soon realizes that she has a conflict of her own. The change has been external: she looks like a man, has learned how to behave like a man, and people treat her like a man. Internally, however, Antonia, also known as Antón, feels exactly the same as before her sex transformation. Although she is now attracted to women, she is still attracted to men: "Nunca como ahora había experimentado la sensación opresiva de ser tráfuga sobre todo por el temor a que una mirada suya, un gesto inapropiado, la hicieran parecer sospechosa a los ojos de los otros" (Never before had she experimented the oppressive sensation of being a fugitive, afraid that one of her own looks, an inappropriate gesture, would make her appear suspicious to the eyes of others).²⁵

Perhaps the most sorjuanine moment in the story happens when Antón starts a relationship with Claudia but is unable to "perform" as a man. Instead of blaming himself, his new body, his transformation, his ambiguity or internal conflict as a woman trapped in a man's body, he chooses the easy way out and holds her responsible for his unsuccessful sexual experience. Little does he know that his claim: "Es que tú no me excitas lo suficiente" (You don't excite me

enough),²⁶ will encounter the voice of an empowered Claudia who protests: "¿De modo que a ti no se te para y yo soy la culpable?" (So you can't get it up, and it's my fault).²⁷ Almost immediately, Claudia's words activate the words of a colonial nun who also disputed the blame that men tend to put on women with a philosophical satire that still acts as a verbal weapon against male aggression: "Hombres necios que acusáis / a la mujer sin razón / sin ver que sois la ocasión / de lo mismo que culpáis" (You foolish and unreasoning men / who cast all blame on women, / not seeing you yourselves are cause / of the same faults you accuse).²⁸ Together, the statements produced explicitly by Antón and Claudia and implicitly by Sor Juana form a composite discourse, a body of knowledge in Foucaultian terms, one that overflows the pages of the *Amadís*. It reveals the symbolic script that Antonia was trying to find all this time, precisely because "it provides us with ideals of masculinity and femininity which render certain behavior appropriate and others not."²⁹

Vocalizing a language that understands culture, society, and history but not necessarily nature as defining factors of gender, Sor Juana and Ana Clavel confirm that "speaking of gender does not mean speaking only of women."³⁰ In their own way, both writers are allowing their literary selves the freedom to transgress from the feminine to the masculine world to show that gender is a social construction. To pull us away from any dichotomy of male and female, good or bad, superior and inferior, passive or active, in one of her poems Sor Juana will argue: "sólo sé que mi cuerpo, / sin que a uno u otro se incline, / es neutro, o abstracto, cuanto / sólo el alma deposite" (I know only that my body, / not to either state inclined, / is neuter, abstract, guardian / of only what my soul consigns).³¹ Along these lines, after spending endless hours analyzing men's behaviors in public restrooms and showers or other places where most women are not allowed, Antonia (or Antón) concludes:

Tal vez el asunto de los sexos no sea más que la impostura de trajes estrechos . . . a pesar de los tiempos que corren el cuerpo soy-mujer sigue siendo un vestido con corsé, lo mismo que el cuerpo soy-hombre es una armadura. Nos preocupamos y ocupamos de las diferencias (incluso en el cuerpo soy-gay) pero hay bocanadas de pez fuera del agua y desgarraduras más profundas: el deseo boquiabierto, la

angustia de estar vivos, la soledad, la tristeza, en fin, de que vamos a morirnos, sin remedio, sin sentido.

(Perhaps sex is no more than a tight-fitting suit . . . even these days the body of a woman is still a dress with a corset, just as the body of a man is an armature. We worry about and deal with the differences (even in the case of a gay body) but there are deeper issues at stake: the open-mouthed desire, the anxiety of being alive, the solitude, the sadness that, after all, we will die, inevitable, without any significance).³²

To finally remove any traces of difference between the sexes, Clavel lets Antonia's best friend, Raimundo, pronounce a statement at the end of the novel that winds up her thoughts on gender: "Más que en los cuerpos, es en el corazón donde reside el secreto y la diferencia. El verdadero sexo y la auténtica identidad se abren camino desde ahí. Lo demás, son sólo ropajes, vestiduras, disfraces. Cuesta mucho trabajo ir desnudos, el corazón expuesto." (It's not in the bodies but in the hearts where the secret and difference reside. The true gender and authentic identity find their ways starting here. The rest is just garments, vestments, costumes. It's hard to be naked, with the heart exposed.)³³ This is how the author of *Cuerpo náufrago* imprints for her readers that "the sexed nature of both women and men is not natural but cultural."³⁴

Being a woman writer in seventeenth century New Spain could not have been easy for Sor Juana. When her religious sisters were writing mystical memoirs following orders from their spiritual mentors, letters or confessions that would be interpreted and used by men to produce their own stories of religious devotion, the prodigy from the convent of San Jerónimo dared to refute a sermon delivered by a well-known priest, wrote philosophical essays, competed with male poets, produced somewhat unorthodox *villancicos*, and received public recognition of her brilliance in Spanish America, Spain, and Portugal. As expected, her reputation became a problem. The church had to silence her. One year before her death, in 1694, Sor Juana renounced to her passion for knowledge, sold her library and confessed in a document signed with her own blood to have been "la peor del mundo" (the worst of all).³⁵ This picture of a defeated intellectual silenced to death, however, can also be seen as another act of transgression.

If we agree with Susan Sontag that “silence remains, inescapably, a form of speech (in many instances, of complaint or indictment) and an element in a dialogue,”³⁶ we can take Sor Juana’s silence as a determination to pursue her academic activities more deviously than before. Besides the fact that many unfinished documents were found in her cell right before her death, along with over one hundred and eighty books, her silence did not erase her previous work, her competence or many accomplishments as a woman who continuously battled to dissolve gender differences. After all, she still manages to influence the work of contemporary authors who look at her as an example of the always problematic search for a public place carried out by women throughout history. Ana Clavel is one of these authors. She approaches Sor Juana with a gender perspective that resuscitates her mysterious figure from apparent silence. She lets the nun transgress the male and female bodies in a metaphorical way, connects her concerns with those of men and women today, and brings her back to life. By the time we reach the conclusion of *Cuerpo náufrago*, Antonia or Antón has become an androgynous person: “él o ella” (he or she) remains neutral “porque cabía la duda sobre su género aunque poco importara para aquellos que podían percibir su belleza” (for there were doubts about his/her gender, although that didn’t matter to those who could see his/her beauty).³⁷ We close the novel and put it back on the bookshelf, but just as we are turning away, we hear Sor Juana’s voice like an echo that comes from afar, coming closer and closer to us: “Ser mujer, ni estar ausente, / no es de amarte impedimento, / pues *sabes tú que las almas / distancia ignoran y sexo*” (That you’re a woman far away / is no hindrance to my love: / for *the soul, as you well know, / distance and sex don’t count*).³⁸

Cuerpos y cartas (Bodies and Letters)

Born only three years after Ana Clavel, the better known writer Cristina Rivera Garza approaches Sor Juana from a radically different angle, with the use of truly innovative narrative techniques to give us “una lección magistral respecto a qué hace un narrador joven con su pasado” (a masterly lesson on what a young narrator does with her past).³⁹ As she clearly states in a recent interview, her knowledge and appreciation of the nun’s works does not predetermine her

literary creations, nor does it become the ammunition of a feminist manifesto. She openly rejects the conception of “una literatura de tesis . . . una literatura panfletaria que pretende dar respuestas en lugar de plantear preguntas, de preferencia imposibles” (a thesis literature . . . a political literature that pretends to provide answers instead of posing preferably impossible questions).⁴⁰ These sorts of informal theorizations on the nature of literature are evident in her short stories and novels, especially in those that revive Sor Juana when we least expect it, as it happens in one of the narratives in her collection of short stories *Ningún reloj cuenta esto* (No Clock Can Count This).⁴¹

At a first glance, the story “La alienación también tiene su belleza” is simply that of an unemployed young Mexican woman who lives in San Antonio, Texas, in a community shelter with a group of ex-hippies. Her quick response to a newspaper ad that calls for a translator and seems to have been written for her, immediately reminds us of Carlos Fuentes’s *Aura*, where Felipe Montero is mysteriously compelled to visit an old house on Donceles Street, in order to take a job as a bilingual historian. Only this time, instead of finding an aging and seemingly decrepit Consuelo Llorente on her bed, the anonymous protagonist of Rivera Garza’s story meets an elegant business woman: Diamantina Skvork. Her job will be to translate from their original Spanish to English a set of nine letters written by Diamantina’s Mexican grandmother, who has recently passed away. Aside from the leitmotif of the letters, no element in the story reminds us of Sor Juana. In total contradiction with the argumentative spirit that dominates the nun’s *Carta Atenagórica* (Letter Worthy of Athena), her *Respuesta a Sor Filotea de la Cruz*, or the letter that she addressed to her confessor, also known as the *Carta de Monterrey* (The Monterrey Letter), Grandma Diamantina’s letters are short and sad, full of commonplaces, and a tedious rosary of repetitive love expressions: “*Amor, carne de mi carne, amor de mí, sangre de mi amor, amor . . . mi más querido amor, te extraño con toda mi alma*” (My love, flesh from my flesh, love of mine, blood from my love, love, most my dear love, I miss you with all my soul).⁴²

After thirteen hours of hard work in front of the computer, the translator is able to decipher the content of the nine letters:

La abuela Diamantina, a la edad de 17 años, se había enamorado perdidamente de Pedro González Martínez, un hombre que trabajaba en el campo y, por toda seña, tenía un caballo. Después de varias citas a escondidas, Diamantina le había abierto su corazón y el cuerpo entero al amparo de la sombra oscura de un mezquite. Consciente de su posición y, tal vez, también consciente de su amor, Pedro había cruzado la frontera con la esperanza de labrarse un porvenir y con la promesa de regresar en cuanto pudiera. Por todo recuerdo le dejó a Diamantina una imagen de la Virgen de los Remedios, con un corazón mal dibujado en la parte posterior y sus dos nombres encerrados, juntos. Así: Diamantina y Pedro.

(At the age of 17, Grandma Diamantina had hopelessly fallen in love with Pedro González Martínez, a man who worked in the fields and, by all signs, had a horse. After several visits in secret, Diamantina had offered her heart and entire body to him, under the dark shadow of a mesquite. Aware of his position and, perhaps, of his love, Pedro had crossed the border in hopes of finding a brighter future, promising to come back as soon as possible. Everything indicated that he left her a stamp of the Virgin of the Remedies, with a poorly-drawn heart on the back, and their names locked up, together. Like this: Diamantina and Pedro).⁴³

Contrary to our expectations, as soon as we fall for this love story the narrator surprises the readers with the true account from the lips of Diamantina's granddaughter:

Mi abuela . . . mi querida abuela. Ella también dejó Coahuila por San Antonio . . . venía para casarse, pero no con Pedro González Martínez, sino con Ignacio López Castro, un licenciado de la región. . . . Después de tener a su única hija, la abuela Diamantina se convirtió en una de las primeras mujeres divorciadas de Texas. Ella denunció a Ignacio López Castro por sus malos tratos y adulterio, pero cuando el divorcio le fue negado, alegó entonces que se demandaba a sí misma por las mismas causas. *Como prueba ofreció estas cartas. Así obtuvo su libertad y se quedó como quería, sin casarse y sola.*

(My grandma . . . my dear grandma. She also left Coahuila for San Antonio . . . she was coming to marry, not Pedro

González Martínez, but Ignacio López Castro, a lawyer from the region. . . . After having her only daughter, Grandma Diamantina became one of the first divorced women in Texas. She accused Ignacio López Castro for mistreating her and for being adulterous, but when the divorce was denied to her, she argued against herself, under the same charges. *She offered these letters to win her case. That's how she obtained her freedom and remained as she wished, without getting married and by herself*).⁴⁴

The discovery of the exact nature of these letters immediately connects their deceased author with the writer–nun from Colonial Mexico, who confesses in her *Respuesta* to have entered the convent due to her “total negación que tenía al matrimonio” as well as her natural inclination “de querer vivir sola” (absolute unwillingness to enter into marriage . . . wanting to leave alone).⁴⁵

Although we could interpret Grandma Diamantina’s actions as an act of early feminism, Rivera Garza implicitly criticizes Patricia Spacks’s theorizations on *The Female Imagination*. In the same manner that Sor Juana composes her *Respuesta* to the Bishop of Puebla with various “tricks of the weak”⁴⁶ from a subordinated position in the hierarchical and patriarchal society of New Spain, Diamantina writes hers with tricks of her own. The written portrayal of her “feelings” and her “ways of reacting” in the absence of her lover, displaying stereotypical “inherent female characteristics” (Spacks 11), serve as a foundation or façade to cover her true intentions. Unlike Sor Juana, who is not *just* interested in living without the responsibilities of marriage but is, in fact, devoted to her studies, “el sosegado silencio de mis libros” (the tranquil silence of my books),⁴⁷ Diamantina seems to be *simply* interested in her freedom. “¡A qué la abuela Diamantina!” comments her surprised translator. “Lluvia de diamantes, parvada de papelitos sueltos. Tan seductora y tan mentirosa. . . . Sin casarse y sola, como ella quería, toda la libertad para ella solita en San Antonio Texas” (Oh, Grandma Diamantina! Diamond shower, flock of loose papers. So seductive and such a liar. . . . Not married and alone, as she wished, all the freedom to herself in San Antonio Texas).⁴⁸ We could argue, nonetheless, that both women use their writing as a tool to obtain a place of their own within their respective societies.

If we take into consideration Luciani's thesis that Sor Juana's letters may also hide a well-crafted process of "literary self-fashioning," one that serves "both self-promotive and self-protective functions,"⁴⁹ we can rightfully relate her persona to the rebellious Diamantina. Without necessarily aligning their stories with feminism, it is still possible to image that, connected across times and between lines, each one of them approaches Luce Irigaray's concept of *hablar-mujer* (speaking-woman). In their own ways, Sor Juana and Diamantina create a space, "en el que las mujeres se permit[en] hablar como ellas hablan, 'sin dejarse distraer por la norma o el hábito,' para no recaer en el mismo 'lenguaje que reproduce las mismas historias'" (in which women give themselves permission to speak the way they speak, 'without the disturbances of norm or habit,' in an effort to stay away from the same 'language that produces the same stories').⁵⁰ As Verónica Grossi asserts in a recent article on Sor Juana's reception since the seventeenth century, phallogocentric criticism has read her varied literary production as a mere biography, but more recent studies reveal that her work "no escenifica la renuncia, el fracaso, la capitulación ante el poder, el silenciamiento, la enfermedad y la muerte sino la afirmación del poder intelectual y político de la mujer; en particular, su derecho inalienable al conocimiento, a la interpretación y a la participación en la sociedad" (does not represent renunciation, failure, surrender to power, silencing, sickness and death, for it affirms a woman's intellectual and political power; in particular, her inalienable right to knowledge, interpretation, and societal participation).⁵¹ As we know, this determination is present even in the heart of her religious compositions, where the nun writes with the language of the church to transgress the passive role that is typically assigned to women by various ecclesiastical authorities. Likewise, if we untangle Diamantina's *Lover's Discourse*, manufactured with the "absence," "anxiety," "dedication," and "drama" that Roland Barthes considers to be essential elements or mechanisms of love, it is clear that she writes her (fictional) letters with the vocabulary that is expected of her gender, but only in order to influence the men who ultimately allow her to be free.

This transgression of assigned gender roles takes an ambitious route in Rivera Garza's *La cresta de Ilión* (Ilion's Crest).⁵² While her short stories and her first novel, *Nadie me verá llorar* (No One Will

See Me Cry),⁵³ have received a great deal of attention from the critics, *La cresta de Ilión* stands as a nebulous narrative that awaits proper interpretation. The story starts in the middle of a stormy night, when an anonymous male doctor is visited by a young and seductive woman who goes by the name of Amparo Dávila and whose most distinctive characteristic is her pronounced hip bone. During that same night, the man's ex-girlfriend, identified as La Traicionada, also shows up at the door. As the novel progresses, these mysterious women will develop a close friendship and a *borgesian* language of their own, making him feel like a prisoner at home. Aside from the intertextual link between his first visitor and the almost forgotten Mexican writer Amparo Dávila of the mid twentieth century (*Zacatecas*, 1928), the readers are left without any clues to solve the enigma of why this woman *a priori* confronts his masculinity: "Yo sé tu secreto. . . . Yo sé que tú eres mujer" (I know your secret. . . . I know that you're a woman).⁵⁴ Oscillating between an ambiguous Ciudad del Norte and a vague Ciudad del Sur, the entire novel will revolve around this mystery as "un cuestionamiento sobre la construcción de las características de la identidad misma basada en las narrativas del género sexual" (a questioning of the construction of identity traits, based on sexual gender narratives).⁵⁵

From this moment on, we accompany the autodiegetic narrator in his search for the truth or myth behind this blunt accusation. Although he first admits, "Soy un hombre al que se le malentiende con frecuencia" (I am a man who is frequently misunderstood),⁵⁶ he quickly dissipates his gender worries after inspecting himself in front of a mirror: "Tuve que moverme varias veces y ver mi reflejo moverse al unísono conmigo, para convencerme de que se trataba del mismo. Toqué mi sexo y, con evidente alivio, comprobé que mi pene y mis testículos seguían en su sitio. Amparo Dávila y la Traicionada me estaban jugando una broma muy pesada" (I had to move several times to see my reflection moving in unison with me, in order to convince myself that it was the same. I touched myself and, with evident relief, I verified that my penis and my testicles were in their place. Amparo Dávila and the Traicionada were trying to fool me).⁵⁷ As proof that "gender identities are circumscribed and socially constituted,"⁵⁸ this doctor feels the need to confirm his now fragile masculinity by having sex with two of his female co-workers. Although nothing about them truly interests him, what matters here

is that he gains peace of mind, derived from a sexual encounter that defines him as a man and not a woman. He strongly believes that his ability to perform as a man, "contradecía flagrantemente la aserción de Amparo Dávila. . . . Amparo Dávila, me lo repetí justo cuando mi pene entraba y salía rápidamente del culo de una de ellas, *estaba equivocada*" (openly contradicted Amparo Dávila's assertion. . . . Amparo Dávila, I repeated it to myself just as my penis was going in and out of one of their asses, *was mistaken*).⁵⁹

Assembled with the same suspense and ambivalence of "La alienación también tiene su belleza," the Sor Juana connection is not obvious in the first pages of *La Cresta de Ilión*, but it manages to permeate the story right on time. Not completely reassured of his masculinity by the presence of his male sex organs, the narrator searches for the truth of his gender and orientation in a different arena. Wondering through the streets of Ciudad del Sur, in a dreamlike scene, he discovers the mythical existence of the historical Amparo Dávila and describes her apartment as a physical and mental space saturated by "una sensación de *impasse*, de *algo detenido no dentro del tiempo sino en algún lugar fuera de él*" (a sensation of *impasse*, of *something held up not within time but somewhere outside of it*).⁶⁰ These words, used here to describe the living quarters of the magical silhouette of Amparo Dávila, redirect our attention to Sor Juana's *Villancicos a la Concepción* (Carols to the Immaculate Conception) of 1689. In the chorus of the fifth composition of this set of religious songs, we hear the poetic voice of an instructor who requires our silence to deliver an important lecture: "¡Un instante me escuchen, / que cantar quiero / un instante que estuvo / fuera del tiempo!" (Listen to me for an instant / that I want to sing / an instant that was / out of time).⁶¹ At this point, the readers who recognize the lines that link Amparo's surreal environment and Sor Juana's poetic creations are forced to take an "inferential walk" to the side of the page,⁶² in order to revive the nun's intellectual transgressions.

During this mental excursion, we are at once reminded of the fact that Sor Juana manipulates the traditional "form" of the *villancicos* to implant a revolutionary "content" in regards to the Immaculate Conception of Mary.⁶³ The cult that is appropriated in 1476 as part of the Roman Church is not defined as a Catholic doctrine and dogma until 1854.⁶⁴ Even taking into account the high impact of Mariolatry

in Sor Juana's New Spain, the nun goes above and beyond any traditional expressions of Marian devotion. In this particular set of *villancicos*, for example, Sor Juana emphasizes Mary's superiority, clearly stating that "Dios en Ella restituye / al Orbe sus perfecciones" (God restores in Her / the perfections of the World).⁶⁵ As she usually does in these religious songs, she demonstrates, once again, that God is the one who wins by allowing Mary to conceive His son by means of the Holy Spirit, "porque ¿a quién importó más / el nacer de Madre limpia?" (for, who was more interested / in having a pure Mother?)⁶⁶ The poetic voice that delivers her sermons is the same one that Sor Juana uses to transgress the limitations of her gender in those religious compositions where the virgin is portrayed as "Soberana Doctora / de las Escuelas divinas" (Sovereign Doctor / of divine Schools)⁶⁷ or "Valiente de aventuras, / Deshacedora de tuertos" (adventurous Brave, / problem Solver).⁶⁸ It is a voice that transgresses gender norms, produced by a woman of the church who insists not only "on the primacy of reason" but also on the "equality of sexes."⁶⁹

As we return to our reading of *La Cresta de Ilión*, we soon realize that the author has appropriately placed Sor Juana's words in her novel to serve as a prelude to obscure the protagonist's gender troubles and to make her readers reconsider what differentiates men from women. To his detriment, the aging woman who seems to have been taken out of a horror film, "una verdadera anciana. Frágil. Quebradiza como una hoja de papel guardada por mucho tiempo en un archivo en malas condiciones" (a genuine old woman. Fragile. Breakable like a piece of paper that has been kept in an archive under bad conditions, for a long time),⁷⁰ treats him as if he were a woman. In a painful effort to convince himself that his interlocutor is not appropriately reading the physical signs of his manliness, the narrator silently rebels against her interpretation:

El tuteo me molestó. Y más lo hizo el darme cuenta que seguía refiriéndose a mí con el uso del femenino. Supuse que su vista no era muy buena. . . . Cualquiera con vista normal podría darse cuenta que no tenía senos, ni cintura, ni cabello largo, ni uñas pintadas. Cualquiera con vista normal se habría fijado en mi pelo facial, la cuadratura de mis hombros, la estrechez de mis caderas, el bulto entre las ingles. Cualquiera, quiero

decir, excepto Amparo Dávila y su horda de emisarias. Todas estaban ciegas. Fuera de sí, es cierto, y ciegas además.

(Her use of the familiar *tú* bothered me, more so when I realized that she addressed me in the feminine person. I supposed her sight wasn't very good. . . . Anyone with normal sight would have noticed that I didn't have breasts, nor a waist, long hair or painted nails. Anyone with normal sight would have noticed my facial hair, my square shoulders, the narrowness of my hips, the bulge in my groin. Anyone, I want to say, except for Amparo Dávila and her hord of emissaries. They were all blind. Out of their minds, true, and also blind).⁷¹

This anxious reaffirmation of his gender by what he "is" and what he "has,"⁷² indirectly reveals Rivera Garza's own postulates on the subject of gender, and how she carries them over to her novelistic practice. As she argues in one of her interviews, "el género es sobre todo un *performance* que varía y se *enacta* de acuerdo a negociaciones específicas en contextos específicos" (gender is, above all, a performance that varies and enacts itself according to specific negotiations within specific contexts).⁷³ Her assertions on this rather delicate subject clearly reveal Butler's influence. Gender, would argue the renowned scholar, should be conceived as "the apparatus by which the production and normalization of masculine and feminine take place along with the interstitial forms of hormonal, chromosomal, psychic, and performative that gender assumes."⁷⁴

Without using this contemporary vocabulary to express gender trouble, Sor Juana reveals a lucid idea on this subject. As it is well known, she explicitly asserts in one of her *romances* (ballads) that souls "distancia ignoran y sexo" (distance and sex don't count);⁷⁵ throughout her *Respuesta a Sor Filotea de la Cruz* the nun defends women's rationality and cleverly inserts them into a world made for men; she emphasizes in another composition that her body is "neutro, o abstracto, cuanto / sólo el alma deposita" (neuter, abstract, guardian / of only what my soul consigns);⁷⁶ and she also argues in her *Villancicos a Santa Catarina* (Carols to Saint Catherine of Alexandria) that "el sexo / no es esencia en lo entendido" (sex is not / the essence of intelligence).⁷⁷ With this textual evidence at hand, we can only agree with Electa Arenal and Yolanda Martínez-San Miguel: "While highly and in many instances encoded, her poems, plays, and

prose texts refer consistently to the female condition, to the colonial context in which knowledge was produced, and the emergence of a creole perspective that challenged the existing notion of a knowing subject."⁷⁸ This distinctive particularity of Sor Juana's writing further problematizes gender constructions when the nun transgresses the world of men with her letters, but also when she voices her opinions through a male character like Castaño in *Los empeños de una casa*, every time she delivers her own sermons under the veil of her religious *villancicos*, or when she simultaneously constructs an image of herself while she revives the medieval profile of the persecuted rational philosopher Pedro Abelardo, in her ambiguous *Letras de San Bernardo* (Poems on St. Bernard).⁷⁹

After endless hours of confusion concerning his "cambio genérico" (gender change),⁸⁰ the narrator of *La Cresta de Ilión* seems to orient his conclusions in a sorjuanine direction. Like the protagonist Antonia or Antón from Clavel's *Cuerpo náufrago*, the unnamed doctor of Rivera Garza's novel realizes:

Ante los ojos de la muerte, casi ya dentro de su regazo, había pocas cosas que diferenciaban a moribundos de moribundas. Los de temperamento lacrimoso lloraban por igual independientemente de la forma interna y externa de sus genitales. Sucios todos, desnutridos de la misma manera, desahuciados, sin esperanza ni expectativa, con un mínimo contacto ya con lo que pomposamente se llamaba la realidad, a estos pacientes poco les podía importar si en vida habían sido hombres o mujeres.

(In the eyes of death, there were very few things that differentiated dying men from dying women. Those of weak temperament cried equally, regardless of the internal or external shape of their genitals. Dirty, with the same level of undernourishment, dismissed from life, without any hopes or expectations, and having very minimal contact with any reality, these patients could care less if they had been men or women during their lifetime).⁸¹

To some extent, his existential crisis allows him to recognize that no gender division can be neatly divided between the masculine and the feminine⁸² and that, ultimately, "not only are we culturally

constructed, but in some sense we construct ourselves."⁸³ Still surrounded by the mystery and uncertainty of his situation, and being trapped in a story of bizarre characters and trancelike moments, the doctor finally accepts: "si por alguna casualidad de la desgracia yo era en realidad mujer, nada cambiaría. No tenía por qué volverme ni más dulce ni más cruel. . . . Ni más serena ni más cercana. Ni más maternal ni más autoritaria" (if, by misfortune, I was indeed a woman, nothing would change. I didn't have to become nicer or cruel, serene, emotional, more maternal or authoritarian).⁸⁴

The development of these ideas in *La Cresta de Ilión* implicitly revives Sor Juana's controversial thoughts on gender and her ambivalent position as a woman writer in Colonial Mexico. Rivera Garza's lesson, on the other hand, is quite explicit and situates her novel within the realm of gender studies: "To assume that gender always and exclusively means the matrix of the "masculine" and the "feminine" is precisely to miss the critical point that the reproduction of that coherent binary is contingent, that it comes at a cost, and that those permutations of gender which do not fit the binary are as much a part of gender as its most normative instance."⁸⁵ The anonymous character in *La Cresta de Ilión* seems to understand this dilemma. "El silencio me dijo más de mi nueva condición que cualquier discurso de mi Emisaria," he points out. "Y entonces, sumido en la materia viscosa de las cosas indecibles, retrocedí. . . . Supongo que las mujeres han entendido. A los hombres, básteles saber que esto ocurre más frecuentemente de lo que pensamos" (Silence told me more about my new condition than any discourse from my Emissary. And then, submerged in the thick substance of unspeakable matters, I moved backwards. I suppose women have understood. Men should know that this happens more frequently than what we think).⁸⁶ Submerged in that state of silence, one that expresses "a mythic project of total liberation,"⁸⁷ he suddenly remembers his first attractions to other men during his adolescence; he places himself in the middle of the invisible bridge that connects women and men; and he finally reveals his true gender identity as an ambiguous range that has little to do with his physical appearance as a man or the female shape of his pelvic bone, that infamous *Cresta de Ilión*.

Cuerpos inconclusos (Unfinished Bodies)

These implicit dialogues between Sor Juana and the writers Ana Clavel and Cristina Rivera Garza are not the only ones that take place in contemporary Mexican literature. In an era that emphasizes “la división entre el organismo y el sujeto, reconociendo al mismo tiempo la continuidad entre el cuerpo y la psique,”⁸⁸ Carmen Boullosa, Guadalupe Loaeza, Rosa Beltrán, Margo Glantz, and Elena Poniatowska—just to mention a few—continually communicate with the writer nun from San Jerónimo. Even the controversial writer Xavier Velasco has just published a novel, *Éste que ves* (This Which You See),⁸⁹ whose title resuscitates Sor Juana’s use of the word as portrayed in her famous sonnet “Este, que ves, engaño colorido” (This object which you see—a painted snare).⁹⁰ Adopted by many intellectuals and/or activists of different nationalities, the writer known as the *Tenth Muse* is practically a national idol in Mexico, an international symbol of feminism, and even a “Queer Cultural Hero” for Chicana lesbian feminists.

The origins of these conversations that appropriate Sor Juana’s figure as a commonplace can be traced back to the eighteenth and seventeenth centuries. As Rosa Perelmuter demonstrates in *Los límites de la femineidad en Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz* (The Limits of Femininity in Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz):

La apropiación de Sor Juana, esa tendencia a querer asimilarla a la época del lector, o a sus zonas de convergencia (estética, religiosa, nacional, sexual) expresan . . . el asombro compartido por sus lectores al enfrentarse a una escritora de la altura de Sor Juana. La insistencia en su excepcionalidad, en verla como singular, sin par, única, musa, fénix o ave rara, da pie a la figuración imaginaria de Sor Juana, fácilmente plegable o moldeable de acuerdo a las necesidades o la óptica de su lector.

(The appropriation of Sor Juana, the reader’s tendency to assimilate her to his own time, or to various zones of (aesthetic, religious, national, sexual) convergence, express . . . the shared amusement of her readers when they face a figure of Sor Juana’s magnitude. The

insistence on her exceptionality, on seeing her as an unmatched, unique muse, phoenix or *rara avis*, promotes an imaginary configuration of Sor Juana, one that can be molded to fit the needs or lens of her reader).⁹¹

At least under the fictional scope of Clavel and Rivera Garza, Sor Juana stops being a *rara avis* and "presents" herself with the worries of any and every woman and man, disconnected for an instant from her intellectual quests. If gender is, indeed, a "regulatory form"⁹² and a regulation "is that which makes regular, but it is also, following Foucault, a mode of discipline and surveillance within late modern forms of power,"⁹³ their individual acts of writing go against the grain, and they each practice Sor Juana's art of "contra/diction."⁹⁴ On one hand, the gendered voices that permeate this new type of writing reveal that Sor Juana's poetry, her letters and *villancicos* still evoke: "sentimientos profundos, e inspira[n] a muchos a sentirla presente, tangible, inmediata."⁹⁵ But both Clavel and Rivera Garza exclude from their characters the academic element that has set Sor Juana or other less known women writers of Colonial Latin America, such as Clarinda or Amarilis,⁹⁶ apart from other women.

By virtue of these intertextual dialogues, we can successfully revive Sor Juana today, even if every study of her life and works is, to a certain degree, a creation of our own, inevitably influenced by the world we live in, the books we read and the theories that shape our imagination. After all, from the surface of a 200 Mexican peso bill or one of her numerous paintings, her portrait poems or defensive letters, the nun still refuses any definitive reading of her works and questions any interpretations of her persona:

Vosotros me concebisteis
a vuestro modo . . .

La imagen de vuestra idea
es la que habéis alabado;
y siendo vuestra, es bien digna
de vuestros mismos aplausos.

Celebrad ese, de vuestra
propia aprehensión, simulacro,
para que en vosotros mismos
se vuelva a quedar el lauro.

Si no es que el sexo ha podido
o ha querido hacer, por raro,
que el lugar de lo perfecto
obtenga lo extraordinario.

(The conception you hold of me
is proportionate to yourselves . . .

Your praises have been lavished
on an image of your idea'
being yours, it surely deserves
the tribute of your applause.

Celebrate that likeness
of what you have apprehended
and let the laurel wreath
be restored to your own brows.

Might it be the surprise of my sex
that explains why you are willing
to allow an unusual case
to pass itself off as perfection?)⁹⁷

NOTES

¹ Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz, Poema 145, *The Answer/La respuesta. Including a Selections of Poems*. Ed. & Trans. Electa Arenal and Amanda Powell. (New York: Feminist, 1994) 152–153.

² Frederick Luciani, *Literary Self-Fashioning in Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz*. (Lewisburg: Bucknell UP, 2004) 62.

³ Electa Arenal, "Speaking the Mother Tongue." *University of Dayton Review* 16 (1983) 93–105.

⁴ Linda Egan, *Diosas, demonios y debate: las armas metafísicas de Sor Juana*. (Salta: Biblioteca de Textos Universitarios, 1997).

⁵ Margo Glantz, "Letras de San Bernardo: La excelsa fábrica." *Calíope* 4 (1998) 173–88; Oswaldo Estrada, "Sor Juana y San Bernardo: Entre la

fiesta religiosa y el disfraz literario." *Cuaderno Internacional de Estudios Humanísticos y Literatura* 7 (2007) 39–54.

⁶ Jean Franco, *Las conspiradoras. La representación de la mujer en México*. (México: El Colegio de México; Fondo de Cultura Económica, 2004) 52.

⁷ This painting appears as the book cover of *Sor Juana y su mundo: Una mirada actual*. Ed. Sara Poot–Herrera. (México: Universidad del Claustro de Sor Juana, 1995).

⁸ Oil painting on linen over papel, 54" x 79". Collection of the artist.

⁹ See, for example, the studies by Emilie Bergmann and Mario Ortiz in this collection.

¹⁰ Emily Hind, "The Sor Juana Archetype in Recent Works by Mexican Women Writers." *Hispanófila* 141 (2004) 91.

¹¹ Ana Clavel, *Los deseos y su sombra*. (México: Alfaguara, 2000).

¹² Ana Clavel, *Cuerpo náufrago*. (México: Alfaguara, 2005).

¹³ Clavel, *Cuerpo* 13. All translations are mine unless otherwise indicated.

¹⁴ Sor Juana, *Answer* 48–49.

¹⁵ Clavel, *Cuerpo* 14.

¹⁶ Myra Jehlén, "Gender." *Critical Terms for Literary Study*. (Chicago; London: The U of Chicago P, 1995) 264.

¹⁷ Rachel Alsop et al, *Theorizing Gender*. (Cambridge, UK: Polity, 2002) 17.

¹⁸ Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz, *Poesía, Teatro, Pensamiento*. (Madrid: Espasa Calpe, 2004) 1414.

¹⁹ Clavel, *Cuerpo* 14.

²⁰ Jehlén 265.

²¹ Alsop et al 99.

²² Alsop et al 99.

²³ Clavel, *Cuerpo* 17.

²⁴ Sor Juana, *Pensamiento* 1413.

²⁵ Clavel, *Cuerpo* 63.

²⁶ Clavel, *Cuerpo* 68.

²⁷ Clavel, *Cuerpo* 68.

²⁸ Sor Juana, Poema 92. *Answer* 156–57.

²⁹ Alsop et al 99.

³⁰ Jehlén 265.

³¹ Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz, Romance 48. *Poems, Protest, and a Dream*. (New York: Penguin, 1997) 140–141.

³² Clavel, *Cuerpo* 164.

³³ Clavel, *Cuerpo* 175.

³⁴ Jehlén 265.

³⁵ Sor Juana, *Pensamiento* 1544.

³⁶ Susan Sontag, *Styles of Radical Will*. (London: Vintage, 2001) 11.

³⁷ Clavel, *Cuerpo* 181.

³⁸ Sor Juana, Poema 19. *A Sor Juana Anthology*. (Cambridge, MA; London: Harvard UP, 1988) 38–39, my emphasis.

- ³⁹ Wilfrido H. Corral, "Y tus padres también: Testamento de los nuevos narradores hispanoamericanos." *Cuadernos Hispanoamericanos* 663 (2005) 93.
- ⁴⁰ Emily Hind, *Entrevistas a quince escritoras mexicanas*. (Madrid: Iberoamericana/Vervuert, 2003) 188.
- ⁴¹ Cristina Rivera Garza, *Ningún reloj cuenta esto*. (Madrid: Tusquets, 2002).
- ⁴² Rivera Garza, *Ningún* 51, 57.
- ⁴³ Rivera Garza, *Ningún* 61–62.
- ⁴⁴ Rivera Garza, *Ningún* 62–63, my emphasis.
- ⁴⁵ Sor Juana, *Respuesta* 50–51.
- ⁴⁶ Josefina Ludmer, "Tricks of the Weak." *Feminist Perspectives on Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz*. (Detroit: Wayne State UP, 1991) 86.
- ⁴⁷ Sor Juana, *Answer* 50–51.
- ⁴⁸ Rivera Garza, *Ningún* 63.
- ⁴⁹ Luciani 16.
- ⁵⁰ Cecilia Olivares, *Glosario de términos de crítica literaria feminista*. (México: El Colegio de México, 1997) 60.
- ⁵¹ Verónica Grossi, "Hacia una revisión crítica de la recepción de Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz, desde el siglo diecisiete hasta la actualidad." *Narrativas. Revista de Narrativa Contemporánea en Castellano* 4 (2007) 17.
- ⁵² Cristina Rivera Garza. *La Cresta de Ilión*. (México: Tusquets 2002).
- ⁵³ Rivera Garza. *Nadie me verá llorar*. (México: Tusquets/CONACULTA/INBA, 1999).
- ⁵⁴ Rivera Garza, *Cresta* 55, 56.
- ⁵⁵ Carlos A. Castellanos, "Ambigüedad en la identidad: *La cresta de Ilión* de Cristina Rivera Garza." *Revista de Literatura Mexicana Contemporánea* 24 (2004): 111.
- ⁵⁶ Rivera Garza, *Cresta* 20.
- ⁵⁷ Rivera Garza, *Cresta* 63.
- ⁵⁸ Sara Salih, and Judith Butler, *The Judith Butler Reader*. (Malden, MA; Oxford: Blackwell, 2005) 22.
- ⁵⁹ Rivera Garza, *Cresta* 66, 67, my emphasis.
- ⁶⁰ Rivera Garza, *Cresta* 82, my emphasis.
- ⁶¹ Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz, Villancico V. *Obras completas*. Vol 2. (México: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1994) 103.
- ⁶² Umberto Eco, *Six Walks in the Fictional Woods*. (Cambridge, MA; London: Harvard UP, 1995) 14.
- ⁶³ Oswaldo Estrada, "Sor Juana y el ejercicio pedagógico en sus villancicos marianos." *Letras Femeninas* 32.2 (2006) 91–92.
- ⁶⁴ Clemens Jöckle, *Encyclopedia of Saints*. (Old Saybrook, CT: Konecky & Konecky, 2003) 299.
- ⁶⁵ Sor Juana, Villancico II. *Obras completas* 100.
- ⁶⁶ Sor Juana, Villancico IV. *Obras completas* 102.
- ⁶⁷ Sor Juana, Villancico III. *Obras completas* 6.

- ⁶⁸ Sor Juana, Villancico VI. *Obras completas* 10–11.
- ⁶⁹ Electa Arenal, and Yolanda Martínez–San Miguel, “Refocusing New Spain and Spanish Colonization: Malinche, Guadalupe, and Sor Juana.” *A Companion to the Literatures of Colonial America*. (Malden, MA; Oxford: Blackwell, 2005) 188.
- ⁷⁰ Rivera Garza, *Cresta* 82.
- ⁷¹ Rivera Garza, *Cresta* 85.
- ⁷² Judith Butler, *Undoing Gender*. (New York; London: Routledge, 2004) 42.
- ⁷³ Hind, *Entrevistas* 189.
- ⁷⁴ Butler, *Undoing* 42.
- ⁷⁵ Sor Juana, Poema 19. *Anthology* 38–39.
- ⁷⁶ Sor Juana, Romance 48. *Poems* 140–141.
- ⁷⁷ Sor Juana, Villancico VI. *Answer* 160–161.
- ⁷⁸ Arenal and Martínez–San Miguel 189.
- ⁷⁹ Estrada, “San Bernardo” 44–48.
- ⁸⁰ Rivera Garza, *Cresta* 57.
- ⁸¹ Rivera Garza, *Cresta* 99.
- ⁸² Elizabeth Wright, *Lacan y el posfeminismo*. (Barcelona: Gedisa, 2004) 47.
- ⁸³ Butler, *Reader* 23.
- ⁸⁴ Rivera Garza, *Cresta* 101.
- ⁸⁵ Butler, *Undoing* 42.
- ⁸⁶ Rivera Garza, *Cresta* 101.
- ⁸⁷ Sontag 18.
- ⁸⁸ Wright 45.
- ⁸⁹ Xavier Velasco, *Éste que ves*. (México: Alfaguara, 2006).
- ⁹⁰ Sor Juana, *Answer* 152–153.
- ⁹¹ Rosa Perelmuter, *Los límites de la femineidad en Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz: Estrategias retóricas y recepción literaria*. (Madrid: Universidad de Navarra/Iberoamericana/Vervuert, 2004) 123.
- ⁹² Butler, *Undoing* 53.
- ⁹³ Butler, *Undoing* 55.
- ⁹⁴ Arenal and Martínez–San Miguel 187.
- ⁹⁵ Perelmuter 116–17.
- ⁹⁶ Raquel Chang–Rodríguez, “Gendered Voices from Lima and Mexico: Clorinda, Amarilis, and Sor Juana.” *A Companion to the Literatures of Colonial America*. (Malden, MA; Oxford: Blackwell, 2005) 278.
- ⁹⁷ Sor Juana, Poema 51. *Anthology* 106–109.

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