

WOMEN'S VOICE

In Latin American Literature



by
**Naomi
Lindstrom**

Women's Voice in Latin American Literature

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Naomi Lindstrom

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To L.L. Johnson

Preface

During the decade of the 1980's, there has been an increasing focus on the critical presuppositions and methods of critics who choose to study literary texts written by women. Considerable debate has centered on such issues as whether women's texts display distinctive characteristics indicating female authorship. Other critics seek to identify a category of writing that is "feminine" in deviating from, and calling into question, criteria of well-writtenness or significance that embody the "masculine" values of mainstream culture. Additional discussion has centered on the possibility, or advisability, of developing new critical approaches exclusively for the purpose of studying women's writing or femininity as a property of certain texts.

This study stands somewhat apart from these debates and their central issues. The works that here receive detailed commentary (novels by Rosario Castellanos of Mexico and Marta Lynch and Silvina Bullrich of Argentina; short stories by Clarice Lispector of Brazil) have been selected for their utilization of the illustrative and persuasive powers of literature to examine critically one aspect of women's cultural and social situation. All four focus attention upon the special problems of expression and communication women may encounter in many societies (the fictional settings include modern and traditional Latin cultures and an Indian community in Southern Mexico). These works show women as disadvantaged, because of their role and status, as participants in communication. The treatment of an issue that particularly affects women is what makes these works either feminist or implicitly feminist texts (among other ways they may be categorized). It is reasonable to suppose that the authors of the four works, all women, drew upon the experience of living as women when they composed their work. Nonetheless, it is not women's distinctive experience, or the inscription of this experience, that receives consideration. Rather, attention goes to the critical vision of women's situation projected in each text, together with the textual construction that projects it.

For purposes of this study, the feminist element in writing is one manifestation of literature's special ability to generate complex, provocatively indirect statements about society. In developing my critical approach, my primary loyalty has been to the texts under analysis. The goal has been to identify fairly the propositions and assertions made by these works and to

explicate the literary means through which these notions are made convincing and memorable to the reader. No claim is being made that the form the analysis takes will necessarily prove generally applicable to other works written by women or concerned with women and their characteristics. While some works display significant commonalities—as do these four in their concern over women's expression—each text, if it is of sufficient interest, deserves attention to its distinctive persuasive and critical mechanisms.

The ideal here has been to avoid, insofar as possible, recourse to terminology other than that normally used in analyzing literary texts. However, in some cases an infusion of expressions from other types of discussion has occurred in identifying and drawing out tendencies inherent in the works in question. Marta Lynch in *La señora Ordóñez*, for example, frequently pursues a novelistic inquiry that at moments parallels discourse analysis. Silvina Bullrich, as an author of popular fiction, often includes in her literary writing passages similar to social criticism or popularized sociology. Again, the strongest efforts have been made to understand and explain the texts under consideration.

I would like to mention developments that have taken place since this book went to press, a number of which represent the continuation or the fulfillment of tendencies and projects discussed here.

English-language readers' access to the writings of Rosario Castellanos has increased with the 1988 publication, by the University of Texas Press, of *A Rosario Castellanos Reader: An Anthology of Her Poetry, Short Fiction, Essays, and Drama*, edited and with a critical introduction by Maureen Ahern with translations by Ahern and others. This volume includes the translation of *The Eternal Feminine*, mentioned in the author bibliography for Castellanos, (Diane E. Marting and Betty Tyree Osiek combined their work in translating this play), as well as many previously unpublished or uncollected translations of poetry and essays. Other projects to translate Castellanos' work into English are presently at various stages of completion and future years should bring the publication of some of the results.

Lispector's work has also reached new English-language readers. The University of Texas Press recently reissued in paperback Lispector's celebrated existential novel, *The Apple in the Dark* in Gregory Rabassa's English version (originally published by Knopf in 1967). Also made newly available was *Family Ties*, in the 1972 translation by Giovanni Pontiero from which Lispector translations in this study are taken. Pontiero continues to take a special interest in bringing into English not only this author's recognized classics, but also her more fragmentary and experimental writings. Notable in this respect is the *Foreign Legion: Stories and Chronicles* (published in London by Carcanet Press, 1986). Translated and with an afterword by Pontiero, this work presents for the first time in English a selection of Lispector's elliptical, evocative *crônicas* or brief journalistic notes.

The availability of English versions of work by a number of Latin American women rose with the publication of new anthologies. Alberto Manguel, ed., *Other Fires: Short Fiction by Latin American Women* (Avenal, NJ: Clarkson N. Potter, 1986) proved a popular offering, while translations appeared

accompanied by scholarly background in Angel Flores and Kate Flores, eds., *Hispanic Feminist Poems from the Middle Ages to the Present* (New York: Feminist Press of CUNY, 1986; in series *The Defiant Muse*), and Marian Arkin and Barbara Schollar, ed., *Longman Anthology of World Literature by Women, 1875-1975* (White Plains, NJ: Longman Press, 1988; includes sections on Brazil, Spanish America, and the Caribbean.) All four authors featured in this study receive critical consideration and/or have their writing represented in the *Longman Anthology*. Of related interest is a thematic anthology of both male- and female- authored works: Ann Venture Young, *The Image of Black Women in 20th Century South American Poetry* (Washington, D.C.: Three Continents Press, 1987).

Women's writing from Latin America has had an increasingly visible representative to the international literary world in the person of Isabel Allende, the Chilean-born writer mentioned in the introduction to this study. Allende's complex, but highly readable novels have swiftly enjoyed success in translation without precedent for a Latin American woman author. *La casa de los espíritus* (1982; *The House of Spirits*, Magda Bogen, trans., 1985), *De amor y de sombra* (1984; *Of Love and Shadow*, Margaret Sayers Peden, trans., 1987), and *Eva Luna* (1987; Peden trans., 1988) have reached both an academic and a more general English-language public in Knopf editions, and there has been considerable fascination with the author, fluent in English and active on the U.S. cultural scene. The ideal outcome of this phenomenon would be for Allende's fame to draw readers toward the writings of other Latin American women, including works from earlier decades.

Less broadly popular than Allende, in her newly-attained prominence is the recent surge of interest in Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz. This seventeenth-century nun has lately attracted translators eager to make her work available in a number of languages, resulting in the publication of different versions of long-untranslated works. Scholars have, in increasing numbers, investigated and interpreted her statements on women's role, her acquisition of an education despite discouraging circumstances, and her baroque verse and writings for the stage. Beyond any doubt, current discussion derives an important stimulus from a work whose influence continues to expand: Octavio Paz's *Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz o las trampas de la fe* (original version 1982; revised 1983), which Harvard University Press published in 1988 as *Sor Juana* (Peden, trans.).

The bibliographic work noted here has also continued. Marting's long-running project, discussed here in the chapter "Feminist Criticism of Latin American Literature: Bibliographic Notes," resulted in her section "Spanish America," in Margery Resnick and Isabelle de Courtviron, eds., *Women Writers in Translation: An Annotated Bibliography 1945-1982* (New York: Garland Press, 1984), and the 1987 *Women Writers of Spanish America: An Annotated Bio-Bibliographical Guide*, published by Greenwood Press of Westport, Connecticut. She continues to work in biographical and bibliographical guidance and is currently coordinating the team preparing *Fifty Spanish American Women Writers* for Greenwood Press. The same publishing house had brought out, in 1986, *Women Writers of Spain: An Annotated Bio-Bibliographical Guide*, edited by the late Carolyn L.

Galerstein and Kathleen McNerney. Also worthy of mention in this category is Sidonia Rosenbaum, *Modern Women Poets of Spanish America* (New York: Garland Press, 1985).

To the discussion, in "Feminist Criticism," of anthologies of articles, an item should be added. Scholars with widely differing approaches to women and femininity in literature are represented in Carmelo Virgillo and Naomi Lindstrom, eds., *Woman as Myth and Metaphor in Latin American Literature* (Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, © 1985, appeared 1986). As well as pursuing the global topic of the anthology, with its essentially women's-studies emphasis, the essays exemplify the varieties of critical approaches to the element of myth in literature.

Particularly extensive interviews with women authors are collected in Evelyn Picon Garfield's, *Women's Voices from Latin America: Interviews with Six Contemporary Authors*. The emphasis is on presenting to English-language readers authors who are still less known and who are still producing new work.

In journals and their contents, two tendencies of change are observable. The journal *Letras Femeninas*, discussed in the section on "Feminist Criticism," has taken on a more professional form under the editorship of Adelaida López Martínez. *Letras Femeninas*, which in its early years gave importance simply to making known the names and work of Spanish and Latin American women authors, now functions more like an academic journal in expecting contributors to investigate designated literary aspects of particular texts or other specific research problems. The journal has moved increasingly toward specific thematic issues such as 11. 1-2 (1985), *Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz. Mexico 1651-1695*. It is a fair speculation that a women's studies undertaking of this type can become more focused on specialized literary investigations in part because the work of bringing women authors and issues of femininity and masculinity into literary discussion has already been, to a considerable extent, accomplished. Journals of no special feminist or women's studies orientation are increasingly likely to include more frequent mention and discussion of women writers and of the literary presentation of concepts male and female.

Another tendency of recent significance, although in a field somewhat adjacent to that of the present study, is that the examination of texts by women from the various U.S. Hispanic groups has become increasingly visible in the past few years. The first book to draw widespread attention to this area of research is Maria Ester Sánchez's *Contemporary Chicana Poetry: A Critical Approach to an Emerging Literature* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986).

Finally, note should be made of the deaths, in 1988, of two of the authors mentioned in this study: Sara Gallardo and Beatriz Guido, both of Argentina.

Naomi Lindstrom

Table of Contents

Preface/ix-xii

Introduction/1

Clarice Lispector:
Articulating Women's Experience/23

Rosario Castellanos:
Women Outside Communication/49

Marta Lynch:
The Mechanisms of Inefficacy/73

Silvina Bullrich:
Making Feminism Accessible/99

Summary/115

Feminist Criticism of Latin American
Literature: Bibliographic Notes/117

Selected Bibliography of Criticism/128

Selected Bibliography of
Primary Sources/140

Index/149

Introduction

Recent years have witnessed a resurgence of interest, both popular and scholarly in the question of women's role. When Simone de Beauvoir's *Le Deuxième Sexe* appeared (1949; English translation, *The Second Sex*, 1952), its treatment of this issue placed it outside the mainstream of social criticism. By expressing profound dissatisfaction with the way in which our society apportions what is properly male and what female, the work initiated a widespread, productive discussion. Sex-role analysis and debate assumed an important place in social writings of the fifties and sixties. Such well-publicized works as Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique* (1963), Kate Millett's *Sexual Politics* (1970) and Germaine Greer's *The Female Eunuch* (1971) helped increase public awareness of the constraints society places upon its female members. Less visible but more rigorous studies sought to construct feminist models for research in various fields. An instance of this attempt is Juliet Mitchell's 1972 *Woman's Estate*, an economic analysis. One need only look at the recent offerings of scholarly publishers to see what inroads sex-role analysis has made in sociology, social services administration and psychology.

It is highly reasonable that literary studies, too, should participate in the general intellectual inquiry into sex roles. Creative writers are known for their great willingness to make manifest the least satisfactory aspects of the prevailing social arrangement. The restriction of women's role, as a troubling matter, has often served as the theme of literary works. For instance, in Samuel Richardson's *Clarissa Harlowe* (1747-48), the eponymous heroine seeks to furnish an improving role model to members of her sex. Her failure makes evident how rigidly her society circumscribes acceptable female behavior. Denis Diderot's 1760 *La Religieuse* points out how few options women enjoy. The nun of the title takes vows, though lacking a vocation, because she cannot aspire to the only other status permissible to her, that of married woman. Such works provide a foreground for sex-role analysis with emphasis on the inequities of existing patterns. They invite a critical reading with the same concern. Such writings are numerous in the twentieth century, as more feminist or feminist-influenced authors express their views through the rhetoric of literature (e.g., Rosario Castellanos in Mexico, Monique Wittig in France, Jean Rhys in England).

A second body of works has also attracted the notice of feminist commen-

tators. These writings do not stress women's need for choice; indeed, many suggest a more rigid system of restrictions as the ideal. They interest sex-role analysts because they constitute "documents" of commonly held views about women. While some of these texts are non-literary, for example, manuals of proper comportment, others have full literary stature. Beauvoir utilizes a great variety of creative writings for their testimonial value. To gauge the historical variations in attitudes toward women, she examines exemplary tales, the *Thousand and One Nights*, the *Decameron*, amorous verse, and other creative writings. In some cases, such as that of courtly love literature, women's image becomes a manifest topic. In these instances, Beauvoir's procedure is to hold the portrait of women projected in the text to her own standard of women as fully existent creatures. She also discusses works that only imply what women are or might be. In particular, she pursues the notion of literature as a mythmaking activity. Her critical premise is that artist-made myths exhibit reflexes of societal myths and, in that sense, furnish indirect documentation of widespread attitudes. Her chapter on "The Myth of Woman in Five Authors" applies this analysis to the writings of Henri de Montherlant, D. H. Lawrence, Paul Claudel, André Breton and Stendhal.¹ Millett's *Sexual Politics* makes use of this procedure as well.

A third type of evidence that has interested commentators is the biographical and historical side of literary life. Beauvoir cites the correspondence of Jules Laforgue, Stendhal and others. Millett looks at the personal beliefs of authors. Her justification is a need to identify the personality factors underlying sexual inequity. Nonetheless, it is startling to find her comparing Swinburne to "a prurient schoolboy jerking off."²

Related are inquiries into women's participation in literary life. A celebrated discussion is Virginia Woolf's 1929 "A Room of One's Own," given a further elaboration by the Mexican writer Ulalume González de León in the latter's 1970 collection of short stories, *A cada rato lunes (Every So Often Monday)*. These works point out that women's role limits access to privacy and life experience, key factors in the genesis of much literary work.³

A corollary of this idea is that literary women are role deviants. Many studies of women authors stress the importance of this aberrance. Both Juan José Sebreli and H. Ernest Lewald have gauged the impact of the "confessional" women poets who scandalized many Latin Americans early in this century. Sebreli considers defiant women authors too removed from ordinary life to create a new role model.⁴ Lewald, on the other hand, finds their lives and work an *avant la lettre* manifestation of women's liberation.⁵ The issue of role deviance has also been raised in regard to George Sand, Gerturde Stein, and the seventeenth-century Mexican nun Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz, among others.⁶ Needless to say, this question figures prominently in the personal and public writings of these women, as well as being a question of biography.

Women as consumers of literature have also been the object of study. One such inquiry is Ann Douglas' 1977 *The Feminization of American Culture*. Douglas examines the emergence, in the nineteenth-century United States, of writings notable for their overt sentimentality and moralizing. Members of both sexes created this product, but its character was determined by the demands of

an essentially female audience.

Very popular writings aimed at a mass female audience have also figured as the subject matter of feminist study. Castellanos, in *Mujer que sabe latín...* (*A Woman Who Knows Latin*, 1973), discusses the endlessly serialized love stories of Corín Tellado. "Lección de cocina (Cooking Lesson)," a short story in the same author's 1971 *Album de familia* consists of a sex-role analysis of cookbook prose. Popular jingles, homilies, television, radio and press images of women form part of the documentation for Castellanos' feminist statements in *Mujer que sabe latín . . .* and *El uso de la palabra (Speaking Up)*, 1974). Greer's *The Female Eunuch* denounces the so-called "Gothic novel" marketed to English-reading women. Beauvoir, in *The Second Sex*, deplores the impact of fashion magazines; Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique* includes an angry critique of housewifely periodicals. Sebrelli's *Eva Perón ¿militante o aventurera?* (*Eva Peron: Revolutionary or Adventuress?*) evaluates the feminist content of Eva's radio interpretations of celebrated women. The larger question of the glamorization of women in mass culture also interests Sebrelli. Though it is not a sex-role analysis, Roland Barthes' 1967 study of women's-magazine texts, *Système de la mode (The System of Fashion)* has much to interest feminists. Barthes shows how these publications trivialize the fashion-conscious bourgeoisie who is their ideal reader. This same body of writings has also been studied, with similar results, by Edgar Morin.⁷

II

In sum, a vast range of materials lend themselves to the study of sex roles in literature. The present inquiry looks at a small but highly significant portion: four texts by Latin American women writers. It would be reductive to label them "feminist" works, since many other concerns are also evident in the writings. Yet each is an instance of a deliberate and explicit literary response to the current-day sex-role debate. Every one of the writers in question has demonstrated her strong interest in the controversy. These women have involved themselves not only literarily but also as public figures willing to comment upon the issue.

The first representative of feminine expression dealt with here is Clarice Lispector (1925-77), born in the Ukraine but Brazilian in her formation. Her inclusion involves crossing a linguistic barrier that often keeps Brazilian writers from winning a readership in Spanish America. However, the transcendence of this barrier has come to seem a desirable move. Major creative writers as well as critics have over the past two decades sought to move their readers away from the concept of two separate Latin American literatures.⁸ The joint critical consideration of Luso-Brazilian and Spanish-American authors is becoming increasingly common. At any rate, since all citations appear here with their English translations, the reader of the present study will not face a linguistic barrier.

The discussion of a Brazilian woman author is especially significant.

Brazil presents an impressive case of the full incorporation of women into literary life. Lispector and Nélida Piñon enjoy the stature of truly major novelists. Not only does Brazil produce women writers of note, but it publicizes them and accords them equal participation in the public activities of literary celebrities. The Brazilian Academy of Literature broke ground in 1977 by inducting Rachel de Queiroz. This circumstance stands in contrast to the situation in Spanish American literature, where the most highly visible figures of the *nueva narrativa* are all male writers.

Lispector cannot be considered a programmatic feminist, either in her public remarks or in her writings. Yet the strength of her concern for women's relation to literature is manifest in both. Her covert approach to these matters is evident in her 1976 interview with *Crisis* [Buenos Aires]. The creator is unreceptive to the interviewer's assertion that her fiction is "essentially feminine."⁹ However, she becomes articulate in describing the relation between maternity and literary production. Lispector considers several aspects of the topic: the difficulty of combining a career and motherhood, maternity as a stimulus to and influence upon creative work, the literary representation of children and mothers and the writing of children's literature as an extension of her own mothering activities. Developing these topics, she reveals a good deal of insight into issues central to women's studies.

The *Crisis* interviewer is not alone in finding Lispector's work feminine in character. Castellanos uses the Brazilian's writings to support the tenet that women's consciousness may manifest itself in literature. Teresinha Alves Pereira emphasizes the influence of notably "feminine" writers on Lispector; see the critic's 1975 *Estudo sobre Clarice Lispector*.

Laços de família (1960; English translation *Family Ties*, 1972) here represents Lispector's achievement in this vein. This volume of short stories has an abundance of female-related subject matter. To elaborate the feminine theme, Lispector creates a number of emblematic women's and girls' voices. These created voices are heard as narrators of or characters in the stories, providing a point of entry into the working of Lispector's much mentioned "femaleness."

Rosario Castellanos (1925-74) was a prominent voice for feminism in Mexico. Eager to explore the transformation of women's experience into artistic forms, she wrote a 1950 thesis on feminine culture at the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México. However, as she notes, the elaboration of this study coincided with her realization that a strictly academic approach was not well suited to her proposed endeavor.¹⁰ Subsequently, Castellanos continued to look into the relation between women's role and art, but through journalism, essay-writing, lecturing and public appearances, meetings with other creative women, classroom teaching and, of course, her own literary production, which merits a chapter's discussion in this study.

As a highly visible public person, Castellanos worked toward several feminist-related goals. Her most abstract labor was the elaboration of a feminist model of criticism that would still respect the specifically literary properties of the text. The theoretical question of how literature is able to structure female experience is ever-present in her writings. More pragmatically, Castellanos

promoted the work of women writers, such as María Luisa Mendoza of Mexico and the Catalanian Mercè Rodoreda, who might otherwise have escaped public notice.¹¹ Both in her teaching and in her writing, she urged readers to accept even the most blatantly feminine writings (e.g. Colette's novels, the letters and diaries of well-born ladies) as potentially significant.¹² Through her very personal journalism in the Mexican newspaper *Excelsior*, she made her own experience exemplary of the problems and satisfactions an independent, outspoken woman faces. Her frankness about her divorce and its social consequences was an especially bold move to increase public awareness of these matters.¹³ Serving as Mexican ambassador to Israel must surely represent, at least in part, her campaign to demonstrate women's all around competence. Along with her diplomatic duties, she continued her literary activities up to her death in 1974. Her comedy *El eterno femenino* (*The Eternal Feminine*), published in 1975, reveals her most overt feminist didactics within a literary work. At the same time, it continues her practice of conserving the complex elaboration and humorous component in even the most "useful" literature.

Of Castellanos' literary output, the 1962 novel *Oficio de tinieblas* (*In Darkness*) receives consideration here. This work depicts the unstable relations between white and Indian during President Lázaro Cárdenas' vigorous attempts to institute social reforms. Though the indigenist theme is in the foreground, the novel also constitutes a cross-cultural inquiry into the factors that hinder women's effective self-expression and self-determination. Because it includes such a wide range of female characters and, more specifically, an implicit analysis of role-related communication difficulties, it is feminist writing.

Marta Lynch (Argentina, 1930-85) was a writer distinguished not only by her social commentary but by her notable narrative skill. Her feminism was less patent than the direct statements characteristic of Bullrich's fiction. Nonetheless, the representation of women is one of the features of Lynch's work that has drawn most attention. Lewald cited her and Bullrich as the leading fiction-writing "witnesses" of Argentine women. Another commentator, Amy Kaminsky, turns to Lynch and Bullrich in search of novelistic documentation or quasi-documentation of the maternal role in Latin America.¹⁴ *La señora Ordóñez* (*Mrs. Ordóñez*, 1967), the Lynch novel this study examines, is an exceptionally complex and troubling portrait in literature of a woman confused about her role. Although firmly anchored in the specifics of recent Argentine history, the work is germane to all countries where roles are undergoing a painful redefinition.

Lynch has also provided nonfictional statements that further demonstrate her awareness of the problem. In a 1974 declaration, "Testimonio: con mi obra (Testimony: With My Work)," published in *Hispanamérica*, she speaks of her efforts to portray women from diverse social backgrounds.¹⁵ Her journalistic comments frequently touch on issues affecting women, such as abortion and divorce.¹⁶ Representative of her feminist remarks is a 1975 interview in which Lynch said:

Si yo fuera hombre, hubiera tenido la mitad de los problemas y el triple del éxito que he tenido. [Cita a Ernesto Sábato:] 'Vos sos una desdichada, que

paga el pato de ser mujer.' En Europa (tanto qu se jactan los europeos de su desarrollo cultural), no tienen absolutamente ningún interés en la literatura escrita por mujeres, habiendo mujeres como Carson McCullers, Mary McCarthy, Virginia Woolf, o Elsa Morante, ¿no?

If I were a man, I would have had half the problems and three times the success I've had. [She quotes the Argentine writer Ernesto Sábato, who told her:] 'You get the short end of the stick just for being a woman.' In Europe (and here the Europeans make such a big thing of their cultural development), they have absolutely no interest in literature written by women, when they have women like Carson McCullers, Mary McCarthy, Virginia Woolf, or Elsa Morante.¹⁷

Lynch recalls an episode in which a literary colleague, apparently unnerved by the oddity of a woman writer, had to reassure himself that she really could cook.¹⁸ She finds this question symptomatic of a widespread conviction that active and competent public women must somehow not quite belong to the female sex.

Silvina Bullrich (Argentina, 1915) is an extremely popular author, notable for her insistence in bringing the sex-role debate to public attention. H. Ernest Lewald, the most prominent and enthusiastic commentator of her writings, had been principally attracted to them by their feminist aspect.¹⁹ In his discussion of *Bodas de cristal* (*Crystal Anniversary*, 1952), *Historias inmorales* (*Immoral Stories*, 1965), *Mañana digo basta* (*Tomorrow I'll Tell Them I've Had it*, 1968), and *Será justicia* (*Just Deserts*, 1976), Lewald finds an almost sociological or anthropological exploration of women's status in present-day Argentina. He parallels the points Bullrich makes through the rhetoric of fiction with the assertions of, among others, Helen Deutsch (*The Psychology of Women*, 1944) and Margaret Mead (*Male and Female*, 1949).²⁰ Another critic notes the polemic strain running through the author's novels: "Bullrich—herself from the upper class—deplores its attitude that women of her class had only one future—marriage, and she condemns the uselessness of such women. In *Bodas de cristal* and *Teléfono ocupado* (*Busy Signal*), apparently emancipated women rebel ineffectually against the old mores."²¹

Apart from her fictional didacticism, which is a topic of the chapter here on Bullrich, she has utilized essays, personal journalism, and public appearances to promote her feminist views. A good example of her nonfiction is *George Sand: una mujer como yo* (*George Sand: A Woman Like Me*, 1972). Bullrich moves from the specifics of Sand's life to a general evaluation of "las mujeres que surgen antes que las demás, que se adelantan a su tiempo (women who are ahead of the rest, who are ahead of their time)."²² Although Bullrich does not grant unquestioning approval to Sand's behavior, she hails it as a salutary rupture with delimited sex roles. Sand's pronouncements on women's status figure prominently in her study. The biographer makes it clear that she shares Sand's underlying premises, if not the vehemence of their expression.

A "Nota autobiográfica" appended to the anthology *Entre mis veinte y treinta años* makes a similar instructive point about Bullrich herself. As a deviant from traditional roles, she found others reluctant to attribute human

needs and feelings: “a mí, a quien todos consideraban una leona o un ventarrón (to me, whom everyone considered some lioness or unleashed force of nature).”²³ Autobiographical fact becomes an illustration of several sex-related issues: the insecurity of a woman living alone, repressive anti-divorce legislation and so forth.

Mañana digo basta is the Bullrich novel discussed here. Its enormous sales and its emphasis on feminist concerns make it a monument to the resurgence of interest in women’s studies. Although, as will become evident, this work ranks below the expertly constructed novels of Castellanos and Lynch, it is of interest as an endeavor to make a rather blatant sex-role polemic accessible to a wide fiction-reading public. Also important is the question of how the conventions of the “best-seller” format may be accommodated to the presentation of the sex-role question, a complicated issue indeed.

At this point, it might be well to justify an obvious circumstance: two of the four representative women writers come from one country, Argentina. The factor most able to account for this apparent imbalance is the vigorous public sex-role debate that has occupied a salient place in Argentine intellectual life.²⁴ Contributors to this exchange have included Victoria Ocampo, Julio Mafud, Esther Vilar, Juan José Sebreli, Arturo Jauretche and other polemicists, social critics and opinionated celebrities.²⁵ The inescapability of the dispute, whether in scholarly inquiry or mass media, encourages its infiltration into the realm of creation. A good index of this situation is the special 1970-71 issue of the magazine *Sur* devoted to women’s issues. Women in the arts, with one notable exception, responded to the magazine’s questionnaires by expressing the most programmatically feminist opinions.

The four women studied here by no means exhaust the list of fine contemporary women writing in Latin America. In the prose genres alone, many important works are female-authored. Especially outstanding are *Los recuerdos del porvenir* (1963; *Recollections of Things to Come*, 1969), by Elena Garro (Mexico, 1920); *As três Marias* (1931; *The Three Marias*, 1963), by Rachel de Queiroz (Brazil, 1910); the many fantastic stories authored by Silvina Ocampo (Argentina, 1903); *La última niebla* (1934; *The House of Mist*, 1947) and *La amantajada* (1938; *The Shrouded Woman*, 1948) by María Luisa Bombal (Chile, 1910-1980); *Ifigenia* (1924) and *Las memorias de la Mamá Blanca* (1929; *Mama Blanca’s Souvenirs*, 1959) by Teresa de la Parra (Venezuela, 1891-1936); *Cartucho* (*Cartridge*, 1931) and *Las manos de Mamá* (*Mama’s Hands*, 1937) by Nellie Campobello (Mexico, 1909); and *Floradas na serra* (*Mountain Blossom*, 1938) by Dinah Silveira de Queiroz (Brazil, 1911-1982). Beatriz Guido (Argentina, 1925) reached many through novels and screenwriting, though some deem her too “pop.”²⁶ Women have also won recognition and sizable readerships for their work in other genres. Gabriela Mistral of Chile (b. Lucila Godoy Alcayaga, 1889-1957, Nobel prize 1945) is a vital presence for her poetry and her extensive writings about women. Alfonsina Storni (Argentina, 1892-1936) is being rediscovered as a poet and feminist; her Uruguayan contemporaries Delmira Agustini (1887-1914) and Juana de Ibarbourou (1895-1979) merit reconsideration. Cecilia Meireles (1901-1964) and Henriqueta Lisboa (1904-1985) are Brazil’s great women poets. In drama, Griselda Gambaro of Argentina (1928),