

Canon y subversión: la obra narrativa de Rosalía de Castro. Edición de Helena González Fernández y María do Cebreiro Rábade Villar. Barcelona: Centre Dona i Literatura/Icaria Editorial. 2012. 204 pp.

Whilst critical studies of the Galician poetry of Rosalía de Castro abound, comparatively scant attention has been paid to her Spanish-language prose. This well-compiled edition of essays in Spanish is therefore a much needed addition to scholarship on the iconic Galician writer. Sporting an extract of Castro's original script on the cover, the book has been published under Icaria Editorial's extensive *Mujeres y Culturas* series and stems from the research project 'Unha análise da obra narrativa de Rosalía de Castro: fundamentos teóricos e metodolóxicos'. The contributors employ a diverse range of critical perspectives to interrogate the often misread tensions in Castro's various novels and journalistic articles, highlighting her uneasy position within both the Galician and Spanish literary traditions. Readers can appreciate the complexity of a corpus which satirizes stringent social codes, defying both the restrictive norms of conservative Spanish realism and the emerging monolingual Galician nationalism of which the fundamentally European writer was a reluctant figurehead.

The book is composed of nine chapters which are separated thematically into two sections, with a comprehensive editorial introduction which contextualizes the trajectory of scholarship on Castro's prose, detailing short-sighted treatment by critics who dismissed its lack of conformity as a deficiency. The first part, entitled 'Qué es una autora?' in reference to the Foucauldian question, begins with a translated chapter from Catherine Davies' monograph *Spanish Women's Writing: 1849–1996* (London: The Athlone Press, 1998). Davies maps out Castro's life and work, helpfully contextualizing her poetry and prose within the socio-political atmosphere of the time and drawing comparisons with her contemporaries Pardo Bazán, Böhl de Faber and Gómez de Avellaneda. Her ambivalent status as a pioneer of Galician letters who has been relegated to the margins of the Spanish literary canon becomes apparent. In a similar vein, Dolores Vilavedra presents a novel examination of Castro's 'ex-centricidad' as a female writer on the border of languages and genres whose controversial renouncement of Galician was a conscious attempt to prevent ideological manipulation of her work. Joana Masó concentrates on the authorial anxiety identifiable in Castro's tendency to refer to 'mujeres que escriben' rather than 'autoras' which contrasts with her textually evident support of women's rights. Particularly compelling is the claim that the titles of *El caballero de las botas azules* and *Las literatas* are symbolic of these gender concerns—both the French equivalent of blue stockings 'bas-bleus' and 'literata' were derogatory terms for aspiring female writers.

An article by María do Cebreiro Rábade Villar opens the second part of the book, which is entitled 'Utopía, crítica social y literatura gótica'. Theoretical notions of community are examined in the less-studied texts *Ruinas* and *El primer loco*, showing Castro to be a simultaneously modern and anti-modern writer who was concerned with the disparity between the promise of progress vis-à-vis protection of Galicia's cultural specificity. Rábade Villar refreshingly demonstrates how Castro's polemical commentary on 'hospitable prostitution' is a deliberate subversion of societal constraint, referring to a letter in which the writer describes similar customs in colonial Peru. For her part, Margarita García Candeira identifies what she terms 'poetics of the desert' in the barren environment of *La hija del mar*, implying that a landscape of paucity (which in this case evokes the sparse genealogy of women's writing) acts as a utopian space that stimulates creativity and consequently emancipation. Meanwhile, Helena Migúelez-Carballeira gives an innovative reading of *El caballero ...* as anti-systemic, exposing the critique of bourgeois leisure, consumerism and the commodification of feminine beauty that is coupled with the proposal of alternatives based on the principles of austerity and pacifism. María Xesús Lama's contribution outlines philosophical and literary interpretations of androgyny, suggesting that the muse in the dialogue which opens *El caballero ...* acts as a metaphor for societal transformation. This novel is also the focus of the essay by Isabel Clúa Ginés, which posits various Gothic manifestations of female desire as projections of associated societal anxieties. Finally, Helena González Fernández gives an in-depth analysis of the subversive quality of the fantastic in Castro's novels, drawing parallels to *Les Dames vertes* (1859) by George Sand. In her reading of *El primer loco*, González Fernández posits the juxtaposition of the idealised statue Berenice with the savage vampire Esmeralda as representative of the reluctance of conservative intellectuals to engage with women, which inevitably hinders social regeneration.

One of the more striking features of the collection is the attention paid to Castro's prologues and less-known texts, of which there is a particular need for further study. This book is a vital resource for scholars interested in her prose, and will be of particular use to those working on gender and cultural studies in the Spanish and Galician fin-de-siècle. The articles propose a range of exciting avenues for inquiry on a writer whose resistance to categorization has until recently often been misunderstood.

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