

A Reconsideration of Two Spanish Women Poets: Angela Figuera Aymerich and Francisca Aguirre

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In the last decade, poetry written by women in Spain experienced a “boom,” as one close observer of the scene has noted,¹ with the result that young women poets on the Peninsula have begun to receive the attention they merit.² It is therefore an opportune moment to turn our critical attention toward the poetry written by women earlier in the twentieth century. For that reason I want to reconsider here the work of two women who were writing between the end of the Spanish Civil War in 1939 and the death of Francisco Franco, the Spanish dictator, in 1975. Angela Figuera Aymerich (1902–1984) and Francisca Aguirre (b. 1930) are two such women who warrant “recuperation,” because they have either been forgotten or have simply not received the critical attention they deserve.

As José Olivio Jiménez has demonstrated in a previous article in this collection, in historical studies of post-Civil War Spanish poetry, Angela Figuera is considered to be a member of the “first generation” of poets to appear after the Civil War (1936–39). There is a general consensus in calling this generation Spain’s “Social Poets.”³ Although Figuera’s work is always discussed together with that of these poets, it has received less attention than that of her male peers: Gabriel Celaya (b.1911), José Hierro (b. 1922) and Blas de Otero (1961–1979). A rereading of her work in the light of recent feminist critical insights will bring more of its originality to light.⁴

Francisca Aguirre is almost thirty years younger than Figuera, and if she were given the recognition she deserves, she might be included with the “second post-civil war generation” of Spanish poets.⁵ There is no general consensus on what distinguishes this group of poets from their immediate predecessors, but Andrew Debicki’s metaphor for them, “Poets of Discovery,” captures the creativity they

displayed toward language, life and self.⁶ Their poems are generally concerned with existential, philosophical and esthetic matters. If Francisca Aguirre's work has had little attention paid to it, one reason for this may be the fact that she is married to Félix Grande (b. 1937) who—along with Angel González (b. 1925), Jaime Gil de Biedma (1929–1990), José Angel Valente (b. 1929), Francisco Brines (b. 1932) and Claudio Rodríguez (b. 1934)—was a key member of the group of poets that dominated the Spanish poetic scene until the early 1970s.

Angela Figuera and Francisca Aguirre have little in common, except that both are women and that both were in their forties before they published their first books of poetry—Figuera forty-six and Aguirre forty-two. However, Angela Figuera was much more prolific than Francisca Aguirre, publishing between 1948 and 1962 eight books of poetry, which reveal her broad interests in social, political, religious, and esthetic matters.

Figuera's first two books, *Mujer de barro* ("Woman of Clay" 1948) and *Soria pura* ("Pure Soria" 1949) are characterized in general terms by optimism and love for life and humankind. These early poems explore the intensity of the feeling the poet experienced for her husband and her baby, and they describe the peace and bliss she found in nature. Her next four books, published between 1950 and 1953—*Vencida por el ángel* ("Vanquished by the Angel"), *El grito inútil* ("The Useless Cry"), *Vispera de la vida* ("The Evening Before Life") and *Los días duros* ("Harsh Days")—are predominantly pessimistic; they reflect on the social and political depredation of the time, the inauthenticity of established religion, and the marginalized status of women. While these books—which constitute the second period of her work—protest against all forms of abuse, injustice and poverty, they also attest to the confusion experienced by the survivors of the Civil War, to the guilt and doubt they shared, as well as to the stubborn hope they placed in their children and in the country's poor workers. Although Figuera during these years sensed her work was a "useless cry," she displayed an unorthodox religious faith in the basic goodness of life as well as in its possibilities for renewal. Angela Figuera's final books, published between 1958 and 1962—*Belleza cruel* ("Cruel Beauty") and *Toco la tierra: letanías* ("I Touch The Earth: Litanies")—condemn the shortcomings of Spanish culture and politics but suggest to future generations how they might rebuild their country. Pessimism is counterbalanced by optimism—in this the third

and final period of her work—as the poet describes the “cruel beauties” she has encountered in her own country, its landscape, its youth, and its workers.

In contrast to Figuera, Francisca Aguirre has published only three books of poetry, all of them in the 1970s: *Itaca* (“Ithaca” 1972), *Los trescientos escalones* (“The Three Hundred Steps” 1977) and *La otra música* (“The Other Music” 1978). In each book, she articulates the vision of a woman in the patriarchal Spanish society of the 1960s and 1970s. The poems in *Itaca* are narrated by a depressed and disillusioned Penelope, alone on the island of Ithaca after Ulysses has set sail on his odyssey. This barren isle reflects the hollowness and pointlessness of life sensed by a woman in the mid-twentieth century, a woman who is oppressed by the image Spanish bourgeois society holds up to her eyes. In reaction, Penelope/Francisca strips away all the certainties and so-called Truths her culture has implanted in her mind. In *Los trescientos escalones* Aguirre describes her childhood with parents and sisters in a positive light. Although her father painted a memorable picture of “300 Steps,” the speaker of these poems no longer knows if those steps lead upwards to light or downwards to nothingness. The world is perceived as empty, as vicious and full of vengeance, but the isolated, creative artist discovers strength in women (Rosa Chacel, Olga Orozco, her own mother), in her immediate family, and in literature and art. Although Aguirre recognizes that music—in *La otra música*—has the illusory power to fulfill us, her speakers see life and humanity as depleted, lacking a center, divided from themselves and from each other. In “este agujero que llamamos vida” (“this hole we call life” *Música* 44), we are “something less than” the gulls that fly around, “vamos por la distancia/ como un rastro al que nadie dio origen” (“we go the distance / like a trail which nobody ever started off” *Música* 41).

Both Aguirre and Figuera lament the injustice and futility of life, and both reflect on the need to challenge and modify the dominant, androcentric vision of their culture. My focus in the remarks that follow will be on this female/feminist revision of the patriarchal status quo, which for Figuera, as we shall see, was an indirect preoccupation, whereas for Aguirre it is a fully conscious intellectual desire.

Angela Figuera

In Angela Figuera’s work there is an occluded feminist vein, the

existence of which she denied.⁷ Despite her protestations—to be expected from a woman of her place and time—I see her as a “latent” feminist. First, in certain early poems she tilted at the dominant male poetic canon. Second, as she developed as a poet, she (like many woman artists) despaired of her talent and her role. Third, in some of her strongest “socially committed” poems, she uses the female figure (woman, mother, girl, baby) as no other Spanish “Social Poet” had done. Fourth, although she was frequently lauded for the instinctive “maternalism” of her work (Bosch, Mantero), she goes to great lengths in a few strong poems to completely demystify the condition of motherhood.

To begin with, today’s reader—who is more sensitive to post-modern feminist insights—will find a latent feminist poetics in Figuera’s early work. One of her first poems is titled “Mujer” (“Woman”):

- 1 ¡Cuán vanamente, cuán ligeramente
 me llamaron poetas, flor, perfume! . . .

Flor, no: florezco. Exhalo sin mudarme.
Me entregan la simiente: doy el fruto.

- 5 El agua corre en mí: no soy el agua.
 Arboles de la orilla, dulcemente
 los acojo y reflejo: no soy árbol.
 Ave que vuela, no: seguro nido.

- Cauce propicio, cálido camino
10 para el fluir eterno de la especie. (26)⁸

(How vainly, how flippantly / did poets call me flower, perfume! . . .
Flower, no: I do the flowering. I exhale without changing [shape]. /
They hand me the seed: I give [back] the fruit. / The water runs [inside]
me: I’m not the water. / As for the trees on the river bank, / sweetly I
embrace and reflect them: I’m not a tree. / Nor a bird that flies: a safe
nest. Propitious [river] bed, hot road / for the eternal flowing of the
species.)

The female speaker above (ll. 1–2) refers sarcastically to poets—certainly male—who in their vanity, haste and lack of profundity reduce the woman they apostrophize in their verse to a beautiful object, a decorative piece, an adornment (“flower,” “perfume”). The central body of the text (ll. 3–8) then proceeds subtly to subvert the notion that woman as beloved is a passive object, an intransitive recipient of admiration. The female artificer of this poem has deliberately selected verbs that denote an active and transitive condition: “I do the flowering (l. 3), the exhaling (l. 3), the fruiting (l. 4), the flowering (l. 7).” Hence in the concluding couplet (ll. 9–10)—the bed through or over which the future of the species must flow—woman is seen not as passive but as an active participant in the act of procreation.

While it is true that “Mujer” can be read as an assertion of maternal instinct, my point is that it can also be read as a tactful challenge to the male-dominated, Hispanic literary tradition insofar as it expresses an implicit criticism of the traditional poetic view of the woman.

“Mujer” should be read in conjunction with another poem from Figuera’s early period whose title is “El fruto redondo” (“The Round Fruit [Offspring]”):

- 1 Sí, también yo quisiera ser palabra desnuda.
 Ser un ala sin plumas en un cielo sin aire.
 Ser un oro sin peso, un soñar sin raíces,
 un sonido sin nadie . . .
- 5 Pero mis versos nacen redondos como frutos,
 envueltos en la pulpa caliente de mi carne. (54)

(Yes, I’d also like to be a naked word. / A featherless wing in an airless sky. / A weightless gold[en thing], a rootless dream, / an incorporeal sound . . . But my verses are born round like fruit, / wrapped in the hot pulp of my flesh.)

In this text the poet reflects on her own poetics, and in so doing she demystifies one of the dominant Hispanic poets of the first half of the twentieth century. The phrase “palabra desnuda” above (l. 1) is an explicit allusion to the esthetic of “naked” poetry made famous by the Nobel Prize winning Spanish poet Juan Ramón Jiménez (1881–

1958).⁹ Moreover, the title “El fruto redondo” echoes a poem entitled “El otoñado” (“Replete with Autumn Fullness”), which Jiménez published two years prior to Figuera’s in 1946 in *La estación total* (The Total Season).¹⁰ In “El otoñado” Jiménez likens his poetic maturity to a ripe fruit or sphere gracefully circling through infinite space. The imagery Figuera selects for the first stanza of her poem—“featherless wing” etc. (ll. 2–4)—is a tactful but parodic echo of Jiménez, from whom she distances herself in her concluding couplet. Hers is a more immediate poetics, more in touch with humanity. Whereas his appears mental, cold and abstract, hers is passionate, warm and physical (ll. 5–6). She gives birth to poems the way women give birth to children.

This difference in Jiménez’ and Figuera’s poetics parallels the one Alicia Ostriker (132–35) found between the subjective and corporeal metaphors women use to describe their art, in contrast to the logical and inorganic imagery selected by men. Therefore it can be demonstrated that in certain poems Figuera was developing her own poetics, one that was woman-centered, gynocentric not androcentric, in which metaphors of procreation and genesis are described from a woman’s point of view and experience. As such metaphorical uniqueness has been overlooked in past readings of Figuera’s work, her originality has not been fully understood.

A second overlooked aspect of Figuera’s work are the feelings of futility and despair she voiced as she proceeded to develop her poetic vision. Such feelings have been linked to the condition of Spain in the 1950s, but never to the fact that Figuera was a woman in such a hostile, male-centered environment. However, such critics as Gilbert and Gubar and Alicia Ostriker have made us aware of the fact that in such a state women experience loss of confidence and self-worth which in turn undermines their potential for development. When for example a woman poet senses that she is not taken as seriously as her male counterparts, she may begin to experience a lack of faith in her own talents.¹¹

With this in mind I offer two poems from Figuera’s mid-period for a revisionary reading. “El grito inútil” and “Los días duros” are normally read—quite rightly so—as powerful denunciations of the socio-political depredations inflicted on Spain by the Franco regime: their basic messages are that we live in hard times and that it is useless to complain against the status quo. As these are very long poems,

I cite only certain parts. “El grito inútil” begins with a series of questions:

- 1 ¿Qué vale una mujer? ¿Para qué sirve
 una mujer viviendo en puro grito?
 [.]
 ¿Qué puedo yo con estos pies de arcilla
 5 rondando las provincias del pecado,
 trepando por las dunas, resbalándome
 por todos los problemas sin remedio?
- ¿Qué puedo yo, menesterosa, incrédula,
 con sólo esta canción, esta porfía
 10 limando y escociéndome la boca?
- ¿Qué puedo yo perdida en el silencio
 de Dios, desconectada de los hombres,
 preñada ya tan sólo de mi muerte,
 en una espera, lánguida y difícil,
 15 edificando, terca, mis poemas
 con argamasa de salitre y llanto? (171)

(What’s a woman worth? What’s the use / of a woman living as a sheer cry? [. . .] What can I do with these clay feet / traipsing round the provinces of sin, / scaling the dunes, slipping / on all the unsolvable problems? What can I do, needy, incredulous, / with only this song, this persistence, / grating and smarting in my mouth? What can I do lost in God’s / silence, disconnected from men, / pregnant now with just my own death, / in a languid and difficult waiting period, / building, in my stubborn way, my poems / from plaster made of saltpeter and tears.)

A traditional reading of these stanzas would note that this is the cry of an artist who feels his art is of little use in combatting the social degradation and political tyranny that beset him.¹² However, let us as postmodern readers also note that this is the cry of a woman poet who selects a metaphor from pregnancy to describe her condition: “preñada ya tan sólo de mi muerte” (l. 13). She is not pregnant with “children” (“hijos”) but with “death.” This is the rhetoric of a woman

who feels (subconscious) guilt for not performing the roles sanctioned and assigned her by her culture, those of mother, child bearer, wife, and lover. For this reason she feels pregnant with death: useless and inferior. As her confidence and self-respect are eroded, she feels she has no right to shout, complain, denounce. The shout against the status quo is "useless" because it is uttered by a woman. "El grito inútil" attests to the marginalized condition of the woman poet in mid-century Spain. It is not just a "social" poem; it is an indication of the desperation felt by a woman who as an artist sensed she was ignored by the patriarchal system, which always has its subtle ways of ignoring those voices that do not speak from within its intellectual and cultural parameters.

The poem "Los días duros" manifests a more defiant attitude toward this marginalized state of affairs, insofar as it concludes with such lines as these:

Los días duros se abren a mi quilla.
He de marchar por ellos renovada.
No mataré mi risa ni mis sueños.
No dejaré mis besos olvidados.
No perderé mi amor entre las ruinas.
Pero no puedo desmayarme blanda. (127)

(Harsh days open up under my keel. / I must walk through them renovated. I will not kill my laughter or my dreams. / I will not consign my kisses to oblivion. / I will not lose my love among the ruins. / But I cannot faint like a softie.)

Despite the positive tone with which "Los días duros" ends, the poem does reveal that the female speaker (a middle aged woman) feels herself to be in a psychologically weak and vulnerable position: "Ya no es escudo el hijo entre los brazos. / Ya no es sagrado el seno desbordante / de generoso jugo, ni nos sirven / los rizos de blasón" ("The child in our arms is no longer a shield. / Our breasts overflowing with generous juice / are no longer sacred, / and our heraldic curls no longer get us by" [126]). The clear implication of these lines is that patriarchal society ignores or marginalizes the older woman. Nevertheless, the speaker in this text is determined to fight:

A la embestida seca de los machos
que olvidan la pulida reverencia,

la rosa, el madrigal y aquellos besos
en el extremo de la mano esquivá,
hay que oponer lo recio femenino. (127)

(To the abrupt charge of the males / who forget the polished bow, / the
rose, the madrigal and those kisses / at the tip of the elusive hand, / one
must oppose feminine toughness.)

In these hard times (“los días duros”) woman must be tough (“recio”); she cannot allow her “dócil barro femenino” (“docile, feminine clay” 125) to be trampled on. When she is young, she can rely on the fact that the softness of the clay out of which she was fashioned (“barro”) will be appreciated—Figuera is also alluding here to her first book of poems *Mujer de barro*—but when she is older, she needs to make that “clay” tough and strong to counteract “la embestida seca de los machos” (“the males’ abrupt [callous] charge”). As Ostriker has observed, hard images—stones, metal—are used by women to protect a self that once was soft (85); in addition, a hard, cold, aggressive exterior (“exoskeletal” form) has been used by women poets to guard against overemotional, sentimental verse (87–90). So in addition to the undeniable social content of Figuera’s poems, we can observe that they are informed by a latent feminist perspective—one that has not been acknowledged in past assessments of her work.

A third point to be made about Figuera’s latent feminism concerns the imagery she selected for some of her socially committed poems. Unlike other social poets in Spain, she used the female figure (woman, mother, child) to transmit more effectively her anti-establishment messages. The targets of her irony are the socio-political, military and religious structures erected under the dictatorship of Francisco Franco. For example, in “Egoísmo” (“Selfishness”), a poem in which she notes the horrors (hunger, lies, pain) at her doorstep, we find this cameo:

Fuera, las madres dóciles que alumbran
con terrible alarido;
las que acarrear hijos como fardos
y las que ven secarse ante sus ojos
la carne que parieron y renuevan
su grito primitivo. (111)

(Outside, docile mothers who give birth / with terrible shrieks; / those who drag kids round like bundles / and those who, seeing before their very eyes / the flesh they bore dry up, renew / their primitive screams.)

The expressionistic images above (reminiscent of Edvard Munch's famous painting "The Scream") are an implicit and powerful denunciation of the political system that tolerates such abuse, and they are more effective because they establish a link between the cries uttered by the mother at the birth of her child with those she emits at its death.¹³ The poem "Bombardeo" ("The Bombing") associates pregnant women with the Virgin Mary and thereby manages to denounce both the military and the religious establishments. It begins: "Yo no iba sola entonces. Iba llena / de tí y de mí" ("I was not alone at that time. I was filled / with you and me"). Later it continues:

Iba llena de gracia por los días
desde la anunciación hasta la rosa.
Pero ellos no podían, ciegos, brutos,
respetar el portento.
Rugieron. Embistieron encrespados.
Lanzaron sobre mí y mi contenido
un huracán de rayos y metralla. (119)
[.]
yo colocaba, dulce, mis dos manos
sobre mi vientre que debió cubrirse
de lirios y de espumas y esas telas
que visten, recamadas, los altares. (120)

(I was filled with grace in those days / from the annunciation to the rose. But, blind, brutes, they could not / respect the portent. / They bellowed. They hunched themselves up and charged. / They hurled on me and my content / a hurricane of thunderbolts and shrapnel. / [. . .] / softly, I placed my two hands / over my belly which should have been covered / with lilies and foam and those embroidered / cloths that dress the altars.)

By implying that her pregnancy is akin to the Mother of God's, the female speaker of the poem effectively denounces the political and religious orders, and she suggests that the Armed Forces (the Fascists) are destroying the very institutions (the Church) they

claimed to be defending. The victorious forces are transformed into symbols of selfishness and masculine hegemony—forces that result in the dehumanization of society.

Figuera's final thematic twist with this rhetorical knife appears in *Belleza cruel* and it concerns infertility. In numerous poems she describes the land in which she lives—Spain—as an infertile country, arid, dry (219, 221, 235, 238) where seeds (especially those of liberty) cannot grow. What Figuera does in these poems is to turn the tables on the metaphor of infertility. Traditionally it is women who are dubbed infertile; however Figuera in these poems shows that the male establishment is sterile because it created an infertile culture. Figuera even urges future generations to turn things around and make the land fertile once more—“saneada tierra / para sembrar a pulso la simiente” (“drained land / to be seeded by dint of sheer hardwork” 249). To accomplish this task, she says, they must not imitate their fathers' and grandfathers' thoughts and deeds, in fact they should ignore such sterile men.

Figuera's vision of the sterilizing effect of male power is shared by contemporary women. In her discussion of comparable poems, Ostriker (138) cites Mary Daly and contends that: “The true religion of mankind . . . is death worship. Masculine power, sterile in itself, survives by ruthless suppression of whatever is organic and sensitive, within and outside itself. It creates a God in its own authoritarian likeness to whom woman submits in her own despite, trapped in her own gentleness, by her own avoidance of power.” Hence, in her maturity, Figuera chose to advise her son and his generation that they should not meekly submit to that infertile, patriarchal society; they should wrest power from it.

The fourth point to be made about Figuera's latent feminism is that in numerous poems she takes pains to demystify the condition of motherhood. The point needs to be made, because much emphasis has been placed on her putative “maternal” impulses (see Bosch, Mantero). For example, in “Madres” (“Mothers” 132–33) she proposes to subvert the traditional view of the mother as a “fecund womb” (“úteros fecundos”). Figuera maintains that copulation and orgasm are not just frenetic thrills and euphoric experiences for a would-be mother; they are sobering and depressing events, because women know that the fruit of their wombs will become fodder—for factories, for war, for death. The poem ends with this couplet: “Madres del mundo, tristes paridoras, / gemid, clamad, aullad por

vuestros frutos" ("Mothers of the world, sadly giving birth, / rail, wail, and howl for your offspring" 133).

Implicit in this text is a denunciation of the patriarchal culture that uses women for its own ends. In addition, in "Destino" ("Fate" 141–42) Figuera addresses God ("hermético alfarero" / "hermetic potter") and accuses him of deceit and fraud. He leaves the male of the species free to roam the earth, but he enslaves woman: "me encadena / al ritmo y servidumbre de la especie" ("enchains me / to the rhythm and servitude of the species" 141).

Mothers are enchained by God, and they are also enslaved by God's Church on earth, as Figuera makes clear in many other poems. In fact, it is clear that Figuera considered that the Church treats its subjects with malign neglect and that it offers a travesty of true religious teaching. She often delineates a deliberately unorthodox posture in her poems, in which mothers take on an active role in order to do those very things Christ taught his followers to do. In these poems Figuera effectively subverts the role of the priest. The speaker of one poem knows that God's angels are too pure to dirty their hands with the problems of this world ("Miedo" / "Fear" 211–12), and so she describes how she herself does those very tasks the angels are too important to assume ("La justicia de los ángeles" / "The Angels' Justice" 228–34, "Me explico ante Dios" / "I Explain Myself Before God" 266–67). The angel "Angela" captures and transmits God's true messages and suggests how they should be implemented in the impoverished society of mid-century Spain.

Beneath such ironical allegories lies the belief that the Church is controlled by men who interpret its doctrines, totally ignore the true spirit of motherhood, and assign women a passive role. Figuera therefore insisted in her latent feminist manner on the injustice and futility of her country's authoritarian and patriarchal religion.¹⁴ The "death" of God, which as Ostriker notes (46) haunted all moderns, is less important for a woman; women poets, Ostriker later adds, desire to disassociate spirituality from theology (168) and to return to a pre-Christian religious object of a fertile and nourishing Mother (161). In Figuera's attitude, we can now detect such a desire.

In the foregoing remarks I have described some of the feminist patches that form part of the "quilt" that is the Figuera text.¹⁵ They are attitudes that tend to be obscured when her poetry is read in conjunction with that of her male peers. Once they are recognized, some of the power of her great poem "Mujeres del mercado"

("Market Women," 178) will be better appreciated. The male patriarchal order is clearly delineated in this text, which graphically describes the atrocious condition of motherhood. The poverty described is an implicit indictment of the politics of Franco's, Spain. The text itself does not reflect on Figuera's poetics, but it exemplifies brilliantly the fact that her poems were "frutos envueltos en la pulpa caliente de mi carne" ("El fruto redondo," 54); ("fruit wrapped in the hot pulp of my flesh" ["The Round Fruit"]).

Figuera, like many women, as Ostriker has noted in a different context, made poetry "for and from the lives of lost women, the insulted and injured of present and past history" (191). Indeed, what Ostriker has written of today's women poets, we can say of Angela Figuera: as she examined her self in contrast to those she saw about her, she began to assume in her work "an almost mystic responsibility for the lives of others" (Ostriker 178).

Francisca Aguirre

Unlike Figuera, Francisca Aguirre was six years old when the Spanish Civil War began. Perhaps for this reason her poetry is concerned not with Spain's immediate social and political ills but with suffering of a more recondite nature: the anguished idealism of the self. Her first book, *Itaca*, was published in 1972, and insofar as it is a revisionary reading of the *Odyssey* from Penelope's point of view, it is consciously feminist. Ostriker states (22) that for women poets "historic and mythic heroines will provide a means of self-exploration, self-projection, self defense," and Aguirre certainly uses the persona of Penelope for such ends. Although Aguirre's subsequent books—*Los trescientos escalones* (1977) and *La otra música* (1978)—are unified by no such overarching a metaphor as her first, they do evince similar anguish and a comparable vision of life.¹⁶

In the following remarks, I will discuss four aspects of Francisca Aguirre's work. First, several years before Gilbert and Gubar's crucial work *The Madwoman in the Attic* was published in 1979, Aguirre had already examined such a claustrophobic image of woman in her verse. Second, in a wry manner her work is a continual subversion of Western (logophallocentric) idealism. Third, in her work Aguirre in effect demystifies androcentric Western esthetics. And fourth, the metaphors she chooses for representing that which is

positive in a woman's life are also found in the work of other women writers of the late twentieth century.

Itaca presents an image of a woman who has been reduced to a state of mental illness by the actions of a patriarch. The book is narrated from the perspective of Penelope, the woman Ulysses abandoned on the island of Ithaca. After he cast Penelope aside, Ulysses became free to set sail on his personal "odyssey" and transform himself into the (male) legend that civilization celebrates. As Aguirre's poems evolve, the island of Ithaca becomes a spatial metaphor for the prison (psychological, emotional) in which Penelope is confined. In fact, the second section of the book is called "El desván de Penélope"—"desván" being a type of "attic."

Ithaca is described initially as a lifeless, empty place: "mantiene el eco de voces que se han ido" ("holds the echo of voices that have departed" *Itaca* 14). It is a deserted island on which no strangers in their right mind will land: "Itaca es sólo el mar / y un cielo que la aplasta" ("Ithaca is only sea / and a sky that crushes it" *Itaca* 17); "aquí nadie viene voluntariamente / . . . / sólo llegan los náufragos" ("no-one voluntarily comes here/ only those who've been shipwrecked" *Itaca* 18), most of whom cannot stand it; but those who do, "se quedan mudos" ("end up mute") and become "un cortejo disgregado, / un arenal en marcha" ("a disbanded procession, / a sandpit on the march" *Itaca* 19). Ithaca, which conditions Penelope, is barren and empty, a silent void, whose few inhabitants wander about as if they were part of a funeral procession. And all this, Aguirre implies, emblemizes the space women inhabit in the present era.

The figural meaning of such an island—a prison of psychic space—takes on novel dimensions in a later poem called "El muro" ("The Wall"):

- 1 Pensó: qué espantoso vacío,
 un desierto es la tierra;
 si ahora echara a correr
 podría salirme de ella totalmente.
- 5 Miraba a su alrededor
 y miraba también dentro de sí
 y no encontraba nada:
 ni el más pequeño promontorio.
 Comprendió que iba a ser muy fácil,
- 10 se trataba sencillamente de correr,

y en ella había, sin duda,
una necesidad de correr sin descanso.

Meditaba, aturdida:
tal vez llegue a algún sitio
15 o puede que por fin salga de todos.

Ingenuamente tomó una decisión.
Y de pronto vio el muro.

Se alzaba ante ella a poca distancia;
lo contempló con estupor;
20 no era muy grande y, sin embargo, parecía rodearla;
más aún: parecía abrazarla.
Giró vertiginosamente la cabeza
mientras algo muy antiguo dentro de ella golpeaba
con un sonido hermoso.
25 Y muy despacio se sentó en el suelo
y comenzó a llorar con gratitud
aceptando con humildad los pañuelos
y las voces que amorosamente la protegían. (*Itaca* 80–81)

(She thought: what a frightful emptiness, / the land is a desert; / if I were now to begin to run / I could get away from it all completely. She looked around her / and she also looked inside herself / and she found nothing: / not even the smallest promontory. / She realized that it was going to be very easy, / it was simply a matter of running, / and in her there was, undoubtedly, / a need to run flat out. She pondered, in bewilderment: / perhaps I'll reach some place / or maybe finally I'll get away from them all. Naively she made her decision. / And suddenly she saw the wall. It rose before her a little way off; / she contemplated it with astonishment; / it wasn't very big but, nevertheless, it seemed to surround her; / what's more: it seemed to embrace her. / She spun her head around in a daze / while something really ancient inside her beat / with a beautiful sound. / And very slowly she sat down on the ground / and began to weep with gratitude / accepting with humility the handkerchiefs / and the voices / that lovingly protected her.)

These are Penelope's thoughts and they come to us in a

deliberately unassuming “free indirect style.”¹⁷ The speaker in the above poem sees her exterior space (ll. 1–2) as an emptiness, a desert, away from which she senses she can run (ll. 10–13), even though there is nothing to run toward (l. 8). When she reflects on her condition, she becomes perplexed (ll. 13–16). It is then that she sees a wall which seems to surround her (l. 20), imprison her, against which she seems to bang her head (ll. 22–23). She accepts this condition with gratitude and humility, taking it for a loving protection, possibly reminiscent of the womb (“algo muy antiguo . . . con un sonido hermoso” ll. 23–4).

The self-destructive tendencies which can be observed in “El muro” are examined in other texts.¹⁸ Penelope gradually displays masochistic symptoms: although each moment Ulysses is away tests her fidelity, she tells him: “aspiro sólo a preservar / el ínfimo tendón / que me sujeta / a tu desolación / como una triste sanguijuela” (“I aspire only to preserve / the tiniest sinew / that keeps me tied / to your desolation / like a sad leech” *Itaca* 64). In other poems the speaker observes that such mental masochism—according to which women are brainwashed by patriarchal culture—is a living death. For instance in one poem the speaker simply asks Penelope: “¿cómo has sido capaz de presenciar la muerte / sin comprender que te contaminaba?” (“how could you have witnessed death / without realizing that it contaminated you?” *Itaca* 65). A stunning characterization of the self-destructive condition of woman—one into which she is impelled by her culture—is contained in “El escalón” (“The Step,” *Itaca* 67–8). This poem confirms that Aguirre shares with other women the view that a woman is psychologically conditioned to act as if she lived in a “mad house.”

Despite the apparent negativity of this vision, it soon becomes apparent, and this is the second point to be made about Aguirre’s work, that the speaker of these texts is rejecting and subverting some of the dominant thoughts and values of the prototypical male of Western culture. Ulysses’ odyssey surely symbolizes, on one level, Western civilization’s belief in ultimate goals, grand schemes, great causes, the search for truth, beauty, for an all-encompassing view of life, a vision of totality. By describing the negative impact of such a quest, Aguirre is deflating the quest itself. Other such ideals are demystified in Aguirre’s work. When a woman is threatened by phallogocentric discourses, “corrosive demystification”—Ostriker claims (162)—is “her mode of conquest.”

“El espectáculo” (“The Spectacle” *Itaca* 32) deflates the notion

that the male of the species sacrifices his life for his beloved and his country. The speaker of this poem warns Penelope that the men she beholds are not dying for her, that they see in her only a refuge or resting place. The speaker interjects: "Míralos: van a morir por algo que no existe" ("Look at them" they're going off to die for something that doesn't exist"), and then adds: "no les niegues su industriosa mentira" ("don't deny them their industrious lie").

With respect to the belief in ultimate goals, Aguirre's work opposes the notion that everything is "provisoria y mudable" ("provisional and changing" *Trescientos* 16). With respect to the belief that man should strive for a vision of totality, her work insists on the notion of fragmentation. When she reacts to the vision of a Picasso or a Klee, she contrasts their all-encompassing designs to "una fragmentación dinástica" ("a dynastic fragmentation") which she sees on earth (*Trescientos* 56-7). We are "lagartijas" ("lizards") says the speaker of one poem, "una segregación tanteando en el vacío" ("a segregated [group] groping in the emptiness" *Itaca* 55). Life is not "una fortaleza" ("a fortress"), the speaker of another poem insists, but "porción, fragmento, parte / nada más" ("portion, fragment, part / nothing else"), hence she concludes "y a este retazo no hay por que pedirle / que abarque una totalidad que no le pertenece" ("and there's no need to ask of this remnant / that it comprise a wholeness it doesn't have" *Trescientos* 31-5). Clearly, Aguirre wants to undermine masculine visions of control and totality: life is not a soldier's fort, it's a scrap or the remnant from a piece of cloth.

In another (very long) poem, "Esta vida, hay que ver, qué desatino" ("This life, you'd never guess, is a right farce" *Trescientos* 61-63), to summarize her philosophy toward life she employs the metaphor of old clothes—perhaps in contrast to the idealistic philosophy implied in Jiménez's "Vino, primero, pura, / vestida de inocencia."¹⁹ The speaker of Aguirre's text is a poor woman who has to make ends meet as best she can. Here are a few of her lines:

Esta vida tan remendada,

 me parece un vestido tan raído,
 un traje de segunda mano,
 algo que nunca fue estrenado,
 algo que usaron otros
 y que yo, pobre desde siempre,

hundida en la miseria desde siempre,
 lavé y planché, así, zurci agujeros
 hasta dejarla decentita,
 hasta darle un aspecto de decoro
 y lucirla con esa dignidad
 que sólo son capaces de poseer los pobres,
 aquellos que han conocido la carencia
 desde mucho antes de nacer. (Trescientos 61)

(This terribly patched-up life, / seems to me a really threadbare dress,
 / a second-hand dress, / something that was never put on, / something
 that others used / and that I, forever poor, / engulfed in wretchedness
 from the start, / washed and ironed, sewed, darned up its holes / until I
 made it decent enough, / until I gave it a decorous look / and wore it
 with that dignity / that only the poor are capable of possessing, / those
 who have known want / from even before they were born.)

Grand schemes such as life's goals and ultimate design are cut
 down to size by Aguirre's minimalist tone and language. A little later
 in the same poem the speaker adds:

Señor, qué vida la de algunos, tan escasa,
 tan reducida a una maceta, a un costurero,
 tan dada la vuelta
 como aquellas americanas
 que mi abuela minuciosamente cosía:
 lo de adentro hacia afuera
 y los respuntes en el mismo sitio:
 una obra de arte, como nueva. (Trescientos 62)

(Lord, what a life some live, so skimpy, / so limited to the size of a
 flower pot, a sewing box, / turned so often / like those coats / my
 grandmother used to stitch meticulously: / front to back / and the
 backstiches in the same place: / a work of art, like new.)

The scheme of life may be cut down to size, but life is still perceived by Aguirre as "a work of art." It can therefore be shown that Francisca Aguirre's sharp wit is directed at deflating the Grand Illusions of the Occident, and that hers is a minimalist philosophy of life. As she exclaims in an aside in a poem reminiscent of Vallejo,

“Sucedan estas cosas” (“These Things Happen” *Trescientos* 24), “esto no es la roca Tarpeya” (“all this isn’t the rock of Tarpeia”)—from which women did affect the course of history.²⁰ For Aguirre, such grand causes belong to the myths of the past; legends written by men in which women are denatured. . . .

A third point to be made about Aguirre’s work is that, just as she debunks Western philosophies of life, she subjects art to a feminist revision. To distance her poetics from that of the high romantic and modern poets of our culture, whose conviction was that their art illuminated life on earth, brought light to mankind, Aguirre calls poetry—in a poem to her husband—an “oficio de tinieblas” (“a shadowy task”): “este oficio tan ambicioso como escaso, / tan de tanteo, tan de sombras / que persiguen la luz como un ahogado” (“this job’s as ambitious as it’s unproductive, / so much groping, so much of shadows pursuing the light like someone who’s drowning” *Trescientos* 43). In addition, Aguirre alludes to male precursors to signal her difference. For instance, in deliberate contrast to Juan Ramón Jiménez’ sublime egotism—“Y yo me iré. Y se quedarán los pájaros / cantando” (“And I shall go away . . . And the birds will stay [here] / singing”)²¹—Aguirre notes: “me moriré / de un silencio mayor que yo” (“I’ll die / from a silence greater than myself” *Trescientos* 11).

One of the more sustained metaphors Aguirre uses to deflate Western poetic ideals—and inscribe a gynocentric vision within Hispanic poetry—is to conceive of art as a weaving or spinning. The connection with weaving is first made by Penelope in a poem entitled “Monólogo” (“Monologue”). She tells herself that she wove “para cubrir aquellas tus heridas” (“to cover those wounds of yours”), and that her weaving was “un manto de palabras / inútiles y hermosas” (“a blanket of beautiful and useless words” *Itaca* 33). The goal of her art is not, for example, to capture those Platonic absolutes, such as Truth and Beauty, but to fashion something simple to wrap around the self. The spinner metaphor is taken up again in *La otra música*,²² in for instance “Música de la distancia” (“Distant Music”), where music is a weaver or sewer whose effect is to make people rejoice:

- 1 Su destino es negar la geografía.
Acerca, siempre acerca esa música infinita.
Es artesana
- y con su aguja y su dedal
- 5 y un hilo como el tiempo

- zurce los huecos que segrega la lejanía.
Une los horizontes
con canciones de coros infantiles
y en su sencilla faltriquera
10 esconde un cañamazo
que despliega un paisaje sin límites.
Fabril y cuidadosa
devana un alfabeto catecúmeno.
Ella es aquel atajo cuaternario
15 que guió hasta el encuentro. Alguien
debió cantar ante la luz
y conducidos por ese hilo de música
llegaron otros que se unieron
a celebrar el mundo con el canto. (Música 23)

(Her fate is to negate geography. / She brings things together, brings them near that infinite music. / She's a craftswoman / and with her thimble and needle / and a thread like time / she patches up the hollows that distance separates. / She unites horizons / with songs from children's choirs / and in her fob pocket / she hides a piece of canvas / that displays a limitless landscape. / Hard working and careful / she spins a catechumenal alphabet. / She's that quaternary shortcut / that led to the meeting. Someone / must have sung in front of the footlights / and others came together / guided by that thread of music / to celebrate the world with singing.)

Art is minimized by being converted into a sewing woman (ll. 3-6, 9, 13) who unpretentiously keeps busy at her task, a task that favors life and inspires others to celebrate it (l. 19). For this woman poet art is not a "well-wrought urn," but a communal "quilt."²³

A further metaphor that Aguirre appropriates for feminists is the myth of Prometheus. Legend has it that Prometheus' entrails were eaten out by vultures as a punishment for his pride. Likewise, in "Autofagia" ("Self-Immolation") Aguirre's speaker confesses to being beset (devoured) by that which is external to her (such as vultures), but she ends her poem with these exclamations:

Es como si el entorno me redujera hasta mí misma,
como si me empujara desde mis manos y mis ojos
hacia el negro agujero de mi sangre.

Es como si las cosas me obligaran a una horrible autofagia:
soy a la vez huesos y perro.
En una pieza Prometeo y el buitре. (Itaca 59)

(It's as if my surroundings reduced me down to my own size, / as if they pushed me from my hands and eyes / down to the black hole of my blood. / It's as if things forced me to a horrible self-immolation: / I am at the same time bones and the dog. / Prometheus and the vulture in one piece.)

The speaker preys on her own battered flesh. This is certainly a negative version of poetic creation, but postmodern readers can see that it articulates a psychologically valid truth for this woman poet. Whereas the Modernist credo was to suppress such harsh feeling and forego distasteful expression (pace Ostriker 124), the articulation of emotional and intellectual extremities becomes a psychic necessity for certain women poets (Ostriker 161); it inspires them to create.

In a later book, Aguirre subjects the notion of "autofagia" to further revision. In "El paraíso encontrado" ("Paradise Found") a homage to the French primitive painter Douanier Rousseau, the speaker of the poem describes everyday household objects as if they were part of a jungle from which wild animals suddenly spring and devour parts of her body. But the speaker discovers the strength from within to turn this into a positive experience and to subvert the oppressive reality that hems her in. The poem ends this way:

- 1 Entonces, con una de las manos que aún conservo,
 arranco de la estantería como del árbol de la ciencia
 un volumen repleto de semillas—palabras—
 y mientras oigo a los reptiles acercarse
 - 5 voy dejando que crezcan hasta el pelo,
 envolviéndome la cabeza,
 versos y flores, polen de música,
 una humedad de llanto y de rocío
 alimentando versos trepadores,
 - 10 versos y versos como madreselvas
 tejiéndome una mágica guirnalda,
 rebrotándome, reanimándome como a una estatua triste
 a la que hicieran una silente transfusión de savia.
- (Trescientos, 48)

(Then, with one of the hands that I still have, / I pull from the shelves
as from the tree of knowledge / a volume replete with seeds—words—
/ and while I hear the reptiles getting closer / I keep on letting them
grow up to my hair, / enveloping my head, / verses and flowers,
musical pollen, / a humidity of tears and dew / feeding climbing
verses, / verses and verses like honeysuckles / weaving a magic
garland for me, / sprouting from me, giving life to me as to a sad statue
/ to which they'd given a silent transfusion of sap.)

Here, the entrails, which in the Prometheus myth were shrunk, grow profusely to indicate that the female speaker has tapped her inner strength and inspiration. "Reserva natural" ("Natural Reserve" *Trescientos* 70) uses the same metaphor of a forest to imply that the woman artist creates a "natural (game) reserve" within herself on which she can draw for her artistic inspiration.

The implication of such thoughts is, to put it bluntly, that as there are fewer role models for women poets, they will likely be thrown back onto their own resources, their own inner strength and imagination in order to articulate a vision with which they can feel satisfaction. In addition, as Ostriker has argued, unlike male poets who valorize spirit over nature and matter, Aguirre like other women poets presents nature as a positive equal (15–28); nature is that in which humankind is embedded, and spirit should celebrate, not subdue, it (107–14).

Aguirre therefore hints intermittently at positive, feminist forces. And that in effect is the fourth and final observation I would like to make about her work. She herself uses the oxymoron "frightful sweetness" ("espantosa dulzura") to articulate what positive notions she encounters, a notion that recalls W. B. Yeats's "tragic gaiety."²⁴ In the poem "Espantosa dulzura," which begins "A veces este mundo me parece un gran circo triste y alucinado" ("At times this world seems to me to be a huge, sad and deluded circus"), she observes "la fusta del domador amado" ("the riding whip of the beloved [male] trainer") before she looks at "las amazonas en sus caballos blancos" ("the amazon women on their white horses" *Música* 25). The horror or fright the male trainer provokes (to which the woman has grown accustomed) is contrasted with and compensated for by the impressive self-sufficiency of the horsewomen and their white horses.

The sea constitutes a further "frightful sweetness" in Aguirre's work. Indeed, for many women poets the sea is a secure, even gratifying place (Ostriker 109–10). In "Testigo de excepción"

(“Exceptional Witness”) the sea is like a womb in which the speaker would immerse herself for consolation and regeneration:

- 1 Yo sólo quiero un mar:
 yo sólo necesito un mar.
 Un agua de distancia,
 un agua que no escape,
5 un agua misericordiosa
 en que lavar mi corazón
 y dejarlo a su orilla
 para ser empujado por sus olas,
 lamido por su lengua de sal
10 que cicatriza heridas. (*Trescientos* 44)²⁵

(I only want a sea: / I only need a sea. / A water [with] distance, / a water that will not escape, / a compassionate water / in which to wash my heart / and leave it on its bank / to be pushed by its waves, / licked by its salt-tongue / that heals wounds up.)

A further positively marked metaphor is the heart. It provides the speaker with sustenance. The heart's irrationality and wildness (“locura”) is championed against “la lógica” of mankind, which always prevails in Western society (*Trescientos* 15). Pragmatism, a philosophy concerned with use, with ends and means—as is our male-dominated Western culture—is subverted by the speaker's insight in this poem.²⁶ In another poem, a homage to Machado and to the regenerative powers of “la tarde” (“the evening”), the speaker refers to “mi corazón de brújula” (“my compass heart” *Trescientos* 23), and implies that it, not her head, guides her through life and teaches her to appreciate insignificant intangibles: “lo mínimo . . . despojos . . . memoria” (“the minimum . . . scraps . . . memory”). And in “Nosotros” (“Us”), a poem dedicated to her family in which the speaker recalls moments of shared fulfillment, of communal epiphany, she introduces the metaphor of a “successive heart,” akin to an eternal memory or “intrahistoria”: “Todo se aúna reuniendo / en un tiempo sin tiempo el sucesivo corazón / mientras volvemos, como el movimiento último / de la sinfonía de Schubert que no puede acabar” (“All combines by reuniting / the successive heart in a time-less time / while we return / as in the last movement / of Schubert's symphony that cannot end.” *Música* 53–54).

And finally, for Aguirre fellowship with others, especially one's family, is an important experience.²⁷ For many women poets, intimacy, mutuality, connection, touch are essential experiences (Ostriker 165). For example, in the following poem the speaker urges her readers to understand and accept the humble decoration that life is, and that they/we are:

Si supiésemos amueblar nuestro corazón,
nuestra caverna de Platón,
la salita de proyección de nuestra vida
con lo que es propio de su territorio.
Si supiésemos recorrer ese invernadero
reconociendo las flores de plástico
y agrupándolas todas con la ternura que dedicáramos
a viejos miembros ortopédicos.
Si supiésemos apartar sin resbalar a la segregación,
sin convertirnos en testigos de cargo.
Si fuésemos tan de verdad nosotros
que no pudiésemos establecer
esa estéril distancia entre nos
y la nostalgia que llamamos otros.
Si tuviésemos el valor de ser ese desasosiego
y no otra cosa,
esa impotencia y no su historia.
Tal vez descansáramos en ese impulso
y alguna vez seríamos dichosos
con nuestro humilde, torpe, escaso decorado.

(*Música* 43)

(If only we knew how to furnish our heart, / our Plato's cave, / our life's projection pit / with what is proper to its territory. / If only we knew how to run round that greenhouse / recognizing its plastic flowers / and grouping all of them together with the tenderness that we'd dedicate / to old orthopaedic members. / If only we knew how to set the segregation to one side without slipping, / without turning ourselves into witnesses for the prosecution. / If we were so really and truly us / that we could not establish / that sterile distance between us / and the nostalgia we call them. / If we had the courage to be that restlessness / and not another thing, / that impotence and not its history. / Perhaps we would rest on that impulse / and for once we would be happy / with our scanty, awkward and humble scenery.)

In conclusion, when one compares Aguirre to Figuera, it becomes clear that Aguirre was undermining a teleological (male) view of life. Life is not a race to the finishing line; it is an experience to be enjoyed the best "we" can. Reality is not a quest for absolutes; it is an appreciation of the small and humble patch "we" are.²⁸ It is possible that because of Aguirre's unconventional perspective, some of the feminist aspects of which I have described above, her work has been ignored by students of the period. A corollary to this line of thought also applies to the work of Angela Figuera: because Figuera's feminism has not been recognized, Figuera's poetry has been depreciated and the uniqueness of her vision obscured. Whether these women deny or recognize their feminism, both are "feminists" in different ways, and the perspective they have brought as women to mid-twentieth century Spanish poetry should in future be given more careful consideration.

Notes

1. Florencio Martínez Ruiz in Jiménez Faro, *Panorama*.
2. For example, in North America recently both *Siglo XX/20th Century* and *Revista Canadiense de Estudios Hispánicos* published two articles on young women poets. In Works Cited, see Ugalde, Wilcox.
3. For instance, Daydi-Tolson's *The Post-Civil War Spanish Social Poets*.
4. A feminist revision of Figuera's work was begun recently; see Mandlove, Quance.
5. For this title, see García Martín. However, the English reader may wish to consult Wilcox, "Spanish Poetry from the Mid 1930s to the Mid 1980s: An Introduction," in Jiménez-Fajardo.
6. See Debicki, "The Generation of 1956–1971," in *Poetry* 1–19.
7. In Ramos (17), she asserts: "Yo no creo en el feminismo" ("I do not believe in feminism").
8. All quotations are from Figuera, *Obras completas* ("Complete Works"); page references are included in parentheses after each quotation.
9. See "Vino, primero, pura, / vestida de inocencia" ("She came, first, pure, / dressed in innocence."). In Jiménez, *Libros de poesía* ("Books of Poems" 555).
10. See Jiménez, *Libros de poesía* 1140.
11. See Ostriker, Chapter 4, "Herr God, Herr Lucifer: Anger, Violence, and Polarization."
12. I am deliberately using the traditional possessive adjective here.

13. As a member of the middle class, Figuera in this poem identifies herself with the socio-political order that tolerates such injustices.
14. In answer to a questionnaire, Figuera wrote: "Católica. Practicante hasta 1936. Luego, no" ("Catholic. Practicing until 1939. Afterwards, no."). In Lechner, *El compromiso* vol. 2, p. 165.
15. I take the metaphor from Cheryl Tornsey's "The Critical Quilt," in Atkins and Morrow.
16. I use the following abbreviations when citing from these books: *Itaca*, *Trescientos*, *Música*. Page references follow each quotation.
17. By this I mean an elliptical splicing of those voices (of various poetic personae) the text actualizes: for example, the thoughts of the speaker and those of the poet.
18. Ostriker, Chapter 4, has studied the phenomenon of anger's turning into self-destruction.
19. See n. 9 above.
20. Tarpeia was the daughter of the governor of the fortress built by Romulus on the banks of the Tiber (i.e. Rome). She desired the gold in the bracelets of the Sabine women and to get it she opened the fortress gates to the Sabines' King—whereupon they killed her. Moreover, the Sabine women did stop the war that ensued by running between the opposing armies.
21. See Jiménez, *Tercera antología* ("Third Poetic Anthology" 212).
22. Music's positive force in this book often finds expression in metaphors related to the woman: "priestess" (16), child-bearing (33), and akin to the fascination a wild beast exercises (15, 27)
23. For "quilt," see Tornsey n. 16 above. The "urn" is the metaphor Cleanth Brooks chose for his study of Romantic and post-Romantic poetry.
24. See "Lapis Lazuli," *Collected Poems* 291–93.
25. See also "Salutación," (*Trescientos* 67)
26. Penelope's heart displayed similar characteristics: "respeto hacia todo lo que vive" ("respect toward all that lives"). It teaches her to smile: "ante este hermoso árbol / que misterioso crece / justificando inútilmente al mundo" ("before this beautiful tree / which grows mysteriously / justifying the world in its useless way" *Itaca* 40).
27. Psychologists such as Nancy Chodorow and Carol Gilligan are beginning to describe such concerns (as the heart, togetherness) as typical of women's discourses rather than men's. For discussion of Chodorow, see Ostriker 70 ff & 165 ff.
28. In his postmodern, late period W. B. Yeats called this "patch" "an acre of green grass" (*Collected Poems* 299). In his mid-period, he called it an acre of stony ground.

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