

Enriqueta Zafra. *Prostituidas por el texto: Discurso prostibulario en la picaresca femenina*.

Purdue Studies in Romance Literatures 46. West Lafayette: Purdue University Press, 2008. 233 pp. index. bibl. \$43.95. ISBN: 978-1-55753-527-6.

Enriqueta Zafra's *Prostituidas por el texto: Discurso prostibulario en la picaresca femenina* is much more than a study of the literary *pícaro*, or female rogue-trickster. Rather, Zafra's study delves deeper, skillfully placing Golden Age picaresque literature in its historical context and exploring a wide range of views and rhetoric that surrounded the "fallen woman" in early modern Spain. Zafra focuses on the interplay between authors over the debates of their time, particularly debates on how to control liberated women and what their role should be in the puritanical Spain of the Catholic Reformation. It is clear that the author has done an enormous amount of work; her investigation is thorough, and draws on a great deal of religious, recreational, and advice literature of early modern Spain, from Martín de Alpizcueta to María de Zayas.

Zafra convincingly demonstrates that the *pícaro* was synonymous with *prostitute* in early modern Spain. In fact, she shows that Spaniards conflated any number of female categories, from *amancebas* (roughly "mistresses") to innkeepers to miller's daughters, as some color of prostitute. The *pícaro* was, above all else, free; and a woman at liberty — who spoke freely, traveled freely, and lived freely — was assumed to be sexually promiscuous. And so it is appropriate that much of the book's first chapter focuses on the debate over legalized prostitution in Spain up to 1623, the year King Philip IV officially criminalized this "oldest profession." The debate that then raged over prostitution pitted traditional pre-Tridentine views with the uncompromising spirit of the Catholic Reformation. Traditionally, Church Fathers like St. Augustine had argued that prostitution was a "lesser evil," containing sex and lust to a few fallen women, buildings, and spaces. But the vigorous new institutions of Catholic Reform, like the Jesuits and the Inquisition, could not reconcile a Christian Spain with its legal brothels. For them, brothels only served to

teach each new generation the delights of fornication, promote sodomy, dishonor maidens, and spread syphilis. Zafra situates literary depictions of loose women in the foreground of this debate.

The rest of Zafra's book tackles the image of the *pícaro* and prostitute in many of the great works of the picaresque genre and Spain's Golden Age. Chapter 2 focuses on the quintessential tale of the *pícaro*: *La pícaro Justina* by Francisco López de Úbeda. Here, Zafra examines how authors used the *pícaro* character as a negative example, both to warn women about the consequences of loose behavior, and to remind men that women's sexuality is a tool of the devil. The author then explores the relationship between such negative examples and the hagiographic literature also popular throughout the Catholic world. By tracing views surrounding Mary Magdalen as well as other well-known saints, Zafra underscores the relationship between women's redemption and their *recogimiento*, or enclosure.

Zafra devotes the bulk of her work to an analysis of literary depictions of women. Chapter 3 looks at *Don Quixote* as well as Cervantes's other works. Just as so much in *Don Quixote* is amusing because everything — a windmill, horse, or convict — is the opposite of what the “Knight of the Sad Countenance” sees it as; so his noble ladies are, in actuality, peasants and whores. Zafra's examination recalls *Don Quixote*'s familiar conflict between the fantasy of feudal honor and the modern reality of base commerce. Here, however, the illusory honor is female honor, and the commerce that of sordid sex and prostitution. She also points out the possible connections between women, lust, and insanity in Cervantes's great novel. In chapters 4 and 5 Zafra scrutinizes four more authors crucial to the development of the picaresque and views of women, including María de Zayas.

Prostituidas por el texto is a wonderful example of the “historical turn” in literary criticism and should serve as a model for all historically minded literary studies. The book's topic reminds us of the great amount of time and anxiety early modern Spaniards exerted trying to comprehend and reign in the margins of their society, whether they were *conversos*, *moriscos*, gypsies, sodomites, or Zafra's *pícaras*. In a somewhat cathartic cultural process, this anxiety created some of Spain's greatest literary themes and works, the picaresque being one of them. Written for a scholarly audience, this work will be a useful text in upper level undergraduate and graduate Spanish courses. It clearly adds much to current scholarship on Spain's Golden Age, the picaresque genre, and early modern women's history. Were it in English, *Prostituidas por el texto* would be an excellent book to use in an undergraduate course on women's history.

EDWARD BEHREND-MARTÍNEZ
Appalachian State University