

**“Mary conquered alone”: Marian Theology as a feminist device in Gómez de Avellaneda’s *El Álbum cubano de lo bueno y lo bello***

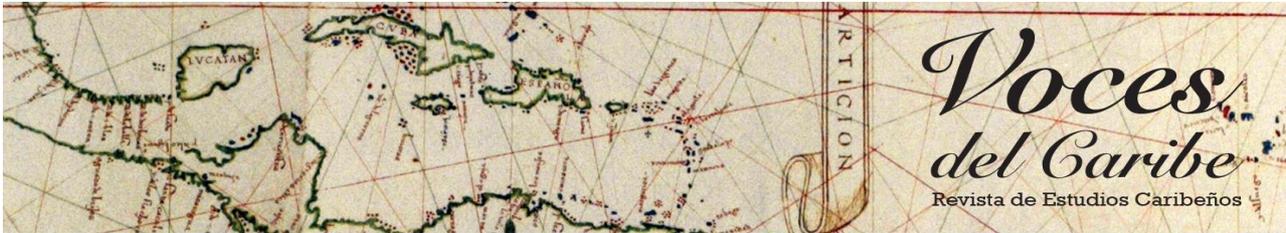


**Retrato de Gertrudis Gómez de Avellaneda**  
**Autor: Federico de Madrazo y Kuntz (1857)**

<http://escritoras.com/escritoras/Gertrudis-Gomez-de-Avellaneda>

In 1854 Gertrudis Gómez de Avellaneda was denied a seat in the Spanish Royal Academy due to her gender, and six years later the writer founded the magazine titled *El Álbum cubano de lo bueno y lo bello*. *El Álbum* was published in twelve editions over a period of six months. Its essays promoted Gómez de Avellaneda’s emancipatory ideas, formed part of the conversation of the development of female identity and, through the careful selection of writings from Cuban and Spanish authors, incorporated women into intellectual debate. In this article, I will examine the use of religious tropes as arguments in favor of gender inclusivity.





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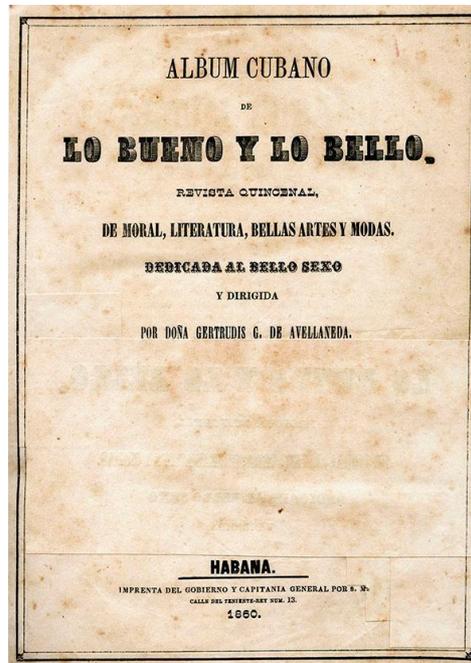
Gómez de Avellaneda underscored the connection between faith and reason in order to challenge 19<sup>th</sup>-century gender roles. This article intends to outline that Avellaneda employs Marian theology and other values associated with Catholic Christianity contemporary to her time to promote her views. Gómez de Avellaneda supports her argument with Marian rhetoric to deconstruct patriarchal beliefs regarding women. From her writings in *El Álbum* I have chosen to consider “Lo bueno y lo bello”, her two essays titled “La mujer”, the poem “Las siete palabras y María al pie de la cruz” and the story “La montaña maldita”. These writings demonstrate a consistent and progressively more dramatic use of Marian theology to argue on behalf of raising the level of respect for women.





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*Álbum cubano de lo bueno y lo bello* (1860)

<http://www.cervantesvirtual.com/obra/album-cubano-de-lo-bueno-y-lo-bello-revista-quincenal-de-moral-literatura-bellas-artes-y-modas-924758/>

Gómez de Avellaneda establishes a critical dialogue with patriarchal discourse to examine and question the situation of women within the same. The Cuban writer seeks to establish her role within intellectual discourse as a means to establish the equality of women in other aspects of life as well. It is through intellectual debate that this discussion must take place, because therein lie not only the negotiations of power, but power itself. Michel Foucault, in his text *The Archeology of Knowledge* (1973) clarifies this point:





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In appearance, speech may well be of little account, but the prohibitions surrounding it soon reveal its links with desire and power. This should not be very surprising, for psychoanalysis has already shown us that speech is not merely the medium which manifests-- or dissembles--desire; it is also the object of desire. Similarly, historians have constantly impressed upon us that speech is no mere verbalization of conflicts and systems of domination, but that it is the very object of men's conflicts. (216)

Gómez de Avellaneda inserts Marian principles into her rhetoric to argue on behalf of elevating the social position of women. María C. Albin's article "El cristianismo y la nueva imagen de la mujer: la figura histórica de María en los ensayos de Gertrudis Gómez de Avellaneda" indicates that the idea of social renovation through Christianity proposed by the theologian Augustus Nicolás is prevalent in Gómez de Avellaneda's arguments and adds that "el cristianismo como fuerza transformadora de la sociedad y como guía del progreso moral de la humanidad, sienta las bases éticas para denunciar la sumisión del género femenino y abolir la desigualdad sexual" (334). During this period there was likely to be a lot of discussion regarding the Virgin Mary both because the teaching of the Immaculate Conception was declared dogmatically in 1854, and because Pope Pius IX was strongly devoted to the Virgin Mary.

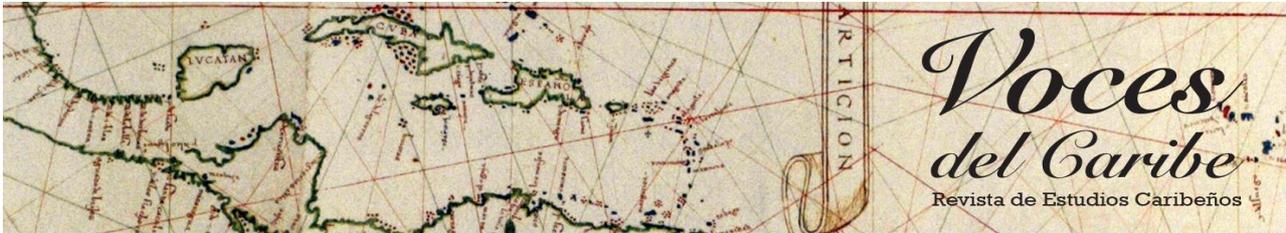




This insistence in demonstrating the cooperation between spirituality and intelligence is a method of inserting the woman into the intellectual discussion. The modern gender coding of women as spiritual instead of intellectual allowed for the exclusion of women from public discourse by creating an artificial divide between reason and faith and relegating women to the realm of faith. Their voices, while not expressly prohibited, were rendered null. In his book, *The Order of Discourse*, Foucault talks about the strategy of exclusion in order to dominate the discussion. Though this strategy consists, in part, of the “taboo” or the verboten, in its most evident and recognized implementation, it can also take other forms such as in the contrast between reason and folly (217), or in this case, the artificial divide between reason and faith. Gómez de Avellaneda was an accomplished writer who had created a platform for her self and other women writers. Nevertheless, so long as society continued to separate faith and reason by assigning spirituality to the women and reason to the men, the former would be effectively silenced.

Culturally and politically, the stage was set for a challenge to the gender norms in Spain. The surge of female authors and dramatists marched alongside the ascension of female monarchs, and interest in Marian theology soared among both women and men. Women in Spain were relegated to the realm of the spiritual rather than intellectual, which essentially excluded women from public discourse, but also





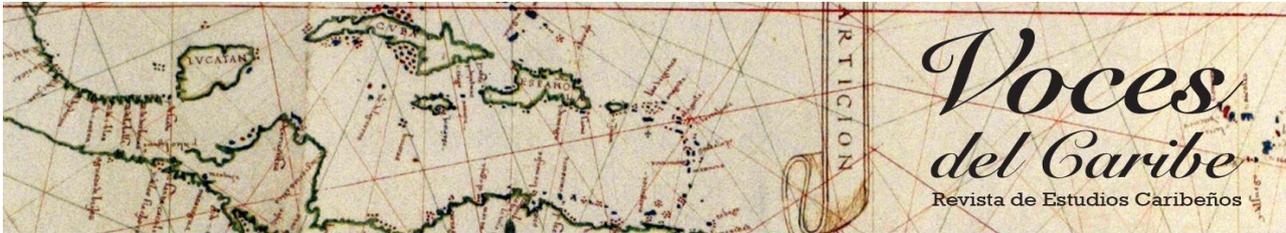
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conferred upon them a great authority for “understanding morality” and assumed a greater capacity (than that of men) for “civilizing” others. Susan Kirkpatrick’s work on the press in Spain and Cuba during this time period notes: “The focal point of this mid-decade burst of female poetic protest was not specifically missing word? political rights but rather the issue at stake in women’s entry into print culture during this period: women’s right to intellectual activity and literary self expression” (*Las Romanticas*, 85). To overcome the strategic discourse that excluded the female voice, Gómez de Avellaneda needed to go beyond creating a space for the female voice and establish this voice as essential for a fully informed perspective. To this end, Gómez de Avellaneda begins her journal with an essay that establishes that faith and reason are not oppositional forces.

This first essay in her journal was titled “Goodness and Beauty”. In it the author lays the groundwork for her argument by defining these two terms that form the title of both the essay as well as the journal. Gómez de Avellaneda sets out to demonstrate that the perceived dichotomy between these two concepts is artificial, arguing that they are not independent but rather interdependent concepts. Evelyn Picon Garfield, in her book *Poder y sexualidad*, discusses this essay and notes:





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En el primer número del *Álbum Cubano...*, se explaya contándonos el vínculo entre lo bueno y lo bello, pues, según ella, las obras del sentimiento moral y las obras del sentimiento artístico son dos manifestaciones de una sola verdad, “la aspiración del alma hacia Dios”. Los dos---arte y religión---son facetas de la voluntad divina que Gómez de Avellaneda representa mediante un sistema filosófico neoplatónico que culmina en la armonía absoluta. (31)

In Garfield’s interpretation, the terms Goodness and Beauty represent religion and art. On my reading, I find that according to Avellaneda goodness is everything that can be associated with morality and beauty is everything that is associated with intellect and the use of reason.

The essay exposes that one is made aware of goodness through one’s use of reason. Gómez de Avellaneda explains that goodness belongs to the moral world and to the dominion of human liberty, while reason is the director of this liberty.

Likewise, reason is ruled by a supreme law that “ilumina á la razon con el resplandor de la verdad para que pueda conocer lo bueno y mover el albedrío a seguirlo” (1)

Goodness is defined as “todo aquello que la ley moral muestra á la razón como verdadero, justo y conveniente, no consistiendo en lo malo sino en la resistencia que





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la libertad opone á aquella verdad, á aquella justicia y á aquella conveniencia” (3).

Inversely, we are able to observe morality as a means of arriving at reason in the following definition:

[...] la armonía que resulta de la observancia de leyes eternas; armonía en que resaltan por una parte la sublimidad de las obras de la inteligencia, en la imitación de la belleza perfecta; y por otro la santidad de las obras de la moral (o sea conocimiento y amor de lo bueno) en la constante tendencia hacia el bien absoluto (3).

These definitions will lay the foundation for Gómez de Avellaneda’s arguments. The essay is an allegory that describes the relation between men and women. Through the argument that the morality-spirituality and reason are interdependent, the Cuban author establishes the interdependence of men and women. Furthermore, the essay establishes the interdependence between morality and intelligence as well as the supremacy of faith. The conversations related to gender and identity that will be shaped throughout the magazine presuppose the acceptance of this argument. This allows Gómez de Avellaneda to employ morality in order to illustrate her view of reason.



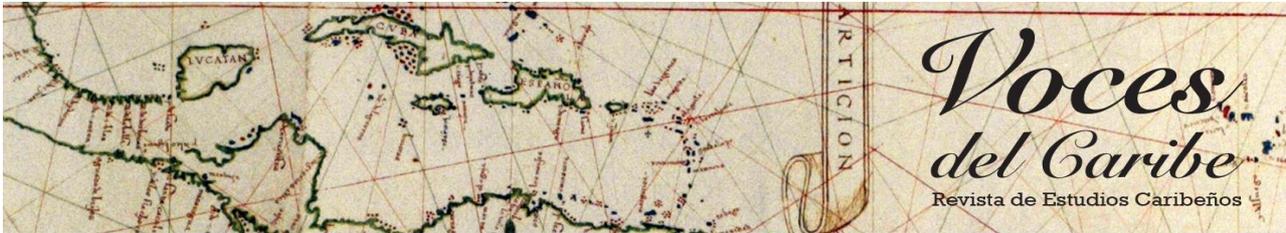


We can appreciate the unification of women in the first of two essays titled “Mujer,” in which the author uses Biblical examples to illustrate the main points of her argument. Gómez de Avellaneda talks about Eve and the two Marys—the Virgin and the Magdalene—and suggests that they are connected by the greatness of their heart. The discussion of the equality of women amongst themselves is made to formulate a discussion against the inequality between men and women. In the contrast that she establishes between the genders, the author alternates between emphasizing equalities and superiorities.

Her acceptance of stereotypes that places men in the rational counter position to emotional women is a rhetorical strategy employed to question and alter those very definitions. Pastor also comments about this approach and says “una estrategia recurrente en su escritura consiste en adoptar intencionadamente la ego-identidad masculina y su punto de vista ideológico, y al parodiarlo, señalar por medio de una desviación del modelo masculino, una identidad femenina” (48-49). She aligns herself with the male perspective to make changes from within that same perspective. This allows her to posit her views from a position of authority.

In the essay titled “La mujer” (“Woman”), the author approaches the topic of gender equality arguing on behalf of giving equal value to distinct talents. At the beginning of the essay, she confers superiority to men in physical strength and does





not deny the superiority of the male intellect, saying “concedemos sin la menor repugnancia que en la dualidad que constituye nuestra especie, el hombre recibió de la naturaleza la superioridad de la fuerza física, y ni aun queremos disputarle la mayor potencia intelectual” (34). Let us take a moment to appreciate the linguistic subtleties employed by Gómez de Avellaneda in this argument. First, the phrase “Concedemos sin la menor repugnancia ...” with respect to physical force. According to the *Diccionario de la lengua española* the word “conceder” means “Dar, otorgar”. “Conceder” is something that one who is in a position to gift, gives to another, who is in a position to receive. The person who concedes a point finds him or her self in the active position that is, to some extent, a position of power. Throughout the journal Gómez de Avellaneda subtly establishes herself as the authority in order to invert the power dynamic between men and women.

Later, the author concedes “without repugnance.” This phrase is passive and signifies the lack of aversion to something that serves to reduce the importance of the thing being conceded. Physical strength, normally viewed in counter position to the intellect, was beginning to lose importance, thanks to the Industrial Revolution. In the opinion of this writer, Gómez de Avellaneda dismissively concedes this attribute to men because it is losing its significance in society. Her statement is condescending and inverts the dynamic of power in discourse. It places herself, a woman, in a



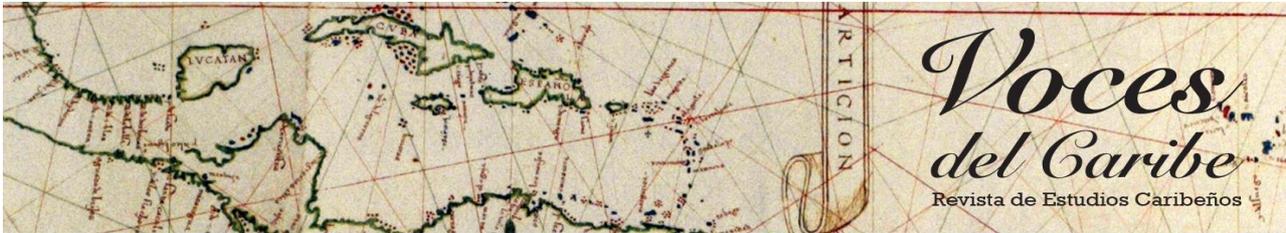


position of being able to concede or deny attributes to men while simultaneously highlighting the fact that the attributes assigned to them lack importance, creating a subtle disturbance in the power dynamic.

We then see the phrase “ni queremos disputarle”, which serves as a false concession; it neither admits nor concedes anything. Once again, we observe a passiveness in her language; Gómez de Avellaneda’s simply declares that she will not deny them, in this moment at least, the illusion of intellectual superiority, but it is worth noting that she does not admit this superiority at any time. We again observe that she appears to place herself in agreement with a chauvinist viewpoint in order to bring her readers to the more relevant parts of her argument.

There is also another inversion of power here. Foucault, in *The Archeology of Knowledge*, talks about the importance of the listener in a discussion and signals that, even when silent, the listener actively affects the dialogue (14-15). The phrase “we do not even wish to dispute” announces the silence of the writer with respect to this subject. We will repeat the earlier citation from Foucault where he says “a man was mad if his speech could not be said to form part of the common discourse of men. His words were considered null and void, without truth or significance.” Earlier, this study asserted that the principle of exclusion (of separation and rejection) was used to





silence the voice of women within patriarchal discourse. Gómez de Avellaneda now uses this same rhetorical strategy to exclude men from the discussion.

She begins her argument with the appearance of agreeing with the so-called “stronger sex”. Then she states that woman becomes equal to man via her unsurmountable affection and passion, seen in the following quote “[...] nos basta la convicción de que nadie puede de buena fé, negar á nuestro sexo la supremacia en los afectos, los títulos de su soberanía, en la inmensa esfera del sentimiento” (34). Later she adds that “no ha podido rehusarle los dictados de bello, tierno, y piadoso” (35). In each of these quotes, Gómez de Avellaneda chooses words and phrasing that are concluding in nature; each of these definitions is presented as if they are well established and undeniable.

According to Foucault, the third principle of processes to control discourse focuses on establishing conditions to discourse. Foucault expands on this idea and states:

There is, I believe, a third group of rules serving to control discourse. Here, we are no longer dealing with the mastery of powers contained within discourse, nor with averting the hazards of its appearance; it is more a question of determining the conditions under which it may be employed, of





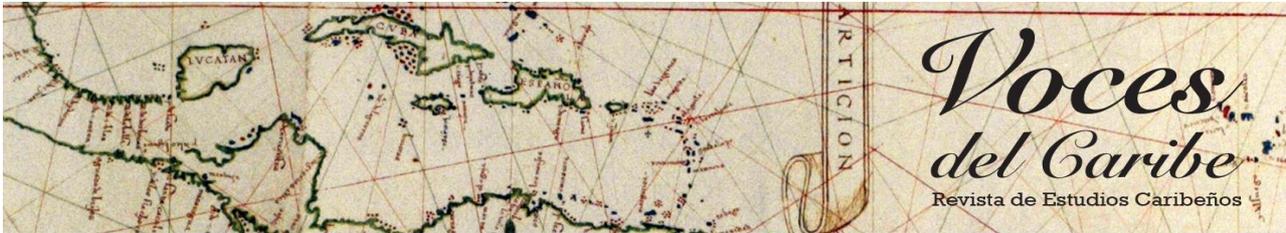
imposing a certain number of rules upon those individuals who employ it, thus denying access to everyone else. [...] More exactly, not all areas of discourse are equally open and penetrable; some are forbidden territory (differentiated and differentiating) while others are virtually open to the winds and sand without any prior restrictions, open to all. (225)

Taking these principles into consideration, I would like to expand upon the difference between “no poder negar” or “rehusar” an attribute, and “conceder,” also an attribute. Men’s attributes have been assigned to them through the concession of women, for whom Gómez de Avellaneda speaks; nevertheless women find themselves already in possession of spiritual superiority with no need for the concession of men.

While the attributes assigned to women are rendered obvious-no one can deny them- the attributes assigned to men remain open to further discussion, as Gómez de Avellaneda did not confirm them, but rather agreed not to refute them for the sake of the present argument. In contrast, she has both asserted the superiority of women with regards to their spirituality, and closed the discussion on the topic declaring that no one, in good faith, could deny it.

Once the spiritual superiority of women has been established, Gómez de Avellaneda begins to formulate some additional counterpoints using Biblical examples. At this point, it is relevant to look at the religious archetypes related to the





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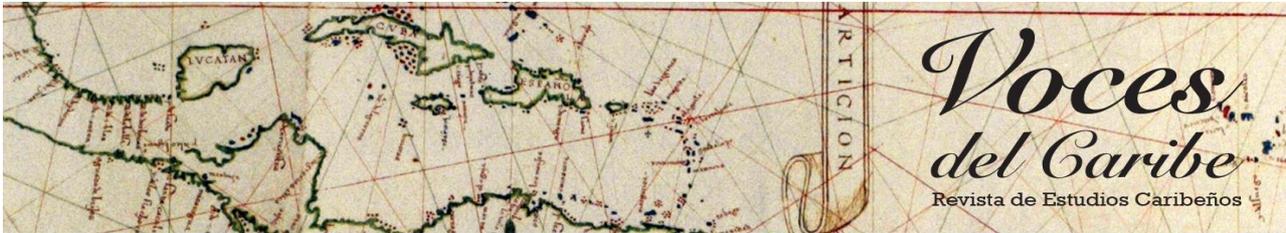
theories of Carl Jung. Jung focused on archetypes that were related to what he called the “collective unconscious.” The three archetypes that are of interest to this analysis are: the Virgin, the Mother, and the Temptress (the Magdalene or Eve). According to Jung, these archetypes also represent the three facets that women will present at different points in their lives. Also significant is the number three, or the Trinity. Finally, we will see how the unification of faith and reason, already established in the essay “Good and Beautiful” will strengthen the following arguments about female superiority.

First, she plants the idea that submission can be a heroic act when she states:

Las almas grandes--ha dicho un poeta--aspiran a descender, no por laxitud, sino por instinto de la verdadera elevación, que consiste en el sacrificio. Tal es precisamente el carácter de la mujer: ella posee aquella intuición de la verdadera grandeza, aquel instinto del supremo heroísmo que hace se complazca *descendiendo*; que hace que se glorifique *sometiéndose*, que hace, en fin, que consagre su corazón altar secretos de holocaustos continuos (34-35).

This establishes the idea of woman as a heroic figure. Next, she elaborates about the sanctity of motherhood when she states that a woman is not just a mother in “el



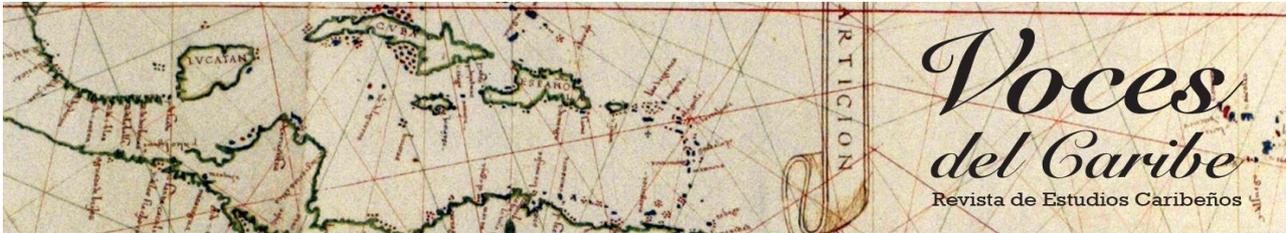


sentido literal de la palabra” but also in “la maternidad de su alma comprende el universo” (35). Once she has reframed submissiveness and motherhood so that they are aligned with sanctity and heroism, she is able to argue that women are superior to men. She points out that while Adam corrupted his descendants because he was tempted by Eve and needed Divine Intervention to rectify his sin, “María venció sola” (Mary conquered alone) (35) to posit the idea of female superiority.

Gómez de Avellaneda formulates this argument to question the concept that intelligence is superior to emotion and also to revisit the idea of submission as an act of inferiority. Mary’s submission rectified Eve’s transgression. In this example, Mary is presented as Co-Redemptrix as she takes part in man’s redemption. Mary as Co-Redemptrix is part of a popular belief that is supported by the idea of the Immaculate Conception, which was dogmatically declared in 1854. The doctrine of the Immaculate Conception uses the metaphor of Jesus as the “New Adam” and Mary as the “New Eve” to support the position that like Jesus, Mary was conceived without the stain of original sin. This allows Gómez de Avellaneda to distinguish between the salvations of the sexes while remaining within the context of current religious discourse.

Doctrines are officially recognized either as the result of a controversy surrounding a teaching or as the result of popular demand for official recognition. The





teaching of the Immaculate Conception was widely accepted prior to becoming dogma and the belief in Mary as Co-Redemptrix is popular though not dogmatic. Pope Pius IX made the official declaration of the Immaculate Conception as part of his efforts to increase devotion to Mary during this time. The popularity of both beliefs and the encouraged devotion to Mary made Gómez de Avellaneda's arguments particularly relevant.

Later, the writer highlights the fact that three women remained at Jesus' side during his crucifixion. She is referring to the three Marys, who also represent the three Jungian archetypes: Mary Magdalene, the Temptress; Mary Salome, mother of James and John;<sup>2</sup> and Mary, the Virgin. She also emphasizes that it was a woman who first learned of the resurrection of Jesus that implies that Jesus favored women for their tremendous faith and love (35-36). It is clear that the submission of the female elevates her, diffusing the line between submissive and superior.

Next, Gómez de Avellaneda compares the Virgin Mary to Mary Magdalene to demonstrate the universality of the female condition. In this argument, she signals that the Bible uses the term "mujer" (woman) "El cristianismo y la nueva imagen de la mujer: la figura histórica de María en los ensayos de Gertrudis Gómez de Avellaneda" "El cristianismo y la nueva imagen de la mujer: la figura histórica de María en los ensayos de Gertrudis Gómez de Avellaneda"<sup>1</sup> indicates that the idea of social





renovation to address them. In the first example, Jesus addresses Mary during his crucifixion by saying “Mujer, he ahi tu hijo” (Woman, here is your son) (36). Later, the angel addresses Mary Magdalene with the same term when he informs her that Jesus is no longer found in the tomb. In both of these occasions, Jesus uses the word “mother,” which is italicized in the essay. Gómez de Avellaneda highlights the use of the term “woman” to address both women, demonstrating the equality that has been divinely assigned to them despite their differences in roles.

In the second essay titled “La mujer” (Woman), Gómez de Avellaneda begins by stating that the supremacy of women in religious matters has been proven in her first essay. In this essay, her motive is to question the supposed weakness of women. The attributes assigned to women are once again defended when she states “nada parece tan ajeno del tierno corazon femenino, nada tan incompatible con el dictado débil con que se distingue al sexo como las acciones de valor arrojado y de constancia invencible [...]” (54), and then continues to give examples of women who possess these attributes. As we have seen earlier, Gómez de Avellaneda controls discourse by carefully selecting the topics that are open to discussion.

Though the essays are similar, there is an important difference: the sex of the designated reader. In the first essay, Gómez de Avellaneda formulates her argument against patriarchal beliefs and addresses the general public with the pronoun



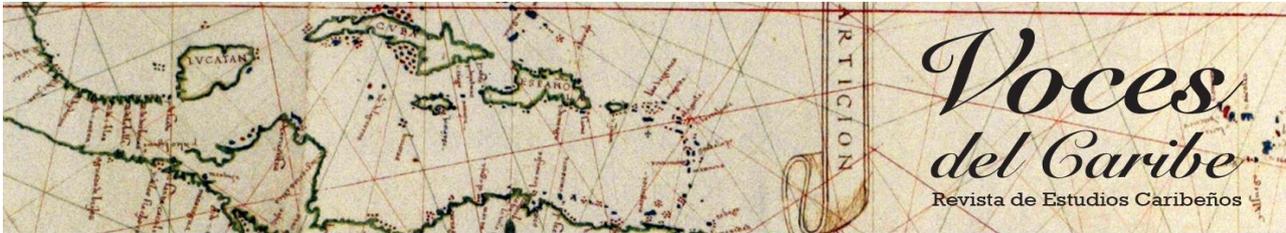


“vosotros” (you all: includes male and females alike). In the second essay, she makes two references to her “lectoras” (female readers) (56-57). The first essay is intended to defend women; the second is to strengthen her.

Another representation of Mary as a Co-Redemptrix is presented in the poem *Las siete palabras y María al pie de la cruz*. In this poem, Gómez de Avellaneda presents the Virgin Mary suffering alongside her son. There are two moments in which Jesus pronounces exactly seven words in this poem. The first is when he says “Ahí tienes, oh hombre! tu Madre clemente”. This is the same phrase the Gómez de Avellaneda signals in her essay “La mujer.” According to Catholic theology, this is the moment in which Jesus establishes Mary as the Mother of the Church. It is an important moment for feminist Catholics, because it places a mortal woman in a position that is superior to mortal men.

The second moment in which Jesus utters exactly seven words is right before his death, when he calls out, “Oh Padre divino! ¿por qué me abandonas?” (28). In these two quotes, Jesus addresses his parents; first, the Mother who gives him his humanity, and then the Father who gives him his divinity. When Jesus leaves the world, the faithful are able to find refuge in Mary. Also, Jesus experiences the absence of the Divine just as his followers would later experience the absence of Jesus. Like his disciples, Jesus would find refuge in his Mother during those





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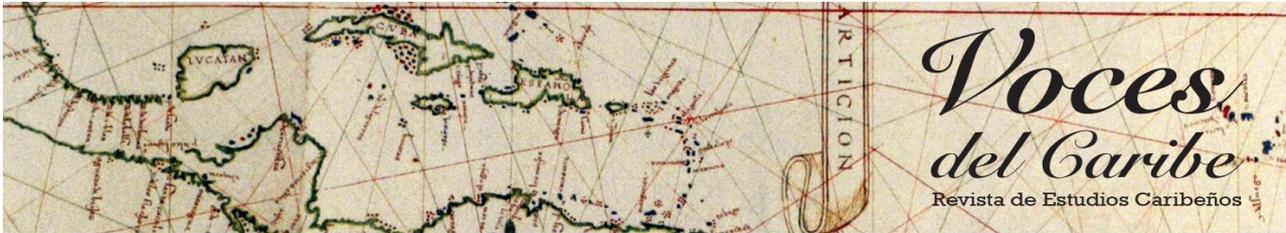
moments. The poem emphasizes this by saying, “La voz aspirante pronuncia despacio: // su queja angustiosa devora el espacio... ...// ¡Y estaba la madre al pié de la cruz!” (28). We can appreciate the stark contrast between the ever-present mother and the absence of the father in the final moments. The last consolation that Jesus would receive on this earth was that of his mother: a woman.

The poem also presents Mary as Co-Redemptrix. Each stanza describes an important moment in the crucifixion and ends with “Y estaba la Madre al pié de la cruz”. This emphasizes Mary’s suffering at the side of her son. In the essay “La mujer” it was established that women are superior in emotions and passion. This poem branches off from that idea and highlights the fact that mothers feel and suffer what their children feel and suffer. Through her maternal connection to Jesus, Mary is crucified with him.

Avellaneda’s arguments about the interdependence between faith and reason, and her insertion of religious archetypes to illustrate her arguments on behalf of women, converge in “La montaña maldita” -a Swiss legend in which Avellaneda’s retelling likens a woman’s suffering to the crucifixion of Jesus. Man’s rejection of the mother figure is linked to rejection of salvation itself and the frustration of progress.

Marta, which means “lady,” is the mother of Walter whose name means “ruler of an army”. These names are fitting representations of the roles in the story. Marta,





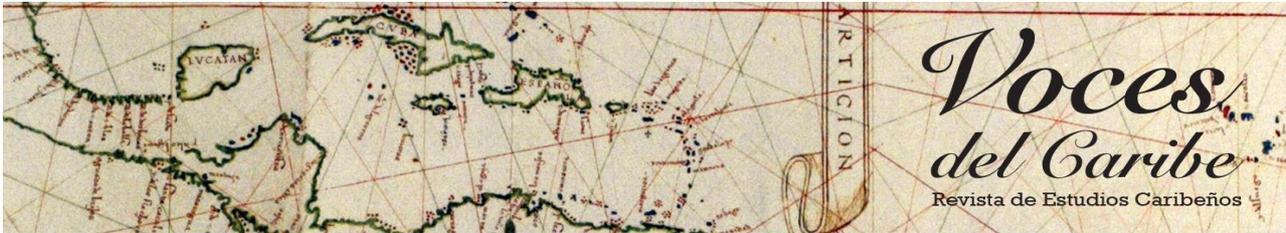
who represents all women, and Walter, whose name ties him to the ideas of destruction, force, and oppression. The characters are divided by their gender stereotypes in other ways as well. Marta is uncultured; Walter is an astute businessman. Marta is loving and nurturing; Walter is cold and lives alone. These contrasts line right up with the stereotypes that Gómez de Avellaneda has dedicated herself to deconstructing throughout the journal's publications.

The story begins with the early arrival of winter, and Marta is ill prepared. The construction of her home is incomplete due to her poverty. The themes of infertility are present both in the early arrival of winter and Marta's advanced age, which is emphasized when the story states that she was planning to live out her final years in this home. From the beginning, the reader is able to feel the sense of hopelessness.

Marta is a sacrificial mother, like the Virgin Mary. She had an illicit relationship, which associates her with Mary Magdalene, and her fall into temptation corrupted her descendant, connecting her to Eve. Walter is the descendant in need of salvation due to his low esteem of women. The story reveals that his biggest sin is his indifference towards them:

Jamás se le ha ocurrido pensar en su madre sin hogar en el mundo, en algunas de las muchas veces que ve a su ternera blanca tan magníficamente alojada.





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Jamás al preparar el abrigo de la bestia favorita, se le ha venido a la mente la desnudez y miseria en que se encuentra la que lo abrigó en su regazo cuando era niño. Increíble se hace semejante indiferencia en el corazón de un hijo que nos empeñamos en buscarle, aunque infructuosamente algún linaje de disculpa (45).

The indifference seen here brings to mind the indifference that 19<sup>th</sup>-century men are guilty of when, in the formation of the national identity, they relegate the women to a subaltern position. I want to highlight the phrase “some redeeming quality” and the connotation it has for men who participate in the chauvinism that Walter represents. We see again the use of exclusionary tactics to control public discourse and that the woman is effectively silenced, not by force, but by indifference. This is an oppressive indifference for which man must redeem himself.

The story describes Walter as a 35-year-old unmarried man who is not accustomed to living with women. This creates a clear separation between him and women who will come to represent salvation in this story. This is also symbolic of his failure to contribute to society beyond himself, as he will not be producing descendants. The populating of the Americas was important in the 19th century and Walter’s failure to produce descendants speaks directly to his actions contributing to larger societal ills.





These elements come together as the story goes on to make a stronger connection between Marta and Jesus, specifically by connecting her to the final days of Jesus. For example, she prefaces her trip by separating herself to pray and “se quejaba amargamente al cielo cuando podía hacerlo sin testigos” (45), this connection to Jesus asking God to “take this cup away from me” in the Gospel of Luke (22:41-42) foretells the eventual demise of Marta. Further, both Jesus and Marta begin their prayers by lamenting their circumstances but end with a changed perspective. Jesus resigns himself to the will of the Father. In Marta’s case, she excuses Walter’s actions saying that he is but an instrument of divine justice.

On the day that Marta begins her trip, she dresses in green, the same color her son wears, and puts on a white head covering. Jesus wore purple, the color that kings wore, and a crown of thorns was placed on his head. Both Jesus and Marta began their journey at midday; another foreshadowing of Marta’s devastating end. Marta, before her trip, placed herself in the hands of the Blessed Mother, whose accompaniment of Jesus was emphasized in Avellaneda’s aforementioned poem.

Marta arrives at her son's house after a long journey. Here, we are able to see the authority that her son has over his mother and his abuse of the same. Marta is soaking from the bad weather and trembling with cold. In spite of this, it is the day of her son's birthday and she wants to spend the evening with him; however, he does not





even stand up to receive her. He is reticent to offer her a seat and he does not offer her anything to drink or eat. When she asks to spend the evening in his house, he turns her down. When she asks that he allow her to stay in the stable, he refuses even this.

Again and again, the mother petitions her son and he rejects her, and with that rejection, the rejection of the opportunity to rectify himself morally. When it becomes clear that Walter will not repent, Marta damns him and his land: “*Maldito seas!*” pronunció lentamente. *Malditas tus riquezas y la montaña que habitas!*” (46).

Up to this point in the story, it would seem that the woman is the victim of the actions of a powerful man who kicked her out of his house and sends her not only to suffer with the cold, but also battle against the elements of the mountain. In the end, the woman dies and the mountain is left barren. Here I would like to emphasize the connection between Marta and the idea of the female divinity. I argued earlier that Marta forms a female version of the Trinity. Now we can see this supernatural relation when Marta is able to change the nature of the mountain by the power of her words. The male protagonist was in a position of power and he abused of this power, causing his mother’s death. The death of the female protagonist, however, was also the death of beauty and happiness. The female represented fertility, and in her absence, is infertility. The man, who made his living from the fertile, female elements



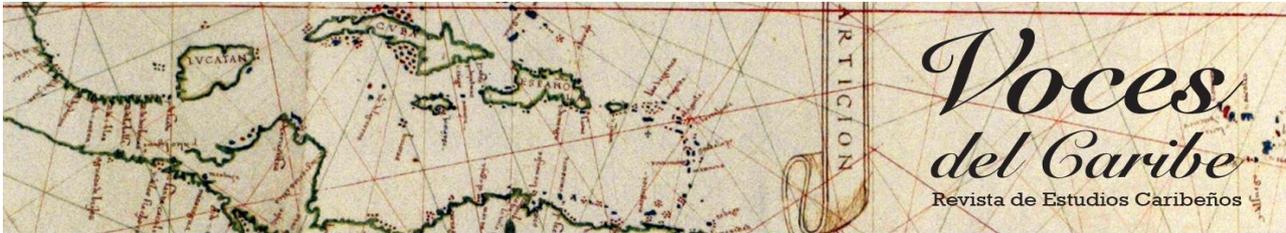


of the earth, did not see that he could not reject women and abuse them without harming the very things that gave him life.

Ultimately, it is clear that Gómez de Avellaneda uses *El Álbum* to challenge the social forces and beliefs that exclude women. Throughout the journal, Gómez de Avellaneda countermands the patriarchal system of the 19th century using the same stereotypes and rhetorical methods employed to subjugate women. Even while seeming to concede stereotypes that elevate men, she has begun to exclude them from the conversation. She begins by arguing that faith and reason are interdependent concepts in order to later argue that faith is a means to arrive at reason. Once this is established, she uses the teachings of the Catholic Church to demonstrate that the spiritual nature of women places women in a superior role. She shows that the Bible connects all women because of their great faith. This allows Gómez de Avellaneda to argue that women are elevated to the level of Mary, Eve's Redemptrix; nevertheless, no man can be elevated to the level of Jesus, Adam's Redeemer. She leaves 19th century men with two options: accept the superiority of women or change the stereotypes surrounding them.

Avellaneda's final arguments can be found in "La montaña maldita": the story of a mother and son who meet a tragic end due to their inability to unite. Walter's success was just as dependent on his intelligence as it was with his relationship with





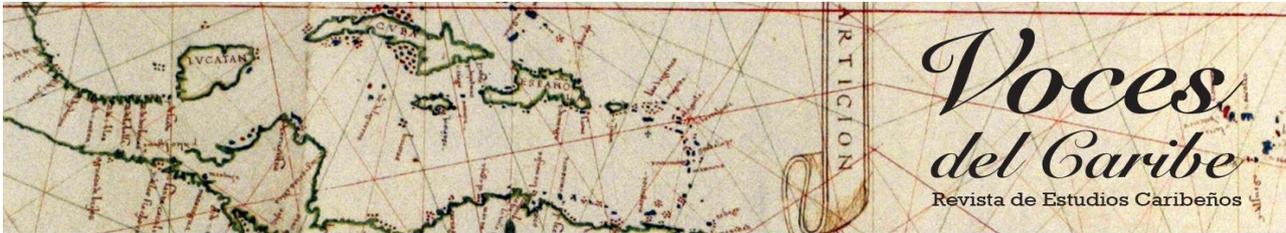
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the divine. The woman who is the divine element of the story could not insist on the necessary reconciliation because of her subaltern position in society. In the end, they both lose because, as it was established at the beginning of the journal, faith and reason must be united. The infertility of the earth and the lack of descendants from Walter turn their failure into a symbol of the failure of a society that excludes women from public discourse. Thus, Gómez de Avellaneda concludes with the necessity to redefine social constructs that oppress women in order for society to thrive.

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### Notes

1. While it should be recognized that an interpretation of Mary Magdalene as a Temptress is debatable and her association with sexual promiscuity is lacking in Biblical evidence, we are seeking to present the viewpoint of Gómez de Avellaneda. Gómez de Avellaneda will later refer to Mary Magdalene as a “cortesana arrepentida” which confirms her interpretation of Mary Magdalene as a Temptress.
2. The interpretation of Mary Salome as the mother of James and John is disputed among contemporary Christians. However, the belief is consistent with the teachings of the Catholic Church and therefore an appropriate interpretation to assign to Gómez de Avellaneda.





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