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Review Essay: Indigenous Literature

Cata, Víctor. *Nácasinu didaka/Sólo somos memoria*. Mexico City: Editorial Praxis, 2008. 97 pp. No ISBN.

Cocom Pech, Jorge Miguel. *Secretos del abuelo/Muk'ult'an in nool*. Mexico City: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 2006. 158 pp. ISBN 968-36-7722-3

Espinosa Sainos, Manuel. *Tikgoj Ititunakumín/Cantan los totonacos*. Mexico City: Comisión Nacional para el Desarrollo de los Pueblos Indígenas, 2008. 117 pp. ISBN 978-970-753-180-2

In the prologue to Jorge Miguel Cocom Pech's *Secretos del Abuelo/Muk'ult'an in nool*, Miguel Leon Portillo, the renowned scholar of both prehispanic and modern indigenous literatures, praises this Mayan author who enriches both Mexican and universal literature (16). Although the claim might seem a little too effusive, it does have some truth to it upon examining other works in modern indigenous literature as a whole inside and outside of Mexico. Turning to indigenous literature in the United States for example, one of the most prominent authors is N. Scott Momaday, winner of the Pulitzer prize in 1968 for his novel *House Made of Dawn*, which opened the way for a long list of writers like Michael Dorris, Louise Erdrich, Leslie Marmon Silko and others that are now included in the canon and curricula of American Literature. In the case of Mexico, the role that indigenous literature plays is little by little becoming more important thanks to the talented men and women that write in a large variety of languages and have been sponsored by government institutions and interested scholars like León Portilla and Carlos Montemayor. However, much work still needs to be done to get these authors published with more mainstream presses and made available internationally, as is the case with indigenous writers north of the border.

Before we look at the individual books, it is necessary to talk about indigenous literature from both the United States and Mexico in a compare and contrast perspective. On the comparison side, both literatures work in conventional literary genres like verse, essay, novel and short story. Both address, but not exclusively, questions of ethnic identity, conflicts with the western world etc. but at the same time both are very much informed by cultural traditions as motifs and settings for their works. Yet although the articulation of traditions and beliefs is perhaps the most striking thing about indigenous literatures from both countries, it is done in such a way that an individual style of a determined author is also quite marked. In other words, an individual voice and perspective is being informed by a collective voice that goes back to an established and vivid oral tradition.

In order to discuss contrasts, the most striking one is the role of the indigenous language of the author as he or she writes. In literature from the US, the indigenous language is mostly present in naming and presenting concepts not to be found in English. This may take the form of formulaic language used to open or close a story or a line included in a song and so on. On the other hand, many Mexican authors publish bilingual editions with Spanish translations or, conversely, Spanish texts with indigenous language translations. All of this depends on how the author works but whatever the case may be, usually the translations are done by the authors themselves. The purpose of this essay is to review three such bilingual books, two in narrative prose and one in verse. Only the titles will be presented as bilingual texts since it would not be practical nor does my lack of knowledge of the languages permit me to quote longer passages in both Spanish and the indigenous language correctly.

One of the first important themes to address while discussing indigenous literature is a certain attitude towards the role of language in the literary text. In *Secretos del abuelo/Muk'ult'an in nool* Jorge Miguel Cocom Pech includes a short prologue entitled "Ka'a siijil tan maya'ob/Renacimiento de la palabra de los mayas" where he stresses the importance of language in the formation of identities and collective memories:

No guardes, no escondas, no impidas la libertad a tus palabras, porque por tu palabra habrás de escribir para todas las edades y para todos los tiempos, que es uno solo y eterno, mientras haya vida sobre la tierra... Ká siijil tan significa volver a nacer la palabra, renacer la voz. Este reencuentro del pasado con el presente, este volver de nuevo que para nosotros los mayas era y es sagrada concepción del tiempo, es un

hecho que se inicia con las voces y testimonios de nuestros hermanos que hoy asumimos el compromiso de dejar constancia de lo que pervivió en la tradición oral, a través de textos literarios... pues nunca las palabras sobre la tierra han sido el sepulcro de los hombres. (23-24)

This importance of language as a vehicle for historical memory is the central theme of Cocom Pech's book that narrates how don Gregorio Pech, the maternal grandfather of the young narrator, passes down Mayan learning to his grandson which is part of a tradition dating back to the "Guerra de las Castas" in 1847. At that time Mayan culture was in threat of extinction as a result of a rebellion against the Mexican government so four boys were chosen, among them don Gregorio's grandfather, to be the carriers of such knowledge to the four compass points. It is here that another important theme of the close relationship between language and nature becomes apparent. The boy is continually told to look for his name and other signs in the song of birds, the winds and other manifestations of nature. Here is an extended quote from the same prologue tracing words through the four seasons of the year:

Deja que en primavera los vientos de tu ánimo dispersen las palabras por los caminos y se vistan con flores rojas, blancas, amarillas y azules, porque las flores son alegres palabras de los áboles, de las hierbas y de las enredaderas... Deja que en verano las palabras se levanten en mariposas, porque ellas, como hijas de la lluvia, son las flores ambulantes de los caminos; deja, en ese tiempo de aguaceros, que en las milpas las mazorcas se ofrezcan, entre el humo del copal y la oración, como palabras de gratitud en las primicias... Cuando llegue el otoño y los áboles desprendan sus hojas al viento, dejá que estas palabras besen con ternura la piel del suelo, pues nunca las palabras sobre la tierra han sido el sepulcro de los hombres... Cuando llegue el invierno, y sientas que te besa el aire frío de sus días, deja a la palabra arder en los saltan, gritan, rugen y cantan en tus adentros, y este canto es parecido al trino del sacbákal, paloma blanca, no lo ahogues en silencios. No temas! Ése es el lenguaje de tu alma! ¡Éssas son las palabras de tu espíritu! (23)

Similar imagery is used in *Tikgoj Ititunakumín/Cantan los totonacos* by Manuel Espinosa Sainos. In the style of a chant composed of short verses and anaphora, the poet expresses in his poem "Kachiwina xatutunaku/Hablemos en totonaco" how language is involved in every aspect of human life which fits in harmony with a chorus of nature:

Porque nuestras voces cantan,
hablamos en totonaco,
canten cerros
canten ríos.

Sóñemos en totonaco,
miremos en totonaco,

Porque nuestras voces cantan,
respiremos en totonaco,

canten cuevas,
canten lluvias.

Caminemos en totonaco,
hay que reír en totonaco.

Porque nuestras
vozess cantan,
anemos en totonaco,
canten milpas,
canten árboles.

Hay que nacer en totonaco
para perpetuar
la identidad (21)

Although Víctor Cata in *Nácasimu dhiida/Solo somos memoria* does not implicitly state a particular attitude toward language, many of the themes of identity, spirituality and sense of community are expressed in stories that are sometimes inspired by folk motifs which will be discussed later. However, returning to his treatment of language, the author skillfully manages a certain naturalness in his stories which include words in Zapotec to contribute to the unfamiliarity of the settings and the characters in the Spanish translations. Many of these words deal with the natural world and are translated in footnotes at the bottom of the page. Thus the reader in Spanish is introduced to Zapotec seasons of the year like “gusibá” (74) which is a period of drought from October to March and “gusigüe” (75) which is a rainy season from April to September. A “berelele” (40) is a stone curlew while a “beenda’ doo xca” (86) is a kind of nonpoisonous snake. Other words left in Zapotec are everyday expressions, insults, exclamations and even onomatopoeias. Some of the words, as is the case with plants and animals, have no direct translation but the author’s choice to include these and others invites the reader to experience the stories in their own environment to the extent that this can be possible.

Spirituality is the next aspect that is closely tied with language and identity and the most obvious place to start is with Jorge Miguel Coocom Pech. The greater part of the book being based on a sort of vision quest with his grandfather as guide, we are only occasionally anchored in the modern world. We know that the narrator first went out on his journey with his grandfather on March 19, 1961 and there are descriptions of radio broadcasts, trains arriving, commerce and festivals which serve only as brief interludes between the esoteric experiences. Early on in his initiation, don Gregorio distinguishes between the corporal and the spiritual world when he tells his grandson that it is through his blood that he will know the origin of his body but it is through his dreams that he will know the origin of his spirit (39). In fact, the grandfather further stresses that dreams are an exercise of the spirit that give testimony to the personal history of an individual, and they are not for accumulating knowledge nor for living in a fantasy world. Remembering dreams then, is for the good of the interior being. The role of dreams in personal reflection and self awareness can be summed up in the following quote by the grandfather: “El hombre que vive y no sueña es un hombre muerto en vida. Mas [ay aquél que sueña y no realiza sus sueños! Acosado por las pesadillas, acaba por sucumbir al insomnio de una realidad que no es suya (40).”

With Manuel Espinoza Sainos, dreams play a lesser role in his poetry but they are useful in warning the dreamer:

Tamakatsin/*Advertencia*
Ay del hombre

que maltrate
a su propia madre,
ignora que en sus sueños
aparecerá la serpiente
de las siete cabezas.

Ay de aquel que arrebate
las flores de los frutos,
no sabe que en sus sueños

brotará la muerte,
le ofenderá semillas
en forma de mujer (29).

On the other hand in Víctor Cata’s stories spirituality is much more syncretic than what one would find in the other two authors. For example, in the story “Ti mitati” lá Jesús/Un tal Jesús” a boy narrator in the first person begins to have nightmares about the persecution of Jesus after hearing Timoteo *El Zurdo* tell about it. This persecution is set not in the Middle East but in the narrator’s town where there is always water and the corn grows early every year thanks to the miracles Jesus did for those that helped him in his flight. But the story ends with the continued anguish of the narrator who lies awake imagining everything: “Son las doce de la noche y ya te di como veinte vueltas a la hamaca y no puedo dormir; me imagino a ese tal Jesús corriendo en la boca de la noche(20).” Upon reading this story, one is reminded of those written by the main precursor of modern Zapotec literature, Andres Henestrosa, and his book *Los hombres que dispersó la danza* (1929). This theme of Jesus being chased by his enemies appears in several stories such as “La milpa salva a Jesús,” “La golondrina,” “El olivo,” and “El carrizo.” When asked about these similarities between his stories and those of Henestrosa, Victor answered in an email that:

...[L]as narraciones sobre la estancia de Jesucristo en tierras zapotecas en el Istmo es

muy recurrente en la memoria colectiva de mi pueblo. Y no sólo de él sino de otros santos. De otros personajes religiosos. Es la huella de la evangelización. Lo que creo

es que estos relatos proceden de algún texto religioso, probablemente, de los textos

apócrifos prohibidos por la iglesia.

This syncretism is present in many other stories by the author and they principally take on two categories: saint worship and encounters with the devil. In the first category we have “San Miguelito/San Miguelito” where the narrator boasts about insulting Saint Michael and getting away with it much to the horror of those around him. But upon seeing the error of his ways he sees no chance of reconciliation after the tortuous penance he has gone through:

Yá perdi la cuenta de las veces que me ha llevado Rosa Xhi’di a San Miguel Chimalapa a suplicarle perdón. Todo lo que me dice la gente lo he hecho: vente en domingo, llega a las doce de la noche; llámalo siete veces; no te bañes tres días, no copules con nadie, hincate. No sienta las rodillas de tanto prosternarme ante él. No sé qué hacer. (28)

The story ends ominously with the narrator screaming at the moon like what is customary during an eclipse.

On the other hand, devotion to the saints can be very helpful as is the case with “Gulala bidixichi/El reparto.” In this story the narrator tells how she defended her right to stay in the family homestead when her siblings returned to take everything after their mother’s death. The narrator was the only one to take care of their mother but that did not impress her family that wanted her out of the house. However, she suddenly stands her ground and keeps the house, believing that the virgin provided her with the strength: “[...][La Virgen] no es tonta; si ella no me ayudaba sabía que también le iba mal, pues todos mis hermanos son «evangelios»; a la basura iría con todo y nicho (59).”

The stories about selling one’s soul to the devil, on the other hand, remind one of the *exempla* stories the Catholic missionaries brought with them from Europe for evangelization purposes and thus transforming them to fit the their new extratextual realities. In “Sente Biida/Cente Biida” the third person narrator talks about how Cente Biida’ appeals to the devil to win a girl that later betrays him. In order to get what he wants, he must bring the devil the special Green Cross found in the town and and throw it in the sewage water nearby. Upon doing what was ordered of him, Cente Biida’ now asks for the girl, power and money and that all pay homage exclusively to him. But the moon hid behind a cloud in order to not bear witness to this bargain and thus in the distance a group of peasants could be seen carrying the Green Cross before them in the north winds and singing “*Kyrie eleison*” (79).

In another story that brings man and the devil together we have “Giuze’/El cazador” which relates a struggle between the hunter Cástulo Gómez and a gigantic serpent that happens to be the devil. The link between the serpent and the devil lies in their powers of immortality since both can change their clothes and now that Cástulo won the battle, the serpents come to him willingly to be sacrificed so that everyone can have belts and sandals made out of snake skin (89).

Another striking element that all three of these books share is a close tie between the erotic and the spiritual world. At the end of his novel, Cocom Pech describes an erotic dream of the narrator’s where some male dancers compete for a naked damsel. In the last paragraph of the novel the narrator describes what he saw when the winner of the contest claimed his prize:

El varón más viejo del grupo, tal vez el patriarca, pues portaba un bastón de mando, entregó a la muchacha. El hombre vencedor la recibió acariciandola. Posteriormente, en cuelillas puso sus labios en la parte íntima de la mujer, quien se estremeció al sentir el calor y la excitación del hombre que más tarde penetraría en su triángulo sagrado...

De pronto, fui descubierto... descubierto por mi abuelo, quien levantó la sábana que cubría mi cara... Entonces desperté (122).

It is a dream symbolic here of the narrator’s maturing into manhood and his initiation into the sacred secrets of Mayan society with the obvious ties of the patriarch of the dream and don Gregorio Pech.

Manuel Espinosa Sainos also relates the spiritual with the erotic in his poem: “Xk'egallxtakgnat k'osmni/ Abstinencia del volador.” Here the image is of a *Volador de Papantla* and the ritual fertility dance they do which consists of five dancers climbing a high pole with ropes wrapped around it. One of the dancers stays on top while playing a small flute and drum and the other four tie an end of the rope around their waste and from their own weight, the rope unwinds as the four dancers are lowered hanging upside down. The image of fertility in the dance is evident from the first two stanzas:

El volador tiene ganas
de tocar los senos,
convertirse en agua de río,
resbalar entre los muslos
de la mujer amada.

Tiene ganas de ser semilla,
penetrar en el ombligo
de la piel morena,
convertirse en colibrí
que brota de la flor. (91)

In another beautiful poem “Lichiwinankgoy lapaxkit ninín/ Los muertos hablan de amor” the poet explained at a panel discussion that the poem was inspired by the fact that it is customary for young lovers to hide in a cemetery to make love since there was usually nowhere else to go and he thought of the possibility that the dead in the cemetery were actually receiving this energy:

Los muertos hablan de amor,
deambulan los deseos,
Los panteones huelen a sexo,
evaporan los besos
En la humedad de los cafetales,
En las barrancas y plátaneras (103).

In the story “Dxibi/Miedo” Victor Cata relates how a woman was able to trick the devil by winning a bet in order to save her adulterous husband, who sold his soul in the first place to conquer other women! The bet consisted of uncurling her pubic hairs one by one but the devil soon found that it was an impossible task and they seemed to multiply as he pulled each one until: “[E]l pueblo se llenó de pelos; estaban en las puertas, en las ventanas, bajo las hamacas de los niños, en las enaguas de las mujeres, en la bolsa de las camisas de los hombres” (67). In short, the town was buried underneath but

everyone cared more about their powers of scaring away the devil than the quantity of hair in everyone’s way!

The final topic to discuss that the three books share in common is the conflicts indigenous cultures have with the outside world. In Cocom Pech’s novel, although there are a few scenes where the outside world is quite neutrally incorporated, the entire book is motivated from an ancestral fear of extinction of Mayan culture at the hands of the government which was mentioned earlier in this essay. In the other two books, however these conflicts become more personal and immediate to contemporary reality. In Victor Cata’s story, “Ni bitchaa xtixka/Abandono de juramento” we have a third person narrator describing Mera’s conflicts after getting involved with an unidentified missionary group that persuades her to give up her “ídolos de piedra y palo” (48) and all of her social contacts at the same time since her previous religious life also logically involved festivities that she could no longer participate in. But finally, at the end of the story she confronts them directly and sends them away with these words:

— Yo no sé dónde está ese infierno del que hablan. El que conozco está aquí, todas nuestras deudas las pagaremos en este lugar. Me asombran cuando dicen que sólo se salv rarán 144 mil almas. No sé quién se los dijo. Lo único que sé es que me muero de melancolía, esta soledad me está aniquilando (51).

In the end, it was ironically the missionaries that taught her the importance of being part of a broader community that she had always known but was persuaded temporarily to abandon.

In Manuel Espinosa Sainos’ poem “Maliya xatutunaku/María totonaca” we have a girl being scolded for breaking a water pitcher she was sent to fill:
Sus labios no pronuncian palabra,
el derecho a jugar será colgado
en el más oscuro de los rincones,
en ese lugar donde los miedos
escupen el veneno del coralillo.

¡Chiquilla inútil!
Tonta como tu madre,
¡hasta cuándo aprenderás
para llamarla de razón?
¡India totonaca!

María totonaca llora,
solloza sin entender
el lenguaje del extranjero.
Que en aquel lugar,
consiente está

Los pájaros no cantan igual (71).

In another poem “Xwatu/El metate” the daily chore of grinding corn becomes symbolic of a woman’s plight:
Mueles y mueles,
La tristeza de los niños,
El dolor de tu hombre
Cuando le gritan indio.

To conclude, it becomes apparent upon reading these three different books by indigenous writers that they are not working within a stereotypical framework at all even though many of the themes like the ones mentioned in this essay seem to overlap repeatedly in their works and those of others. It is thus quite evident that the writers have more than demonstrated that they can find their own individual voices within a collective, oral tradition that offers a fascinating alternative to literary currents inside and outside of Mexico. Indeed, the three short essays by Karl Lenkersdorf, Silvia

Cristina Leírana Alcocer, and Jaime Valdivieso B. at the end of Cocom Pech's book all coincide in the contrasts between the Mayan and the Western world views putting stress on how the former, which is more animistic in nature, can correct the more anthropocentric tendencies of the latter. Whether this is motivated by a perfunctory praise for the book or sincerity, one is tempted to see how these comments could relate to all of the books reviewed here.

Scott Hadley, Benemérita Universidad Autónoma de Puebla

Review Essay: Del siglo XIX al siglo XX: Voces de mujeres en la literatura hispanoamericana

Hughes, Psiche. *Violations: Stories of Love by Latin American Women*. Lincoln: U of Nebraska P, 2004. 186 pp. ISBN 0-8032-7347-9

Muñiz-Huberman, Angelina. *The Confidantes*. Trans. Labinger G. Andrea. Santa Fe, NM: Gaon Books, 2009. 137 pp. ISBN 978-0-9820657-2-3.

Romeu, Raquel. *Voces de mujeres en la literatura cubana*. Madrid: Editorial Verbum, 2000. 197 pp. ISBN 84-7962-158-3

Selimov, Alexander. *De la ilustración al modernismo: La poética de la cultura romántica en el discurso de Germán Gómez de Avellaneda*. Boulder: Society of Spanish and Spanish American Studies, 2003. 132 pp. ISBN 0-89295-103-6

Weldt-Basson, Helen Carol. *Subversive Silences: Nonverbal Expression and Implicit Narrative Strategies in the Works of Latin American Women Writers*. Cranbury: Fairleigh Dickinson UP, 2009. 277 pp. ISBN 978-0-8386-4172-9

Desde la época colonial la escritura de mujeres latinoamericanas ha estado siempre presente en la literatura de nuestros países. Más sin embargo, no es hasta entrado el siglo XIX cuando esa escritura comienza a consolidarse hasta llegar al siglo XX consolidándose en un discurso femenino latinoamericano universalizante. Esta universalización de la literatura femenina latinoamericana ha llevado a que críticos literarios de muchas partes del mundo se hayan interesado en el estudio de nuestras letras femeninas, lo cual ha propiciado el momento para que las traducciones en varias lenguas de las obras de nuestras escritoras hayan brindado al lector universalista la oportunidad de leer la obra de estas mujeres en varios idiomas, pero sobre todo en la lengua inglesa. En este ensayo se hará una aproximación crítica a las traducciones *Violations: Stories of Love by Latin American Women and The Confidants*; también haremos una lectura crítica de los ensayos críticos sobre escritoras latinoamericanas *Voces de mujeres en la literatura cubana*, *De la ilustración al modernismo: la poética de la cultura romántica en el discurso de Germán Gómez de Avellaneda y Subversive Silences: Nonverbal Expression and Implicit Narrative Strategies in the Works of Latin American Women Writers*. Todos estos textos en una forma u otra se conectan, ya que tanto las traducciones como los textos críticos tienen como elemento común la palabra femenina latinoamericana y su enfrentamiento al discurso patriarcal que la ha acechado constantemente desde los tiempos coloniales.

Subversive Silences: Nonverbal Expression and Implicit Narrative Strategies in the Works of Latin American Women Writers escrito por Helen Carol Weldt-Basson es un texto muy completo y muy delineado tanto en la estructura del texto como en el análisis que hace la autora de varios textos femeninos de todo el continente latinoamericano. La autora ha seleccionado a la argentina Marta Brunet; las chilenas María Luisa Bombal e Isabel Allende; las mexicanas Rosario Ferré y Sandra Cisneros. Las obras de todas estas escritoras son analizadas dentro de distintas posturas teóricas que van desde la teoría posestructuralista, pasa por la teoría narratológica de Gérard Genette, se mete en las teorías del lector de Wolfgang Iser y se concentra en la mayoría de los análisis en las distintas teorías feministas que se han desarrollado en el siglo XX, entre ellas, el feminismo fracés de Irigaray

, el sociolinguista de Cherys Kramaraes, Dale Spenser and Deborah Tannen, entre otras teorías feministas. El primer capítulo del libro "Language and Silence: A Theoretical Overview" es una introducción teórica a las distintas teorías que la autora utilizará en el transcurso del estudio y análisis que hará de las obras ya anteriormente mencionadas. El capítulo está subdividido en *Muted Group Theory*, *Sociolinguistic Theory*, *Silence Passive or Empowered Strategy*, *Silence and Previous Literary Analysis*, *Male vs Female Writers, Toward a New Theory of Silences*, and *A Synopsis of Theoretical Applications*.

Bajo estos sub-títulos Weldt-Basson ubica las distintas obras literarias que analiza en el libro y sus contextos históricos literarios. En el capítulo II "Paradoxical Silence, Part I: "Overreading" the Works of Marta Brunet" utilizando las teorías de Nancy K. Miller, la autora hace una nueva lectura de la obra de Brunet dentro del contexto histórico mitológico del mito de aracne, haciendo incipit en el signo de la opresión femenina que está presente en todas las obras de Brunet. Se destacan entre otras cosas el uso del silencio femenino, tanto por medio del sometimiento como de un cuestionamiento pasivo de la mujer sobre el discurso patriarcal que domina su vida. También este capítulo se estudia y ubica la obra de Brunet dentro del movimiento feminista chileno de su época. Concluye, la autora que "Brunet's thematic use of silence as both as a sign of oppression and a subversive weapon leads to the construction of a paradoxical silence..." (59). En el Segundo capítulo "Paradoxical Silence, Part II: Silence/Narrative Voice in the Works of María Luisa Bombal" basa su análisis Weldt-Basson en las teorías de Susan Lancer sobre la voz autorial aplicadas a la obra de la escritora chilena. Para la autora el uso del silencio como arma contestaria en el discurso femenista de Bombal, es lo que conecta la estructura narrativa del texto con el discurso autorial y la voz femenina de sus personajes.

Asimismo apoya la autora su análisis en el caso de *La última niebla* el uso del silencio como característica esencial del texto y como una manera de subvertir Bombal el discurso femenino de sus personajes por medio de sueños y rituales. El mismo elemento del silencio, pero ya dentro del mundo autorial y narrativo de la protagonista lo utiliza Bombal en *La amoriagada*. En "El árbol" la técnica de la subversión del silencio, plantea Weldt-Basson emerge por medio del simbolismo. En el capítulo IV "The Encoded Silence of Rosario Castellanos: Coding, Paradox, and Parentheses", Weldt-Basson se approxima a la obra de Rosario Castellanos a través de la decodificación de la técnica de códigos que utiliza Castellanos en sus cuentos. Aquí otra vez, se vuelve a analizar, aunque en menor escala, el uso del silencio en algunos cuentos de Castellanos. El capítulo V "Hyperbolic Silence: Agony and Irony in the Works of Isabel Allende" es dedicado a ubicar la obra de Allende dentro del contexto del discurso feminista chileno de su generación. Se hace otra vez incipit en el uso del silencio comoarma narrativa femenina y se añade además el uso de la ironía como elemento unificador en algunas obras de Allende, como *Los cuentos de Eva Luna*.

Igualmente estudia el tema de la compensación femenina y las alianzas femeninas en la obra de la chilena. En el capítulo VI "Symbolic Silence: Rosario Ferré's Equation of Women and Puerto Rico", la autora enfoca su análisis en la obra de la puertorriqueña. Aquí de Nuevo surge el tema del silencio simbólico enmarcado dentro del contexto cultural caribeño. La autora ahonda en la función del género dentro del elemento natural que caracteriza el comportamiento de la mujer. Para ello estudia la temática del silencio en la obra de Ferré y su adhesión a la voz textual femenina que sobresale en su obra. En el capítulo VII "Paradise Silence: Ritual and Genre in Laura Esquivel", Weldt-Basson dirige su análisis hacia el estudio de la cultura como elemento funcional en los rituales del género femenino. Así estudia los arquetipos femeninos a través de la parodia, la trama y la caracterización que subyacen en los textos de Esquivel. El capítulo VIII "Cultural Silence: Naïve Narrators, Inverted Icons, and Bilingual Gaps in the Works of Sandra Cisneros", la autora apoya su discurso teórico en el tema del silencio cultural y como este es una constante en el bilingüismo y códigos culturales que surgen en la obra de Cisneros. Termina su libro Weldt-Basson con el capítulo IX "Conclusions: Toward a Feminist Poetics of Silence". En este capítulo se recogen las conclusiones teóricas que a través de todo el libro Weldt-Basson ha ido reconociendo, exponiendo y aplicando en el análisis de los textos estudiados en su libro.