

Doyle, Herman Melville, Joseph Conrad, William James, and even Edgar Allan Poe hover above and permeate this novel, but it is Henry James with whom Makowsky draws the closest parallel in her exploration and appreciation of Martin's *oeuvre*. As Makowsky explains, "Martin's artistic values are closer to those of Henry James than they are to those of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle. . . . [she] places human beings before money, fame, or even art" (p. 238). In Martin's fiction, that often takes the form of female friendships and compassion, "a great imagination . . . manifests itself in empathy" (p. 251).

Therein may lie the puzzling lack of wide recognition for Martin's ten novels and four collections of short stories. Unlike Doyle, for example, she has not followed her audience but has let her deep exploration of the uses of imagination take her to various worlds, challenging the kind of audience, for example, enjoyed by Atwood. Makowsky's book is an excellent and necessary introduction to Martin's fictional universes—one that goes far in illuminating both the novelist's themes and the influences of nineteenth century, (mostly) American writers on her craft and art.

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NOTES

¹ In Henry James's story "The Figure in the Carpet," a fictional author claims that there is a "particular thing I've written my books most for," which the narrator describes as a "primal plan, something like a complex figure in a Persian carpet"; see James, "The Figure in the Carpet," in *Henry James' Shorter Masterpieces*, ed. Peter Rawlings, vol. 2 (Sussex: Harvester Press, 1984), 54, 62.

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LATIN AMERICAN WOMEN AND THE LITERATURE OF MADNESS: NARRATIVES AT THE CROSSROADS OF GENDER, POLITICS AND THE MIND, by Elvira Sánchez-Blake and Laura Kanost. Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2015. 188 pp. \$39.95 cloth; \$19.99 ebook.

INTERSECTIONS OF HARM: NARRATIVES OF LATINA DEVIANCE AND DEFIANCE, by Laura Halperin. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2015. 254 pp. \$99.95 cloth; \$29.95 paper; \$29.95 ebook.

Elvira Sánchez-Blake and Laura Kanost in *Latin American Women and the Literature of Madness: Narratives at the Crossroads of Gender, Politics and the Mind* and Laura Halperin in *Intersections of Harm: Narratives of Latina Deviance and Defiance* put the topic of madness at the center of their criti-

cal debate. Sánchez-Blake and Kanost argue that the dynamics of reason and unreason have occupied the attention of twentieth-century scholars in Europe and North America but have received little attention in Latin America. The authors underscore the connection between literature and the violent history of Latin America in the late twentieth century; brutal military dictatorships and civil wars ignited—especially in women authors—an interest in writing fiction that employs insanity as a literary device. Thus, Sánchez-Blake and Kanost focus on a “poetics of madness,” which allows them—following Michel Foucault’s seminal work *History of Madness* (1961), which states that the literature of madness is a medium for raising the critical consciousness of humanity—to open a space for women to talk about the intersections of experience, culture, and politics (p. 2).

Latin American Women and the Literature of Madness’s six chapters analyze, respectively, the 1984 novel by Uruguayan author Cristina Peri Rossi, *La nave de los locos* (*The Ship of Fools*), in which Peri Rossi denounces exclusion and marginalization by military regimes in South America through the image of characters traveling without destination; Lya Luft’s *Exilio* (1987, *Exile*), whose depressed protagonist stands as representative of contemporary Brazilian women, mentally strained by multiple and sometimes clashing societal expectations; the 1994 collaborative work by Chilean author Diamela Eltit and photographer Paz Errázuriz, *El infarto del alma* (*Soul’s Infarct*), in which the utter marginalization of psychiatric hospital residents alludes to oppression by military dictatorship in Chile; the first novel by Mexican author Cristina Rivera Garza, *Nadie me verá llorar* (1999, *No One Will See Me Cry*), in which madness becomes a reflection of gender, class, and national struggles in Mexico at the turn of the twentieth century; Laura Restrepo’s 2004 *Delirio* (*Delirium*), which portrays a woman suffering from delirium in order to depict Colombia under siege by violence, political corruption, and social decay; and Puerto Rican writer and editor Irene Vilar’s memoirs *The Ladies’ Gallery: A Memoir of Family Secrets* (1996) and *Impossible Motherhood: Testimony of an Abortion Addict* (2009), which create a family narrative of mental illness that is inextricably linked to the neocolonial status of the Caribbean island.

Sánchez-Blake and Kanost’s analyses of these narratives show the strengths and limitations of madness as a concept or as a literary device that intersects with postmodern and feminist critical theories. The strength of a critical book that focuses on madness through the analysis of contemporary fiction written by Latina and Latin American women is to open the theoretical studies of madness from the Latina/Latin American angle. The limitation of an important book like this is that, in some moments, by underscoring the allegorical nature of madness in literature—such as with Sánchez-Blake’s analysis of Peri Rossi’s *The Ship of Fools*, the chapter that begins the book—everything is questionably interpreted as madness.

Nevertheless, the careful selection of narratives studied in this book is an important contribution to the field of Latin American literary and women's studies. It is an invitation to revisit canonical novels and to discover others, such as the painful and fascinating memoirs by Vilar. The most outstanding contribution of this book is the thorough and clear review of theoretical and critical texts regarding madness. Foucault's *History of Madness* guides Sánchez-Blake and Kanost's work. In their introduction, the authors trace a map of different approaches to madness that complement Foucault's arguments—and borrow his terminology—on the power relations between “the healthy” and “the madman”; the role of language as the structure of madness; who decides what is “real” and what is “illusory” or the subject of perception; and the blurry line that separates reason and unreason. Many literary critics—including Shoshana Felman, Lillian Feder, Sander L. Gilman, Phyllis Chesler, Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar, and Elaine Showalter—have shown the pertinence of madness in culture and literature as a mode of behavior, especially for women who need to escape from alienating mores and social rules. However, new approaches to madness as a mental illness, especially the contributions of disability studies, question the symbolic and metaphoric uses of madness. Marta Caminero-Santangelo in *The Madwoman Can't Speak, or Why Insanity Is Not Subversive* (1998) approaches madness as a disabling mental illness and cultural mechanism that not only makes individual subjectivity impossible but also prevents collective resistance. For Caminero-Santangelo, madness is antithetical to feminism. *Latin American Women and the Literature of Madness* responds to Caminero-Santangelo's essentialized definition of madness by demonstrating strategies for speaking and listening to the poetics of madness in contemporary Latin American women's narratives.

In *Intersections of Harm*, Laura Halperin intelligently dialogues with Gloria Anzaldúa's groundbreaking 1987 book *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza* in order to examine the ways in which “the tongue,” the language and writing of contemporary Latina authors, is harmed in an attempt to silence or tame it (p. 1). Halperin also examines the ways in which the “wild tongue” of Latinas resists the efforts to muzzle their voices (p. 2). This approach enables her to analyze together the concepts of harm and hope in Vilar's memoirs *The Ladies' Gallery* and *Impossible Motherhood*, the Dominican American novelist Loida Maritza Pérez's *Geographies of Home* (1999), the Xicana writer Ana Castillo's novel *So Far from God* (1993), the Cuban American author Cristina García's novel *Dreaming in Cuban* (1992), and the Dominican American writer Julia Alvarez's novel *How the García Girls Lost their Accents* (1991).

Halperin successfully demonstrates how the concept of harm that governs the narratives of these authors—portrayals of the damage wreaked on the bodies and minds of Latina characters as well as on the places they

inhabit—demands to be studied at the individual and collective levels. As Halperin states “the representations of harm in Latina literature elucidate grave social injustices that demand rectification. Part of such rectification consists of recognition, and part of this recognition entails acknowledging the intersectional ways in which harm can manifest itself” (p. 3).

Halperin’s brilliant analyses of the novels and memoirs, as well as her thorough research of the history they recreate, fulfills one of the goals of her book: to avoid presenting a facile concept of hope. To be able to speak, to be able to vocalize the harms suffered by the individual and the community does not imply that the voice will be heard. Nevertheless, Halperin rightly underscores that the authors place their subjects in the fluid spaces of the interstices. The terms *interstice* and *intersections* enable her to connect race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, and class—key concepts at the center of the Latina battle for belonging. These narratives of deviance and defiance, as the subtitle of the book indicates, are the aesthetic representations of that battle. Latinas struggle to belong to their bodies and minds, which are marked by race and gender, and also to the places they inhabit, which are marked by histories of aggression against their communities. Therefore, home in these narratives is a concept tied to body, mind, and place at once. Halperin reads home in complete agreement with Anzaldúa; for both, home is the space “between and among” spaces, “the one where belonging can be found even in the face of perpetual unbelonging, and the one where hope can be gleaned amid pervasive harm” (p. 201).

Intersections of Harm is not only an outstanding and innovative contribution to Latina/o literature but also to contemporary women’s literature and theorizations about madness and institutional structures of oppression. The book must be praised for its solid construction. Its five chapters are constantly in dialogue with each other, which enriches Halperin’s sophisticated study of the literary representations of harm inflicted on Latinas’ minds, bodies, and communities. When read together, Sánchez-Blake and Kanost’s *Latin American Women and the Literature of Madness* and Halperin’s *Intersections of Harm* show the development and maturity of Latin American and Latina feminist criticism. Their studies of the strategies of women authors to represent social and political oppression, especially against women, as well as women’s defiance, is of the utmost importance in our global present marked by femicides, gender violence, and sexual violence against women.

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