

biography as a modern genre in the political and social dialectic of the mid-seventeenth century.

Emile L. Bergmann and Stacey Schlau, eds. *The Routledge Research Companion to the Works of Sor Juana Inés De La Cruz*. London: Routledge, 2017. xxi + 320 pp. + 6 illus. \$235. Review by PATRICIA M. GARCÍA, THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT AUSTIN.

This volume in the *Routledge Research Series* is designed for the scholar interested in Sor Juana studies who would benefit from both historical contexts of the ways in which Sor Juana's life and works have been analyzed and debated as well as a discussion of current trends and future directions for such research. Bergmann and Schlau begin their introduction by describing Sor Juana, the seventeenth-century nun and poetess of Mexico, as "nun, rebel, genius, poet, persecuted intellectual, and proto-feminist" (ix). Such a description speaks also to how Sor Juana has been studied, presented, and transformed as a historical figure and author whose life, at times, overshadows her works. In a telling footnote at the end of the introduction, the editors comment, "what is authentic about Sor Juana is not the anecdotes, but rather her work" (xx). By analyzing the field of Sor Juana studies with this precept in mind, the editors present questions of gender, nationalism, transnationalism, identity, interdisciplinary approaches, and popular culture as they are applied to her life and her works. While literary approaches dominate the field and, as they acknowledge, their own focus, they argue for the richness of considering other fields, including creative responses and comparative studies.

Part 1: "Contexts" speaks less to the biographical data about Sor Juana (noted in the introduction, including discussion of the accuracies and mythmaking surrounding her life story) and more to the historical and intellectual milieu, which helped to develop Sor Juana as a writer, and to which she contributed as well. Alejandro Cañeque's "The Empire and Mexico City: Religious, Political, and Social Institutions of a Transatlantic Enterprise" utilizes Sor Juana's visual work, a triumphal arch over the Mexico City cathedral designed to welcome the arrival of the new viceroy in 1680. Her work on this

project reflects the importance of the viceroy system in Mexico City at this time and also shows the patron relationships Sor Juana, like other writers, held with the government. Moreover, it demonstrates Cañeque's larger argument that citizens of New Spain "saw themselves as inhabitants of a polity that was larger than the viceroy of New Spain" (10), thus questioning a view of Sor Juana and her work as separate from imperial politics and identity. Yolanda Martínez-San Miguel's essay "The Creole Intellectual Project: Creating the Baroque Archive" complicates this idea by noting how creole identity, that is individuals of European descent born in the Americas, sparked some sense of a "distinct American identity" that led to both celebratory discourses and, eventually, revolution and independence. Speaking more directly to Sor Juana's written works and providing a thoughtful reading of her use of both Spanish and Nahuatl, Martínez-San Miguel also returns to the triumphal arch, noting that while the companion arch utilized Aztec cosmology, Sor Juana's use of Roman demonstrates these conflicting identities she, like other citizens of New Spain, worked to inhabit. The Baroque aesthetic, with its emphasis on "representation of a diversity of voices, ethnicities, and ways of knowing that establish an interesting dialogue with imperial centers of power" (19) is a fitting lens with which to read Sor Juana's interrogation of her multiple identities as Catholic, creole, woman, and writer. Stephanie Kirk takes on this discussion of gender in the final essay in this section entitled "The Gendering of Knowledge in New Spain: Enclosure, Women's Education, and Writing," beginning with examples from *Autodefensa espiritual* (*Spiritual Self-Defense*, 1681) in which Sor Juana famously defends her education, seen unfit for women by her confessor, as part of her work towards spiritual salvation. This argument for women's agency is what has led many feminist and gender scholars to examine her work, and Kirk presents a useful and critical overview of such scholarship, ending with an acknowledgement that any study of her work must also consider the intersection of gender and knowledge within sites of knowledge production, such as the convent system, and how that affects the work produced. Taken together, these three essays help provide an understanding of the world of New Spain that produced Sor Juana in ways that invite critical discussion about how she presents this world.

Part II: "Reception History" speaks to the volume's strengths: its treatment of the interdisciplinary nature of the field of Sor Juana studies. Mónica Díaz's essay "Seventeenth-Century Dialogues: Transatlantic Reading of Sor Juana" offers a comprehensive review of scholars working in this area, focusing on gender and ethnicity as an essential component of this scholarship. Martha Lilia Tenorio's "Readings from the Seventeenth, Eighteenth, and Nineteenth Centuries: Hagiography and Nationalism" tracks Sor Juana's reputation through the responses to the published works in her lifetime and beyond, noting the risks this has for those critics who ask her to be the standard bearer for their representative issues (feminist, nationalist, victim/hero of Catholic hierarchy, indigenous). As the section moves to "Twentieth-Century Readings: Schons, Pfandl, and Paz" by Marie-Cécile Bénassy-Berling, we again see the transatlantic nature of the field by focusing on these three important scholars who hail from the United States, Germany, and Spain respectively. In the 1920s, Dorothy Schons asserted a feminist view of Sor Juana as an accomplished writer and thinker of her age. Unfortunately, an alternative view of Sor Juana put forward by Ludwig Pfandl in the 1930s read Sor Juana's passion for learning and writing as "neurotic" and an example of "feminine Oedipus complex," resulting in disorganized and at times narcissistic and inferior writing (56). Tenorios denounces such a view, much as the field has. The great Mexican writer Octavio Paz told Sor Juana's story in his 1982 book *Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz o Las Trampas de la Fe* to great acclaim for his extensive research and storytelling style. Its place within Paz's canon is unsure, but Tenorio sees its value as evidence of Paz's love for his subject.

Amanda Powell's "Passionate Advocate: Sor Juana, Feminisms, and Sapphic Lovers" reviews both feminist and lesbian critiques of her life and work, always aware of the issues in conflating the two, especially in a contemporary use of the terms. Isabel Gómez's "Translations of Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz: Ideology and Interpretation" close reads various translations of her work to view the ideological framework of the period of each translation, noting that we can learn much about Sor Juana and her reception through such an analysis. J. Vanessa Lyon's "My Original, A Woman': Copies, Originals, and Sor Juana's Iconic Portraits" views her portraits as a fashioning and even self-fashioning

of her image, one that can be read much as her poetic works and can benefit from similar feminist and cross-cultural critical lenses. The last essay, Emily Hind's "Contemporary Mexican Sor Juanas: Artistic, Popular, and Scholarly" presents re-imaginings of Sor Juana, especially as she is held as both a Mexican and Chicano/a icon, a reminder of Sor Juana's ever-evolving legacy.

Part III: "Interpretations and Debates about the Works" reviews criticism of Sor Juana's prose, verse, theater, and public art. The prose section includes Marie-Cécile Bénassy-Berling's "The Afterlife of a Polemic: Conflicts and Discoveries Regarding Sor Juana's Letters" and Grady C. Wray's "Challenging Theological Authority: The *Carta Antenagórica/Crisis Sobre un Sermón* and the *Respuesta a Sor Filotea*"; both examine Sor Juana's famous response to Antonio Vieira's sermon and subsequent reply to "Sor Filotea" (actually the Bishop of Puebla) who critiqued her argument and urged her to return to a more serious religious life. The response has been viewed as an early feminist manifesto, and both of these scholars work to provide more contextual information about the debate, its publication, its contemporary reception, and its reception today. The verse section contains four essays: Emile L. Bergmann's "Sor Juana's Love Poetry: A Woman's Voice in a Man's Genre"; Rocío Quispe-Agoni's "Sor Juana's *Romances*: Fame, Contemplation, and Celebration"; Luis F. Avilés' "Philosophical Sonnets: Through a Baroque Lens"; and Alessandra Luiselli's "*Primero Sueño*: Heresy and Knowledge." Bergmann and Quispe-Agoni examine the sonnet and romance forms as moments where Sor Juana engaged with traditional forms in non-traditional ways, especially as the desired subject or dedicatee of these works is often female. Avilés and Luiselli analyze her more philosophical verse forms, seeing both the sonnets and the longer romance as indebted to Baroque style and forms but, as with her romantic works, adapting such forms to reflect her own intellectual inquiries as a thinker, nun, and poet. The final section on her works examines theater and public art and is the longest of the three, encompassing six essays, demonstrating the increased attention to her public works. Verónica Grossi ("Writing for the Public Eye: The Theological Production, Church Spectacle" and State Sponsored Art [the *Neptuno Alegórico*]), Mario A. Ortiz ("Sor Juana as Lyricist and Musical Theorist"), and Ivonne del Valle ("*Loa* to *El Divino Narciso*:"

The Costs of Critiquing the Conquest”) review her use of allegory as a way of honoring and critiquing those political and religious leaders whose influence in her world provided the space she occupied but also limited it. Linda Egan (“The *Autos*: Theology on Stage”), Susana Hernández Araico (“*Los Empeños de Una Casa*: Staging Gender”), and Guillermo Schmidhuber de la Mora (“*La Segunda Celestina*, a Recently Discovered Play, and *Amor es más Laberinto*”) further these arguments, but consider the transatlantic nature of her writing, especially in how she depicts Mexico/New Spain to audiences straddling both worlds.

The final section, Part V: “Future Directions for Research,” includes one essay: “Understudied Aspects of Canonical Works and Potential Approaches to Little-Studied Works” by George Antony Thomas. Thomas sets an agenda for the future of Sor Juana studies while recognizing some of its unique challenges and opportunities. First, the vast and diverse number of texts she produced in her life and the multiple approaches to studying them can, at times, be overwhelming and has led to more intensive studies of fewer selected works. Some of this results from critical judgments of her more traditional verse forms or occasional pieces that see them as too ceremonial or even “uninspired” (261). As the essays in this collection show, more attention is being paid to less-canonical works, and Thomas argues that much could be learned in seeing these works in dialogue with her canonical texts as well as other writings from the period. As the field continues to embrace feminist, hemispherical, and transnational approaches, Thomas argues that it should also pay attention to her use of genre and occasional works to reflect the intellectual history of the period. The volume, I believe, heeds this call in its thoughtful organization and representation of the field in its extensive reviews of past scholarship and its influence on the interpretation and reception of Sor Juana’s works. New arguments are presented in many of the essays, but with a sense of a challenge to the reader of this research companion to put these ideas forward. The volume is geared to scholars familiar with her works but likely newer to the field. As such, it is especially useful to graduate students and emerging researchers. Overall, *The Routledge Research Companion to the Works of Sor Juana Inés De La Cruz* is a well-researched, carefully organized, and thoughtful analysis of the life and work of its subject.