

REMAKING THE LITERARY CANON IN ENGLISH:

WOMEN WRITERS, 1880-1920

Edited by María Elena Jaime de Pablos

This book has been issued within the framework of the research project “Escritoras inéditas en español en los albores del s. XX (1880-1920). Renovación pedagógica del canon literario” [“Unpublished Women Writers in Spanish at the Dawn of the 20th Century (1880-1920). Pedagogical Renewal of the Literary Cannon”] (SA019P17), funded by the Ministry of Education of the Regional Government of Castile-Leon (Spain) and the European Regional Development Fund. This research project is led by Professor Milagro Martín Clavijo from the University of Salamanca.

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Introduction

María Elena Jaime de Pablos

This book is based on the conviction that the Literary Canon in English, founded on patriarchal principles, needs to be significantly revised and updated to include the name of a legion of women writers who have been unfairly neglected and marginalised up to now. The essays collected in this publication aim at shedding light on some of them writing mainly between 1880-1920 with a threefold purpose: to rescue them from oblivion, to recuperate their works for contemporary audiences, and to put them in the place of honour they deserve.

In the first chapter, “Women, Science and Gender Equality in Emily Lawless’ *A Garden Diary*”, María Elena Jaime de Pablos deals with Emily Lawless (1845-1913), an excellent writer, a brilliant naturalist and a relevant historian, whose influence reached the highest British intellectual circles at the turn of the nineteenth century. In order to give visibility to, and to evaluate the literary production of Lawless, a body of work which faded from sight after the author’s death, María Elena Jaime de Pablos analyses the treatment of women, science and gender equality in *A Garden Diary: September 1899-September 1900*. This chapter shows that in this diary, Emily Lawless conceives nature as a source of wisdom, spirituality, freedom, self-fulfilment, healing, happiness and artistic inspiration. To disentangle some of its mysteries, she approaches it from a naturalist point of view and she invites other women to do likewise, indicating that they are as entitled to carry out scientific knowledge as men are.

“Rosamond Jacob, L.A.M. Priestley and ‘New’ Fictional Heroines”, by Mary Pierse, offers a study of *Callaghan*, a novel published in 1920, which reflects the suffrage and nationalist involvements of its author, Rosamond Jacob (1888-1960). However, Jacob perceived a desirability or necessity to hide her identity under a pseudonym –F. Winthrop, a stratagem that exposes the gender-related and real-life pressures, conflicts, and controversies of the period in Ireland. This study pays particular attention to the novel’s female protagonist from cultural, political and fictional points of view. The chapter also sheds light upon another Irishwoman, L.A.M. Priestley and her work *The Feminine in Fiction* (1918).

In the third chapter, “The Power and Passion of a Woman’s Middle Age: An Irish Response to an International Event in Edith Ć. Somerville and Martin Ross’s *The Real Charlotte* (1894)”, Julie Ann Stevens affirms that despite their reputation as creators of *The Real Charlotte*, one of the finest Irish novels of the nineteenth century, Somerville and Ross tend to be neglected outside of Ireland. Yet their satires include important commentary on international events during the fin de siècle. For instance, overlooked manuscripts of *The Real Charlotte* include extracts from a poem about the Mexican hero, “Joaquin Murieta”, by Californian Joaquin Miller, who admired the newspaper magnate, Mrs. Frank Leslie –Miriam Follin. She married and divorced William Wilde while the Irish women were writing their novel about an older woman’s passion for a younger man. This chapter examines the Irish response to transnational discourse about women, passion, and power.

María Amor Barros del Río’s contribution to this book, “Julia M. Crottie’s Neighbours: A Portrayal of Rural Ireland and Migration” analyses the phenomenon of Irish (female) migration at the dawn of the 20th century and its connection with the Great Famine in Julia Crottie’s first novel *Neighbours: Annals of a Dull Town* (1900). In its twenty stories, Crottie re-creates vivid portrayals of nineteenth-century rural Ireland and explores with realism the pettiness of a small town, Innisdoyle, and the daily lives of its inhabitants. In the stagnant atmosphere of this imagined town, migration emerges as a challenge in terms of beliefs and expectations, highlighting inconvenient issues. To date, Julia Crottie’s contribution to the Irish literary arena has deserved little attention despite her masterly use of satire and her frank approach to the representation of a paralysed Ireland.

Another female writer who has inexplicably slipped from critical and popular consciousness receives close attention in “Dorothy Richardson, Mother of Modernism: From the New Woman Reform Movement to the Modernist Revolution”. Aintzane Legarreta Mentxaka states that with the opening sentence of Dorothy Richardson’s *Pointed Roofs* (1915): “Miriam left the gaslit hall and went slowly upstairs”, the English novel left the gaslit halls of Victorian fiction and moved towards the attic of the human mind. The inventor of the “stream of consciousness” method, Richardson was the first novelist to radically alter punctuation in order to reproduce thought. She also dismantled plot, disrupted structure, and played around with words and

sentences much like a composer or a painter creating new combinations. Woolf declared that Richardson had invented a new sentence, “a psychological sentence of the feminine gender”. It was to become the template sentence of modernist fiction in English. Richardson’s saga *Pilgrimage*, starting with *Pointed Roofs* and comprising thirteen novels, is comparable in scope and radicalism to Proust’s *Reserche*.

Miriam Borham Puyal, the author of the following chapter: “Quixotic Pioneers: Portraits of Sentient and Intellectual Women in Mary Hays’ Work”, asserts that although Mary Hays (1759-60-1843) is still not included in most syllabi in Spain, she nevertheless remains one of the key figures for understanding the prominent role that women writers had in the dialectical battles that were being conducted in the late eighteenth century. Her voice –as a woman, an artist and a philosopher– was influential, but she was also attacked, mocked, and, finally, overlooked. She can be said to embody the stance and position of the woman writer in history, and her work must be recovered for future generations, for the map of Britain’s so-called war of ideas at the turn of the century since understanding of the radical sentimental novel would not be complete without her. Miriam Borham Puyal’s contribution focuses on Hays’ powerful portrayal of women who read, and, therefore, think. She defended women’s right to education and drew attention to other rights she claimed for her sex, amongst them sexual freedom. The chapter also exposes the consequences that such independence had for Hays and her literary alter ego, Emma Courtney. Borham Puyal demonstrates that, although Hays’ quixotic stance alienated her from her own society, she nevertheless opened the way for future women to claim authority over fiction and their own story.

In “Art and Autonomy: The Female Writer in Florence Wilford’s *Nigel Bartram’s Ideal*”, Katherine Mansfield presents *Nigel Bartram’s Ideal* (1868) by Florence Wilford as a little-known sensational Künstlerroman that explores a woman’s struggle to align her literary ambitions with social expectations of femininity. The essay examines New Woman fiction by providing an exploration of the internal struggle to marry intellectual and socially acceptable middle-class womanly values alongside sensationally-standard plot devices. Moreover, whereas in Sensation and New Woman fiction the protagonist is usually shown to fail in their literary aspirations, Wilford’s novel breaches the conventions of both genres in that both Wilford and Marion are rewarded with success in their literary project of self-liberation. Little has been written, or is indeed known, about

Wilford and her literary career. This essay seeks to redress this by revealing previously unknown details about Wilford's own life including her incarceration in a psychiatric institution during the final years of her life.

Margarita Estévez Saá examines women writers' attraction to the trope of the ghost in "Uses and Functions of the Trope of the Ghost in Women's Short stories: From Mary Shelley to Elizabeth Bowen". Her contribution intends to explain the ongoing and continued interest of women writers in ghost stories, with a particular emphasis on the case of late nineteenth-century and early twentieth-century British women writers. She reflects on what is a ghost and reviews women's attraction to the trope –both as writers and as readers. She considers women's critical reflection on the trope of the ghost –from Mary Shelley's "On Ghosts" (1824) to Virginia Woolf's "The Supernatural in Fiction" (1918) – and analyses some of the uses and functions of ghosts in short stories by authors such as Elizabeth Gaskell, Mrs. Henry Wood, Dinah Maria Mulock, or Elizabeth Bowen.

In the following chapter, "A Child of the Sun'. Insight and Empathy in Katherine Mansfield's Short Stories", Maria Micaela Coppola focuses on Mansfield's representations of empathy and insight in her short stories, qualities originating in deep awareness of one's body, of nature, and of oneself in them. Mansfield (1888-1923) describes the fleeting sense of bliss and revelation which is triggered by experiences of empathetic communication with nature ("At the Bay", "How Pearl Button Was Kidnapped"), among men and women ("Prelude") or between two women ("Bliss"). In her Notebooks, Mansfield explains that these moments are at the core of the subject's wellbeing and expresses her urge to get in contact with and fully understand the external world and, with it, the self. Finally, Maria Micaela Coppola deals with how Mansfield individuates the hermeneutic tool –writing– through which the connection between external and inner world can be traced.

The closing chapter of the book features a study on Indian Women Writing Fiction in English, "Anticolonial and Antinationalist Indian Female Writers in English (1880-1920)". This study is carried out by Jorge Diego Sánchez and Antonia Navarro Tejero, who analyse the works of four Indian female writers in English: Toru Dutt, Cornelia Sorabji, Sarojini Naidu and Rokeya Hossain. This chapter takes a threefold approach: firstly, to recognise the importance of their act of writing in their times and the contemporary recurrence and ostracism of their writings; secondly, to evaluate their

position in terms of acceptance/rejection –and the many in-betweens– of the British Empire and previous structures of difference in the South Asian Subcontinent, as depicted by their literary, journalist and social view of an Indian identity in the making and as associated with concepts of colonies and nation; and thirdly, to adopt a gender perspective that recognises the echo of their works with its power to inspire future studies which might go deeper into investigating other writers who, in that same time frame, had not been nationally and internationally ignored.