

Martina Vinatea Recoba, ed. *Epístola de Amarilis a Belardo*.

Biblioteca Indiana 15. Madrid: Universidad de Navarra – Iberoamericana – Vervuert, 2009. 172 pp. bibl. €24.80. ISBN: 978-84-8489-401-8.

Martina Vinatea presents the first annotated edition of *Epístola de Amarilis a Belardo*, a notorious verse epistle written in the Viceroyalty of Peru by an unknown female author. The author of the epistle was probably a nun, who used the pseudonym of Amarilis, and addressed the verse epistle to Lope de Vega, who reproduced it alongside his own autobiographical poetic response in his *La Filomena* (1621), and once again in his *Laurel de Apolo* (1630). Whereas literary scholars have previously focused their attention in attempting to determine the identity of the author of the epistle, Martina Vinatea shifts focus on studying the literary quality of the epistle and the cultural context in which it was written. However, she includes a well documented overview on the discussion about the epistle's authorship, broadly summarizing and outlining the distinctive hypotheses aimed to uncover this literary mystery.

Vinatea's edition is divided in two parts: the first is a preliminary study of the verse epistle, while the second includes the entire poem, followed by a detailed commentary on each of the nineteen stanzas, analyzed by Vinatea as separate units. The preliminary study begins with the history of the textual edition of the poem and then recreates the historical and cultural context in the viceroyalty of Peru in the early seventeenth century. Vinatea points out clearly the role of intellectual and cultural activities in the most important cities of the richest province of the Spanish empire; she highlights the resonance that Peruvian poets had in the literary and cultural circles in Spain to the point of calling the attention of two major authors of the times, Miguel de Cervantes and Lope de Vega. Vinatea emphasizes the role of women's education in the cultural environment of Peruvian cities, particularly Lima, in the seventeenth century, and cites two prominent example of female authorship: Clarinda and Amarilis. The introduction of the historical and cultural context is followed by the core of the preliminary study: the evaluation and literary analysis of the poem and its genre. Vinatea evaluates the epistle as literary genre, its prevalence in the Spanish Golden Age literature, and the distinctive traits of Amarilis' composition. Vinatea demonstrates how the *Epístola* is clearly influenced by the Petrarchan verse and discusses how this influx alters the traditional form of the classic lyrical epistle adding originality and renovation to the genre. Vinatea

concludes that the formal use of the Petrarchan verse (*canzone*) in the structure of the stanzas, while keeping the conclusive petition as pragmatic motivation of the poem, makes the *Epistola* unique in its genre. The study also refers to the Neoplatonism as the philosophical influence in the choice of topic for the poem: love without physical possession. To conclude her preliminary study Vinatea includes a stylistic and rhetorical analysis of the poem: use of metrics, lyrical rhythm, literary tropes, etc., with the purpose of revealing how the author of the poem possesses an ample knowledge of the most relevant literary traditions of the times. The second part of the book consists of the poem itself in a modern version, followed by erudite annotations inclusive of lexical notes and bibliographical references. Vinatea examines the nineteen stanzas of the poem, introducing the thematic context and pointing out philological relevancies for each one. This accurate annotation work provides the reader with a better understanding of the *Epistola* and its literary sources. This book is a solid contribution to the study of female authorship and literary production during colonial times in the Americas. It is also a valuable resource for teaching Spanish American early modern poetry.

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