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Female Stereotypes in Literature (With a Focus on Latin American Writers)

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That men view culture and society as male is understandable, given that the male sector of the population need not think about the world's gender, as there is no visible difference or conflict between what a men is about and how the world is supposed to run. That women also view the world from masculine eyes is a sad but unfortunate fact. The difficulty in achieving change in this perception lies in its subtlety. It is easy enough to point out the discrepancy between a male and female's pay for the same job. It is a decidedly more laborious task to try and explain why a man and a women doing two different jobs receiving disparate wages may also be a reflection of gender-produced inequality. Why is the woman working at a job that pays consistently lower wages then the man's job does? To reveal the underlying truths, the right questions must be asked. Male is the norm; humanity is viewed as masculine. On the one hand, what male and female have come to mean at the present time is changing our definition of society. These changing roles and impressions are quite visible in what we read, in what is being written. What is fascinating to note is the wide range of male roles, everchanging, and the steadiness with which female literary characters adhere to the classic modes. If in fact literature is a reflection of our reality, that despite individual perceptions it mirrors social manners, then women's changing roles, be they social, political or emotional, in life and literature, must not be ignored. But, if in fact society is 'male,' then literature must also be 'male.' Though writings about females by males may be suspect, all literature, even women's writings about women may also need to be re-read. As Susan Koppelman Cornillon states in her essay, "The Fiction of Fiction," "Women internalize the male idea of the feminine and create themselves in the shape of that idea." [1] Because of this re-shaping many women writers have strayed little from the given stereotypes of the female character that so plague literature. From the "Dick and Jane" reading series that we shall look at later, to the classics, women have held tightly to several role models as their guides. While male characters have been given free reign to be and become what they like, even to fail if they choose, women characters have been written to play and re-play the same themes, limited as they are. Thus, when the female character deviates from the norm, from these stringent stereotypes, more attention is then called to the purity of what the female character is supposed to be. The narrowness, the confining nature of the women's stereotypes in literature is as nullifying as are the imagined strictures on her in real life. Men are encouraged to become men in both novels and life. Women are forced to rise above being a woman. Women strive to be more man-like and are condemned when they take on male characteristics—agression, ambition, etc.

Unfortunately, most of what our students read in school perpetuates the sexist myths that prevail in our society. Year after year the students are presented with material that inculcates the male-superior/female-

inferior tenet. No questions are asked. Everything is accepted. It is horrifying to me to be faced with a blatant sexual stereotype in our books and to have no student refute its inherent sexist undertone. On the other hand, the subtlety with which the new non-sexist texts present their material makes the surprise-click! effect—"of course a woman can be a scientist"—difficult for the inexperienced student to perceive. Texts with sexist views of men and women are much more available than are the more well-thought out non-sexist texts. One can work within the framework of a negative role-model and study it precisely for what it says about the nature of stereotypes. But, one must be able to recognize these stereotypes and understand what the characters and author are trying to say. Thus, students must he equipped with some very practical knowledge of what is in effect, a manipulative device.

Even before our students reach a literary reading level, they are bombarded with sexist images from the pages of their textbooks and primers. An analysis was done by a group of researchers, "Women in Words and Images," with the expressed aim of eliminatiny sex-role stereotyping in school readers. This analysis, *Dick and Jane as Victims* (*Sex Stereotyping in Children's Readers*), points out the enormous lacuna between boys and girls in respect to their potential as men and women. The restraints placed on girls and women are vividly depicted in most primers. what comes through so often is the message of what women/men should and shouldn't be.

> lf Janey does become a doctor, she
>
> will feel guilty at not being a mommy,
>
> or as good a mommy as she 'ought' to
>
> be. Johnny will not feel at all
>
> guilty about being a doctor, whether
>
> he is a Daddy or not. [2]

"Ought to" and "should" are quite guilt-ridden terms, too often shrouded in a woman's self-esteem. What is implicit here are sacrifices and selflessness as an integral part of a woman's make-up. In this revealing study of what goes on in school books, it was found that certain positive traits are manifested much more often in the boys. These traits include: ingenuity, creativity, bravery, elevates the men who love her. She, as a literary figure, will most certainly be the love object of some grand passion, usually adulterous or tragically finite.

The *Mother* (*Wife*) role differs from the motherly Virgin role in several ways. The *Mother* (*Wife*), or the flesh and bones mother, starts out as all good, as the provider of life, a nurturer. Soon, however, her offspring learn that she can also deny them her gifts. Thus begins an arduous love-hate relationship. When Mother is being angelic, according to Ferguson, she is meek and submissive. When she is angry or devilish, she becomes a shrew, a nag or witch-like. The writers of *Dick and Jane as Victims* point out that in the majority of school books,

> wives and mothers are not only dull;
>
> sometimes they are actually
>
> unpleasant! One mother chases the

children with a rolling pin and a wife

nags her husband until he misses his

three wishes. Mom spanks, yells, gets

mad. She hates fun and spontaneity

almost as much as she hates dust. [3]

This *Mother/* (*Wife*) role carries with it a host of schizoid tendencies. The pure idea of "wifeliness" smacks of submission, inferiority and a willingness to please. On the other side of this passive woman is the wife who dominates her spouse and belittles him. She is the key to her husband's drive and failure who also threatens the very core of his manliness. At the instant the wife tries to liberate herself from her submissive role, she immediately becomes a domineering character, nasty and unkind. Who doesn't remember the childhood rhyme that concludes with "when she was good she was very, very good—and when she was bad she was horrid"?

Even at her worst, the *Mother/* (*Wife*) is heads above the role of the *Old Maid* , for the *Mother/Wife* has achieved a modicum of respectability by being married. *The Old Maid* in literature carries a negative connotation. She is the ultimate in rejection. She is almost always physically unattractive (what else? since a woman is valued for her beauty), and is seen by others as either crazy or pitiable. She is sometimes seen as a maiden aunt type where she falls in and out of the Mother (Virginal, of course) role of being a surrogate parent to some stranded niece or nephew. She most often reeks of frustrated motherhood and always of frustrated sexuality. The Old Maid is asexual at best. Because she didn't choose her role, she is usually characterized by extreme passivity. She may manifest great religiousity or piety, but not spirituality.

To what end these classifications? My students are adolescents perserverance, achievement, adventurousness, curiosity, strength, heroism, imagination and mobility. The few qualities most often alloted to the girls are confining ones: passivity, incompetence, fearfulness, docility and dependence. The girls are pictured as compliant and altruistic to a fault—a good audience for men's work. The study shows that the girls are usually drawn as smaller, stunted almost, which feeds directly into the confining nature of a woman's role. The biggest fault seems to be the general lack of selfhood that is expressed by these girls/women. "The omission of issues of conscience for females reinforces Freud's stereotypes of women as creatures who have underdeveloped egos." [3] The subliminal message in these primers is that girls barely exist as real people while boys are multidimensional. How can this conception of male/female not effect the social relationships of all human beings?

The stereotypes of women's roles in more literary works are often preceded by a view of woman and the traits, more generalized, which she embodies. In Mary Ellmann's *Thinking About Women* , the author speaks of certain characteristics associated with women that help form the archetype of what role a female character may take in a literary work. These elements of "womanhood" greatly reduce the possibility of role development for the female character. Ellmann describes the way women are seen as *formless* —i.e. a soft body is a soft mind. This can only lead one to believe that a woman's intellect is inferior to the male's clarity and precision of thought. Ellmann writes of women as *passive* , as unable to move to action, in direct opposition to a man's activity and agression. Women are also described in terms of *instability* , the hysterical female. *Piety* is another "attribute" so characteristic of women's stereotypes . This idea of piety can be seen

over and over again in the characters women so often portray in literature, as in the Virgin or the Mother. Ellmann also speaks of the *spirituality* of women—the way women ennoble their men. This ennobling of men comes through curiously in not only a spiritual way, but also when the woman is seen as a seductress or goddess. The two traits that most define the role of women in literature for me, and to which Ellmann so eloquently speaks are *confinement* and *compliancy* . Confinement can be seen as the extreme opposite of what is strictly masculine in literature—range of character. Confinement allows women to "thrive" in innocence, purity and seclusion—in smallness. The woman who comes to life in the kitchen is symbolic of the narrowness of women's roles. The dullness implicit in the limits of women characters can only lead to tedium for the character and the reader. *Compliancy* in women takes various forms according to Ellmann. Women, are compliant as submissive daughters and wives; as mothers or whores—they may all share the same sense of submission. These broad categories that Ellmann reveals for us are precursors for the more formalized literary stereotypes that we will begin to examine. [4]

The list of stereotypes of women's roles in literature may include many sub-categories with exotic names. Yet, the most oftrecurring are the most basic. Rarely are the stereotypes heroic. Women have somehow been excluded from "the real stuff" that makes heroes tick. As Carol Pearson and Katherine Pope state in *Who am I This Time* ?: *Female Portraits in British and American Literature* ,

> Patriarchal society views women
>
> essentially as supporting characters
>
> in the drama of life. Men change the
>
> world, and women help them. This
>
> assumption has led to an inaccurate
>
> literary terminology and criticism. [5]

The authors point out that although male and female archetypes in literature (pre-heroes, if you will), start off at the same point, very important particulars preclude similar resolutions. These details that influence character development are often caused by the divergent roles and opportunities afforded to the sexes. The roles of women in literature may be seen as cages—small and unnaturally restricting. And as birds in cages, if one flaps her wings too long and hard against the steel bars, the wings will break. Few women characters are given the strength or courage to resist these limits. Women are kept innocent and ignorant, are protected from all that may threaten the sanctity and purity of what the world (male), wants a women to be. Anything that punctures the woman's stereotype also invades the male's sacred territory. If a woman is not what she is supposed to be—what then, must a man do to to keep up with her? Since women are prevented from being heroes, it is only fitting that men will overdo their own heroic role. A woman is seen as eternally waiting to be saved, constantly dependent, a victim, usually in the name of love.

The list of female stereotypes and sub-types is long and varied on the surface, but it can be reduced to a basic core group. Whether the "innocent ingenue" is thusly named or called a "modest maiden," she is sure to be an outshoot of *The Virgin* . "Temptress," "goddess" or "seductress," she's still born of *The Whore/Fallen Woman* . Be she a "schoolmarm" or "spinster," she's still kin to the *Old Maid* . It is interesting to note just where these roles overlap. The Virgin tempted by earthy delights (man), can quickly become the Whore. It is

also curious that the stereotypes for females appear as diametrically opposed pairs—virgin/whore, saint/devil, mom/old maid. There is no netherland term—thus, no room to err. In *Images of Women in Literature* by Mary Anne Ferguson, the author speaks of several stereotypes: the mother, the wife, the mistress/seductress, the sex-object, the old maid, the educated woman, and the lady. She goes on to delineate and breakdown these terms to include the submissive wife, the dominating wife and even the new-form—the liberated woman. [6] I have chosen to explore the following stereotypes in this unit due to their prevalance in literature and to their appeal to the students. These are *the Virgin* , *the SeductressGoddess* , *the Mother* (*Wife*) and *the Old Maid* .

The Virgin , called "the good angel" in Pope and Pearson's *The Female Hero in American and British Literature* , is always chaste, innocent and ignorant of wordly things. This naturally imposes strict limits on her mobility, knowledge and curiosity. She is passive and worshipped. The role of Virgin when it spills into the Mother role is life giving. The Virgin stereotype allows the female to always remain a girl, to never have to acknowledge her sexuality. She has the ability, due to her proximity to saintliness, to cleanse, heal and save. Though she possess not the sensuality of carnal knowledge, men adore her. As Ferguson notes, she brings life and she nurtures it. She is somewhat like Little Orphan Annie who never grows up, whose fairness and sweetness are revered by all. She is safe.

When the Virgin type fails in her innocence, she may well fall into the next stereotype, *the Seductress/Goddess* or *Fallen Woman* . The fallen or ruined woman may or may not be exactly the *Seductre* ss *Goddess* type. She may have fallen prey to the power of some man. Her culpability may be resolved if in fact she was of virtuous character or virginal.

> Sexual transgression loses its
>
> overwhelming character as a wrong or a
>
> mistake when the persons have virtues
>
> of a compelling sort or spirtual
>
> goodness, or the grandeur of
>
> goodness. [7]

However, if she "asked for" the betrayal, if she is seen to have caused the man to fall to her beauty, then she is in fact seen as evil, as the perpertrator of the transgression. In fact,

> Novelists are often rather hard on
>
> those seduced and betrayed girls who
>
> are bereft of heroic quality; without
>
> a transcendent purity of some degree
>
> to free them from rebuke and
>
> condescension, the girls choke in a

tangle of weakness, sexuality, vanity,

illusion, irresolution. [8]

Of course, the *Seductress-Goddess* is the opposite of the *Virgin* . The *Seductress-Goddess* takes life away, revels in men's weakness at the same time that she, through her great beauty and sensuality, of a Latin background. They are very resistent to break new ground where sexual stereotyping is concerned. The roles mentioned above are strictly adhered to in their lives. She who resists these roles in life, or literature, will be heavily chastised either through alienation or rejection. The stereotype of male and female in the Latin world is even more heavily demarcated. Therefore, the work of recognizing these archetypes, acknowledging their inherent weaknesses and crushing them, is a monumental task. What I propose to do here is to point out these classic modes and put certain literary texts to the test in order to understand the pervasiveness of these stereotypes in literature. After lenghty discussion and analysis of these aforementioned stereotypes, certain poems, short stories or excerpts from longer works will be presented for study. Because the majority of my students are Spanish-speaking, I am selecting the literary texts from among several Spanish language writers. Since many of my students also read in English, the sample and some suggested readings will be in translation. This will make the unit easily usable by the monolingual teacher. For example, Alfonsina Storni, an Argentine poet, writes expressively in "It May Be"of her mother's longing to be free and reveals much about the servitude of Latin women, to their homes, their families, their church. In one poem she admits that she's much superior to most of the men who surround her, yet she recognizes that physically, as a woman, she is man's slave, clay to be molded. On the other side of Latin America in Chile, Gabriela Mistral writes in vivid metaphors of love, birth and pregnancy, revealing a Nobel prize poet totally frustrated by her lack of motherhood.

One hopes that by learning about stereotypes and seeing them in very concrete form, students will be encouraged to understand the ludicrousness of restricting women (and ultimately men also) to narrow roles, both in literary forms and in life. By letting down the barriers to girls, the boys will also be set free. Perhaps through the use of literary forms, the students will be less threatened or intimidated than if their personal styles were questioned or attacked. It is hoped that through the exposure to these sexist themes and forms in literature, the student's sensibilities will be awakened to other ways of being and viewing the world. Literature makes it easier because,

Literature both reflects and helps to

create reality. It is through their

preservation in works of art that we

know what the stereotypes and

archetypes have been and are; in turn,

knowing the images influences our view

of reality and even our behavior. [10]

Outline of Outstanding Traits of Female Stereotypes

While certain characteristics prevail in most of the literary stereotypes of women: formlessness, passivity, subordination, selflessness, narrowness of character, etc., the following outline wil help to further identify the archetypes.

I. *The Virgin* is . . .
A. pure in thought, word and deed
B. chaste
C. angelic
D. innocent
1. untouched
2. ignorant of wordly life
E. passive
F. worshipped in a spiritual way
G. religious/pious/spiritual
H. comforting/healing
I. life-giving
J. asexual/nonsexual
Symbolically she may be described in terms of *lightness* , *clarity* , *whiteness* , *shapelessness* , with an *ethereal luminescence* .
II. *The Seductress/Goddess* is . . .
A. attractive
B. sexual/sensual—pleasure producing
C. exalted/adored by men in an earthy way
D. envied by other women
E. free of wifely-motherly qualities or tasks
F. powerful in a limited sense—can bring men to failure or also move them to great works
G. somewhat “evil” by nature of her sexuality
III. *The Mother/Wife* is . . .
This role may overlap with the *Virgin* in its “motherliness,” but is seen as more worldly, more “flesh and bones” than the Virgin.
A. When she is “good” she is . . .
1. submissive/totally dependent
2. supportive
3. life-producing/nurturing
4. comforting/healing
5. a workhorse
6. selfless/sacrificing
7. confined
8. kind/sweet
B. But when she is “bad”she is . . .
1. strict—the disciplinarian/punitive
2. domineering/dominating
3. a nag/shrew/witch-like
4. nasty/harsh
5. unattractive/matronly/dull/dowdy/not very sensual

6. driven (always behind her man or her children)

IV. *The Old Maid* is . . .

A. unattractive

B. asexual/sexually frustrated

C. ridiculed/pitied

D. cold/queer/weird (as viewed by others)

E. unhappy

F. nosey

G. alienated from “real” society

H. a frustrated mother, sometimes a surrogate parent

I. extremely passive—as she never chooses her role

J. a tragic figure

You Would Have Me White (Tu me quieres blanca)
by Alfonsina Storni, translated by Rachel Benson

You would have me white, I still don't know—
You want me to be foam, You seek to have me pure
You want me to be pearl. (God forgive you),
To be a lily chaste To have me chaste
Above all others . (God forgive you),
With subdued perfume. To have me snow white!
Closed corolla.

Flee to the woods;

Nor should a moonbeam Go to the mountain;
Have filtered in to me. . Wash out your mouth;
Nor may a daisy Live with the shepards;
Call herself my sister. . Touch the damp earth
You want me spotless. , With your hands;
You want me pure, Feed your body
You want me snow white. On bitter rice;
Drink from the rocks;
You who have held all Sleep upon frost;
goblets in your hand, Renew your tissues
Your lips stained purple With saltpeter and water;
With fruits and honey. Speak with the birds
You who at the banquet, And rise at dawn
Covered with vine leaves, And when your flesh
Neglected the meat Has altered
In feasting to Bacchus. And when you have put into it
You who dressed in red The soul
Sped to Ruin That you left entangled
In the black In bedrooms,
Gardens of envy. Then, my good man,
You may seek to have me white,
You who keep To have me pure,
Your skeleton intact— To have me chaste. [11]
By what miracles

Tú Me Quieres Blanca

Tú me quieres alba, No sé todav'a
Me quieres de espumas, Por cuales milagros,
Me quieres de nácar. Me pretendes blanca
Que sea azucena (Dios te lo perdone),

Sobre todas, casta.
De perfume tenue
Corola cerrada.
Ni un rayo de luna
Filtrado me haya.
Ni una margarita
Se diga mi hermana.
Tú me quieres nivea,
Tú me quieres blanca,
Tú me quieres alba.

Tú que hubiste todas
Las copas a mano,
De frutos y mieles
Los labios morados.
Tú que en el banquete
Cubierto de pampanos
Dejaste las carnes
Festejando a Baco.
Tú que en los jardines
Negros del Enga–o
Vestido de rojo
Corriste al Estrago.

Tú que el esqueleto
Conservas intacto
Me pretendes casta
(Dios te lo perdone),
¡Me pretendes alba!
Huye hacia los bosques;
Vete a la monta–a;
L'mpiate la boca;
Vive en las caba–as;
Toca con las manos
La tierra mojada;
Alimenta el cuerpo
Con ra'z amarga;
Bebe de las rocas;
Duerme sobre escarcha;
Renueva tejidos
Con salitre y agua;
Habla con los pájaros
Y lévate al alba,
Y cuando las carnes
Te sean tornadas,
Y cuando hayas puesto
En ellas el alma
Que por las alcobas
Se quedó enredada,
Entonces, buen hombre,
Preténdeme blanca,
Preténdeme nivea,
Preténdeme casta.

Suggested Lesson Plans for "You Would Have Me White"

This poem provides a very clear example in literature of what a woman feels her role should be, imposed by a male dominated society. She describes how she "should" be, how "he" would have her be; pure, chaste, ignorant of the real world. Through the use of "lily white" images, we understand the impossibility of such a constricting role. Man is described as partaking of all life's experiences, of action, of tasting the bitter and the sweet. The true feelings of the poet concerning these restrictions on her total being are revealed when whe declares that men, for all the "life" they have tasted, will never have the soul of a woman, can never confine the soul of a woman to such smallness. Men have lost their soul in all their activity.

This poem offers a great many possibilities for study. The poem should be read aloud several times by teacher and students. The first readings should be for totality and sound. Thereafter, it may be read for meaning. Thinking in terms of the previous outline and discussion of how women are portrayed in literature and what characteristics the stereotypes entail, the following questions/exercises are designed to focus on the details of this poem.

STANZA ONE

1. What do the grammatical constructions, “You *would have* me . . .” and “you *want* me . . .” imply as to power and domination? What grammatical change could you make to change the tone and meaning? (Ex. You wish I were white).
2. What do the words *white* , *foam* , *pearl* , *lily* all have in common? What do they bring to mind in terms of color, form, strength and purity? Change the words *foam* , *pearl* and *lily* and see if the poem changes. Come up with a list of symbolically similar adjectives and nouns for this stanza (i.e. angels, snow).
3. What word best encompasses how “he” wants “her” to be? (chaste)
4. Why does the poet describe the perfume as *subdued* ? How does this change the very nature of perfume?
5. What does the poet evoke with the use of *closed* for *corolla* ? Take out *subdued* and *closed* and read the poem again. Does the meaning of this stanza change? How?

STANZA TWO

1. What does *moonbeam* bring to the total picture of purity? Why *moonbeam* and not *sunlight* ?
2. How does the contrast between *daisy* in this stanza and *lily* in stanza one relate to women’s purity? Which flower is more pure, perfect? Why?
3. How does *spotless* make you feel? What other words could you put in place of *spotless?*
4. Again, the “you want me . . .” structure, this time *pure* . What must one do to remain pure? (i.e. remain ignorant, innocent, hidden, helpless). Make a list of words you could put in for *pure* (i.e. untouched, clean, etc.)
5. “Snow white” here may only evoke a feeling of purity, maybe of coldness. Could it not also be associated with the fairy tale figure—a fantasy, myth-like creature? How would that relate to a woman’s role?

STANZA THREE

1. Who is *you* here?
2. What does the contrast between the whiteness and colorlessness of the woman in the previous

stanzas and the use here of *stained purple* , *fruits* , *red* , *black* describing man's life tell us about the difference between men's and women's lives? Why the use of red/black?
3. What do the images of *feasting* , *eating* , *drinking* and *banquets* provoke? (i.e. sensuality, ripeness, lust)
4. What does Storni mean by *all goblets* here? Does she imply that man has partaken of all of life?
5. What are the *Gardens of Envy* ? Who envies what, or whom?

STANZA FOUR

1. What does the poet mean by keeping "Your skeleton intact"?
2. What is the overwhelming tone implicit with the use of "God forgive you"? (i.e. cynicism, anger, irony)

STANZA FIVE

1. List the action words in this stanza. (Flee, go, wash, live, touch, feed, drink, sleep, renews, speak, rise) Who is acting here? How do these actions contrast with the inactivity that man so wants for woman?

Change all these action verbs to see what you can create with new words. Why so much variety in these lines? Does this possibly relate to the wide range of actions available to man?
2. What words imply that man's life may not be all smooth, innocent pleasure? (i.e. *damp* , *bitter* , *rocks* , *frost*)
3. What is *saltpeter* ? Why does the poet use it in this context?
4. Why will the man's flesh alter?
5. What does this last stanza tell us about how the poet truly regards men and women? With all of man's full life, does he have the soul that a woman has? What does the author mean with this last stanza? Where has he left his soul?

How do you feel about this poem? Does this poem reflect today's men and women/girls and boys? Why or why not?

Other Exercises

These general questions/exercises may be applied to any text where a female stereotype is to be studied. They may also be used as a pre-test and post-test to gauge if any attitudes about women and women's roles in literature have been altered. This unit pretends to cast light on the prevailing nature and pernicousness of the narrow limits placed on girls/women in literature and life. It is thus hoped that some changes in attitude among students will occur.

1. What kind of books do you like to read?
2. How are the girl characters treated in these books? the boy characters?
3.What is your idea of a girl? woman?
4. What things can a girl do that a boy cannot do? What things can a boy do that a girl cannot do? Why?
5. What jobs/professions can a man choose that a woman cannot choose? Why?
6. What three qualities do you most admire in a woman? in a man?
7. What are the advantages of being a girl/woman today?
   Disadvantages? What are the advantages and disadvantages of being a boy/man?
8. Would you choose to be the other sex? Why or why not?

The following questions may be asked about any chosen text to determine what stereotype the woman characer may fit :

1. Is the main character a man or a woman?
2. Is the author a man or a woman? Can you tell from an initial reading? How?
3. How is the woman character described?
4. What is the range of activity allowed the female character? the male character? Is the woman active or passive?
5. What are some of the characteristics of this character? Is she warm, dependent, seductive, nasty, etc.?
6. What symbols or images are used to describe her?
7. How do these images correspond to her personality? to the message of the text?
8. Does she fit easily into any of the major stereotypes of women?— *The Virgin* , *Mother* , *Seductress* , *Old Maid* ?
9. Is she rebelling from or adhering to the stereotype?

Another way of treating a chosen text may be as follows :

1. Give out the Outline of Outstanding Traits of Female Stereotypes provided herein.
2. Read the text.
3. Based on an initial reading, what is the students' first impression of the female character? Does she readily fit into a category?
4. Students list traits of this character that help place her into one of the stereotypes (i.e. whiteness, purity, may lead her to the *Virgin* type).
5. What are some of the symbols or figurative language employed to describe this character? (i.e. lilies, moonlight, snow, etc.)
6. Is she doesn't easily fit into one of the stereotypes, what could you call her? Students may invent a new name for her type.

Additional exercises may include :

1. Students draw up a list of additional stereotypes and sub-types (i.e. "Shrinking Violet", "Libber")
2. Students develop an outline of traits and symbols that can be used to define these new types.
3. Students draw up a list of male stereotypes in life and literature with appropriate descriptions (i.e. male macho: tough, roughly-hewn) Describe these male stereotypes in terms of their "ideal" women.
4. A list of traits and descriptive terms may be discussed while students try to guess what the stereotype is.

Resources for Students and Teachers

Storni's poem included here is only one good example of stereotypes in literature. I am including here a list of several Spanish language writers, men and women, with titles or works that may be used for the study of stereotypes of women. The previous exercises may be applied to any of these short texts. It is hoped that this kind of re-reading could take place with any text in any language. This list will take the form of a student bibliography or teacher resource bibliography.

1. Agustini, Delmira (Uruguay)

Suggested readings may be found in *Poesias Completas* Buenos Aires: Editorial Losada, S.A. 1944.

See the following poems:

“Visión”

“Fiera de Amor”

“El Cisne”

“Desde Lejos”

“Intima”

“Mis Amores”

“Explosión”

“La Copa del Amor”

“Serpentina”

“Boca a Boca”

Erotic, sensual poetry with woman as aggressive and seductive.

2. Bombal, Mar’a Luisa (Chile)

Excerpts may be taken from the following book that the author wrote in English:

House of Mist New York: Farrar, Straus and Co., 1947.

Protagonist is totally dependent and subjected to fantasy and dreams of love.

3. Catá, Alfonso Hernández (Cuba)

Cuentos La Habana: Insituto de Literatura y Linguistica Academia de Ciencias de Cuba, 1966.

Two very good short stories in this collection are:

“Dia del Sol”—A womam who can only live if she’s abused and victimized.

“La Culpable”—Woman brings fishing party to tragedy by her seductive but natural being.

4. Ibarbourou, Juana de (Uruguay)

Amtolog’a Poética Santiago de Chile: Zig Zag, S.A., 1940.

Ibarbourou was a happily married womam whose poetry reflects a sensual, erotic, intuitive, natural liberated woman.

See:

“El Fuerte Lazo”

“La Inquietud Fugaz”

“Lacer’a”

“Timonel de Mi Sue–o”

Other poems by Ibarbourou may be found in:

A *ntolog’a* (*Poes’a y Prosa 1918-1971). Buenos Aires* : *Editorial Losada* , *S* . *A* ., 1853.

See the following poems:

“Pasión”

“Toilette Suprema”

“Ofrenda”

(The last two deal with women as love objects.)

See the following prose:

“El Gesto M’o”—the smallness of women’s roles.

“Alma de llama”—passion

“Ensueno”—small woman/big man.

“La Tentación”

“La Luna”

“Canciones de Luna”

“La Dulce Palabra”

(These last four deal with a mother frustrated in her role who loves her child but wants more from life.)

“Lunita”—mother/fantasy

“Diario de Una Joven Madre”

“La Ni–a y el Pr’ncipe y el Café con Leche”

5. Mistral, Gabriela (Godoy-Alcayaga, Lucila)(Chile)

Gabriela’s poetry (and prose) speaks most often of her love for children—her maternal feelings. Her reason for existence was maternity, both material and spiritual, though she never had children and raised a nephew who

died young. She writes of solitude and love.

The following material is suggested:

Selected Poems of Gabriela Mistral (*translated and edited by Dorise Dana*). Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1961. English/Spanish edition—a great resource.

Especially see:

“La Espera”/“The Useless Wait”

“Balada”/“Ballad”

“Volverlo a Ver”/“To See Him Again”

“Dios lo Quiere”/“God Wills It”

“La Oración de la Maestra”/“The Teacher’s Prayer”

“Meciendo”/“Rocking”

“La Madre Triste”/“The Sad Mother”

“Apegado a M’”/“Close to Me”

“Ni–o Mexicano”/“Mexican Child”

“Todas Ibamos a Ser Reinas”/“We Were All to be Queens”

“La Flor del Aire”/“The Flower of the Air”

“La Fervorosa”/“The Fervent Woman”

“La Granjera”/“The Woman Granger”

“Mujer de Prisionero”/“The Prisoner’s Wife”

“La Liana”/“The Liana”

“Ayudadores”/“The Helpers”

Other books by Mistral that can be used as resources are:

Poes’as Completas . Madrid: Aguilar, S.A., 1966.

Includes her works from *Desolación* , *Ternura* , *Tala* and *Lagar* , I. (Spanish)

Poemas de las Madres . Santiego de Chile: Cuadernos del Pacifico, 1950.

Beautifully illustrated poems for motherhood (Spanish).

Todas Ibamos a Ser Reinas . Chile: Empresa Editora Nacional Quimantu Ltd., 1971 (Spanish).

6. Neruda Pablo and Cesar Vallejo (Chile and Peru)

Neruda and Vallejo : *Selected Poems* . Edited by Bobert Bly. Boston: Beacon Press (Bilingual Edition).

Neruda from *Veinte Poemas de Amor y Una Cancion* , See: “Body of a woman, white hills, white thighs”

Vallejo , see:.

“La Pagana”/“Pagan Woman”—Evil, lusty woman.

“Los Pasos Lejanos”/“The Distant Footsteps”—selfless, sacrificing mother.

“El Buen Sentido”/“The Right Meaning”—mother.

Both Vallejo and Neruda may be found in other texts. This edition is easy to use in its bilingual form. Another useful text in English that contains both Vallejo and Meruda (among others) is:

Monegal, Emir Rodr’guez (ed.). *The Borzoi Anthology of Latin American Literature* . New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1977.

7. Rojas, Manuel. (Chile)

Antolog’a Autobiográfica . Chile: Empresa Ercilla, S.A., 1962.

See the story “El Vaso de Leche”—woman as nurturer, mother—clear images.

8. Storni, Alfonsina (Argentina).

The following texts may be used:

Obras Completas I *Poes’as* . Buenos Aires: SELA, 1976. Spanish—collection of Storni’s poetry.

Alfonsina Storni by Sonia Jones. Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1979.

English text that speaks about Storni’s life and work including several poems in Spanish. Good for background material.

It is obvious that these are not the only writers in Latin America, nor are they the only ones who address women and their roles in their works. Nor are these the only books available that contain these writers. I have added here some additional names that the teacher can research to introduce women who write or have written in Spanish.

Sor Juana Ines de la Cruz—Mexico (1651-1695). Very erudite, important woman of letters.

A discussion of the following Latin American novelists can be found in:

Fox-Lockert, Lucia. *Women Novelists in Spain and Spanish America* . New Jersey and London: The Scarecrow Press, Inc., 1979.

Gertrudis Gomez de Avellaneda Cuba (1814).

Clorinda Matto de Turner Peru (1852).

Mercedes Cabello de Carbonera Peru (1845).

Teresa de Parra Venezuela (1890).

Silvina Bullrich Argentina (1915).

Clara Silva Uruguay (1908).

Marta Brunet Chile (1897).

Rosario Castellanos Mexico (1925).

Beatriz Guido Argnetina (1924).

Elena Garro Mexico (1917).

Luisa Josefina Hernández Mexico (1917).

Elena Poniatowska Mexico.

For more information on Latin American women (including women

writers) see “Ms.” magazine, May 1982.

NOTES

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1. Susan Koppelman Cornillon, “The Fiction of Fiction,” in *Images of Women in Fiction* : *Feminist Perspectives* (Bowling Green, Ohio: Bowling Green University Press, 1972), p. 113.
2. Women on Words and Images (group), *Dick and Jane as Victims: Sex Stereotyping in Children’s Readers* , (Princetom, N.J., 1972), p. 6.
3. Ibid., p. 20.
4. Mary Ellmann, *Thinking About Women* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1968), pp. 55-145.
5. Carol Pearson and Katherine Pope, *Who am I This Time? (Female Portraits in British and American Literature)* (New York: McGraw Hill, 1976).
6. Mary Anne Ferguson, *Images of Women in Literature* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1973), pp. 5-11.
7. Elizabeth Hardwick, *Seduction and Betrayal* (New York: Random House, 1970), p. 182.
8. Ibid., p. 186.
9. Women on Words and Images, p. 34.
10. Ferguson, p. 5.
11. Alfonsina Storni, “you Would Have Me White”/“Tu Me Quieres Blanca” in *Nine Latin American Poets* (*A Verse Translation*), (New York: Las Americas Publishing Co., 1968), pp. 254-257.

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Appignanesi, Lisa. *Femininity and the Creative Imagination: A Study of Henry James , Robery Musil , and Marcel Proust* . London: Vision Press Limited, 1973. Introduction on "Femininity: Definitions and Perspectives" is useful for clarifying terms.

Benson, Rachel. *Nine Latin American Poets (A Verse Translation),* New York: Las Americas Publishing Co., 1968. Nine well-knowm poets in a bilingual version. Good for classrooms.

Cornillon, Susan Koppelman. *Images of Women in Fiction* : *Feminist Perspectives* . Bowling Green, Ohio: Bowling Green University Press, 1972. Essays about women and writing that look to literature for what women are or may be.

Ellmann, Mary, *Thinking About Women* . New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1968. Original and at times humorous study of how the concept of female is defined in literature. Good general reading.

Fergusom, Mary Anne, *Images of Women in Literature* . Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1973. A great selection of stories by men and women arranged around certain female stereotypes as a means of illustrating these types. Good stories.

Fetterly, Judith. *The Resisting Reader: A Feminist Approach to American Fiction* . Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1978. Scholarly look at several male writers and the images of women inherent in their writings—James, Fitzgerald, Hemingway, Mailer, etc.

Fox-Lockert, Lucia. *Women Novelists in Spain and Spanish America* . New Jersey and London: The Scarecrow Press, Inc., 1979. Good book for background material on various known and unknown women writers in the Spanish-speaking world. Each author has one central work studied.

Hahner, June. *Women in Latin American History: Their Lives and Views* . Los Angeles: UCLA Latin American Center Publications, 1976. Focus on several important but perhaps unknow women and their impact of history

politics literature. Good for students.

Hardwick, Elizabeth, *Seduction and Betrayal* . New York: Random House, 1970. Insightful and personal essays om women writers and writers' women.

McKendrick, Melveena. *Women and Society in the Spanish Drama of the Golden Age* : *A Study of the "Mujer Varonil"* . Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1974. Especiallly useful for those interested in the Golden Age of Spain and what the world of women was like then.

Pearson, Carol and Katherine Pope. *The Female Hero in American and British Literature* . New York/London: R.R. Bowker Co., 1981. Ambitious study of the doings and undoings of female literary heroes. Extensive bibliography of works by and about women.

Pearson, Carol and Katherime Pope. *Who am I This Time? (Female Portraits in British and American Literature)* . New York: McGraw Hill. A novel look at women's changing and unchanging roles in literary works.

Showalter, Elaine. *A Literature of Their Own: British Women Novelists from Bronte to Lessing* . Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1977. Some original observations—focus on British writers.

Spacks, Patricia Meyer. *The Female Imagination* . New York: Alfred Knopf, 1975. Excellent study of power/passivity, woman as artist. Personal style—good reading.

Women on Words and Images (group), *Dick and Jane as Victims* : *Sex Stereotyping in Children's Readers* . Princeton, N.J., 1972. Fascinating study that demonstrates the sexism inherent in most schoolbooks.