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The Image of the Virgin in Gertrudis Gómez de Avellaneda's *Sab* (1841) and Carolina Coronado's *Poesías* (1843) as a Configuration of Female Literary and Social Independence

by

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## Introduction

In 19th-century Spain and Cuba it became increasingly difficult to maintain traditional ideologies about women. As Romanticism spread in the 19th-century, its literature included archetypes that situated women in one of two extremes: *la virgen* (the virgin) or *la celestina* (the procuress) the archetypes suggest that women either correspond to sexual and intellectual purity or to the less acceptable woman, the procuress. The categorization of women based on cultural and social archetypes is the premise of this analysis of the works of Gertrudis Gómez de Avellaneda and Carolina Coronado. These two women authors would leave an impactful legacy for future women writers.

This analysis will look at two different texts to exhibit how these two women authors attempted to change the idea of the woman as the “other sex” as described by Simone de Beauvoir in her book *The Second Sex* (1949). The texts are *Sab* (1841) and *Poesías* (1843). Both *Sab* and two poems from *Poesías* illustrate how these authors wanted to express themselves through literature and critique the power structures manifested in 19th-century literary writing in Spain and Cuba. They also questioned the archetypes or traditional depictions of women as the “other.” This paper claims that the archetype of the virgin can be used to subvert and critique ideology and societal norms, such as in the case of the image of the *el ángel del hogar*, which posits that women should be domestically oriented. As well as *La perfecta casada*, which also maintained that a woman’s place is in the household. In *Sab* the author uses the naiveté of the main character Carlota to criticize the structure that forced her to accept and pursue the domestic marriage ideology. Similarly, in Carolina Coronado’s compilation of poems titled *Poesías*, the image of the virgin or descriptions of a virginal woman are used to praise or chastise her and

warn her of dangers. In this thesis, the chosen works will be analyzed to illustrate how traditional roles and archetype of the virgin are used to show the downfall of a main character through false ideology in order to critique the social structure that binds women into specific roles.

### **Construction of the female**

In her book *The Second Sex* Simone de Beauvoir argues that women are “... defined and differentiated with reference to man and not he with reference to her; she is the incidental, the inessential as opposed to the essential. He is the Subject, he is the Absolute—she is the Other” (xxii). Beauvoir reasons that women may often choose to stay as the “Other” due to the benefits, material rewards and stability. Beauvoir states that

To decline to be the Other, to refuse to be party to the deal—this would be for women to renounce all the advantages conferred upon them by their alliance with the superior caste. Man-the-sovereign will provide women-the-liege with material protection and will undertake the moral justification of her existence; thus she can evade at once both economic risk and the metaphysical risk of liberty in which ends and aims must be contrived without assistance. (xxvii)

Beauvoir argues that women face a dilemma for refusing to be the “Other”, and the consequence could be financially or morally disastrous. Instead, the woman is forced into accepting herself as the “other” in order to be secure in society. Furthermore, Beauvoir observes that the justification of women as the “other” is derived from various areas from mythical tales or biblical stories that posit women as the weaker sex (xxviii). Next, it is essential to understand the situation that women find themselves in, for their lived experience supersedes any biological designation as a “female” (38). As such, Beauvoir contends that the female experience derives from the lived

environment. For example, Beauvoir states that women feel that “the place the father holds in the family, the universal predominance of males, her own education-everything confirms her in her belief in masculine superiority” (43). Therefore, for a woman there is an ingrained notion that she was born to be the “other” when her male relationships show her that she is the “other”.

In her chapter titled “Patriarchal Times and Classical Antiquity” the author mentions some of the issues that women have faced. Private property would be an impactful development that would change how women were seen. As Beauvoir contends that a “woman was dethroned by the advent of private property, and her lot through the centuries has been bound up with private property: her history in large part is involved with that of the patrimony” (82). Beauvoir claims that women are inseparable from the concept of private property because they are often a victim of it. They are akin to property because they can be transferred to “others” as property especially through marriage (82). For example,

Through marriage woman is now no longer lent from one clan to another: she is torn up by the roots from the group into which she was born, and annexed by her husband’s group; he buys her as one buys a farm animal or a slave; he imposes his domestic divinities upon her; and the children born to her belong to the husband’s family. (82)

Beauvoir puts forward that women are like private property in that they have an owner, and she, like property, is transferable. She is ripped away from her former life, and then she is given to the husband (82). Another important aspect for the lived experience of women is that they are subjected to a higher moral code. Virginity and purity are essential to be a proper woman (83). Beauvoir states that “... when woman becomes man’s property, he wants her to be a virgin and he requires complete fidelity under threats of extreme penalties. It would be the worst

of crimes to risk giving inheritance rights to offspring begotten by some stranger;” (83). In this quote, we see the importance of virginity. Virginity is not only social, but also an economical drive. Therefore, virginity is a method of control, to ensure economic security. Virginity also manifests itself as both an aspiration and subjection for women. Beauvoir states that virginity is sought after because it is the new or untouched which entices men to pursue the unknown (154). Virginity is also very important as it has a connection with youth for if it is left untouched for too long it loses its appeal to the opposite sex and becomes a weight that holds a woman down (155). Beauvoir argues that “marriage is the destiny traditionally offered to women by society. It is still true that most women are married, or have been, or plan to be, or suffer from not being” (425). This marriage destiny implicates other aspects that women must adhere to, mainly the production of children and their upbringing. (426).

Also, it is important to note that certain ideas about women were not immune to social change and literary change. Such so that,

During the nineteenth century, however, middle-class conceptions became somewhat modified; there was an ardent effort to defend and preserve marriage; and, on the other hand, the progress of individualism made impossible the simple suppression of feminine claims; Saint-Simon, Fourier, George Sand, and all the romantics had too vigorously proclaimed the right to love. (437)

The 19th-century brought forth a different possibility for women. In this paper, we will look at 19th-century Spain. This quote suggests there was a conflict within Romantic ideologies and values and growing awareness of the position of women’s status as the “other”.

## **Historical Background**

In the time of 19th-Century Spain there was a rejection of previous literary movements, and instead an adoption of German Romantic themes which emphasized nationalism, imagination, emotion, etc. This newfound style was brought forth by Johann Nikolaus Böhl von Faber (Gies, 345). The Romantic style of writing was different from the previous Neo-classical structure of writing which emphasized a greater adherence to proper form (Flitter, 7). Neo-Classical compositions were also a fictionalized equalizer that strived for unification of Europeans in order to curb individual country patriotism and perception of cultural differences (Flitter,7).

Johann Nikolaus Böhl von Faber furthered ideas from A.W. Schlegel who was one of the first proponents of Romanticism in the 1800s (5-6). Schlegel argued that literature derives from the specific social context of its relative time period (6). Interestingly, A.W Schlegel also petitioned for a reemergence of older Spanish literary movement and works from previous Spanish writers (6). Johann Nikolaus Böhl von Faber would use some of the ideas by A.W. Schlegel to convince Spain's literary circles (6).

These ideas that Böhl was intending to present did not have a smooth transition into Spanish literature. There would be contestation about which literary structure and movement was superior until 1814 (7). However, around 1814 there was a shift in literature and the arts towards an aesthetic that would be come to be known as Romanticism. This is a pivotal year because it contains the successful war of independence, defeat of Napoleon in the Iberian Peninsula, popular rejection of French, and international influences, as well as an embrace of Spanish nationalism, culture, history, and tradition. That year was a turning point for literature, when a new literary movement would emerge that would take on the term "romancesco" (7). Also, it is important to note that the development of Romanticism was also due to a literary rivalry between

Böhl and Jose Joaquin de Mora, which would help develop Romanticism in Spain (9). This rivalry was largely founded on Böhl's defense of A.W. Schlegel who promoted famed Spanish authors such as Lope de Vega and others (6). But, followers of the neo-classical movement were skeptical of writers such as Lope de Vega who did not use certain classical ideas in their writing (6). This rebuke from neo-classicists would be difficult to overcome. Because "In the later eighteenth-century, neo-Classicism had enjoyed official support at the very highest level—from the Conde de Aranda and from Charles III himself—dominating 'approved' literary circles and constituting the only corpus of systematic literary doctrine available to writers" (7). This would make Böhl's endeavor seem to be misguided as neo-classicism was favored by the elite, yet he was fortunate enough to succeed at the end with the adoption of his ideas into Spanish literary circles due in part to perfect timing and determination.

The following is an explanation of how Böhl developed Romanticism in Spain, highlighting his determination. First Böhl explained that Spain had values such as honor, love etc. in their poetry which exemplified their superiority for Romanticism (10). The rivalry between Mora and Böhl eventually expanded itself to the general public (12). Böhl was seen to have won the argument in part based on a pamphlet that he wrote titled *Pasatiempo Critico* which outlined important themes, especially nationalism (13). Böhl was then inspired by Johann Gottfried Herder, who was trying to revive German literary texts (14). This would inspire Böhl, who would try to do the same but with Spanish literature. He contended that Spanish literature should return to the days of the past, and values that had been present in earlier times (15). It is interesting to note that due to Böhl's influences and his own influence on the Romantic literary movement, the movement would adopt non-liberal ideals (17). Böhl was also criticized for misinterpreting the Romantic character, which would, to some, only emerge until around 1833



(17). Böhl is an important figure in the initiation of the idea of Spanish Romanticism, but there were some connections that he made, such as Romanticism and religion, which were disputed later (18). Nevertheless, Böhl is an important figure for Spanish Romanticism and its development as a new literary movement.

### **Gendered Language**

In their book titled “Culture and Gender in Nineteenth-Century Spain,” Lou Charnon-Deutsch and Jo Labanyi compiled essays from various authors to question the construction of gender (Deutsch, 4). Instead of understanding gender on a general level, the argument among these essays is that gender is created by various influences such as language, criticism, and character development in novels, prose, poems other literary genres and cultural products. (Deutsch, 4-6). First, an important distinction that is made about gender are the words used to differentiate a woman writer and a man writer in the grammatical structure of the Spanish language.

In the chapter titled “Gender and Language: The Womanly Woman and Manly Writing” Maryellen Bieder finds that a linguistic designation can identify authors as either feminine or masculine based upon word ending (Deutsch, 98). As the author states, this differentiation in language also affects the reception of that writing negatively (Deutsch, 98). The author goes on to state that “since masculine cultural forms constitute the norm, the work of a female *literata* or *poetisa* represents that-which-is-not-the-norm, the otherness of non-male writing” (Deutsch, 98). This idea of “otherness” corresponds to the ideas of Simone de Beauvoir and the female as the “other” to her male counterpart. Moreover, women utilize a writing style called *varonil*, which is not quite masculine nor feminine (Deutsch, 99). In doing so, they may counteract being the “other”. However, writing as the male, according to the author, can be beneficial but also lead to

prejudice because they are entering uncharted territory for women (Deutsch, 99). The author also states that “women who do not write ‘like a woman’ breach the conventions of genre and language and are therefore suspected of not conforming to their proper biological role. To stray from the strict allegiance between socio-sexual gender and writing is to open oneself up to public exposure as not-a-woman” (Deutsch, 99). This was seen to be a dangerous precedent that was being set in the 19th-century and was mediated through different methods such as criticism of the writer along the lines of gender rather than according to their work. This linguistic categorization meant something different based upon the group of people who were scrutinizing the writer from the standpoint of the man: the woman writer was as either a failure or a success (Deutsch, 30). In the chapter titled “Autobiography as Insult” Noel Valis asserts that “In other words, to be a poetess was equivalent to being a woman; and the *poetisa*/ female, although a superior being, is identified with Nature, that is with everything other than Culture...” (Valis, 31). For example, “Thus Carolina Coronado as a poetess, by implication, lacks talent, because she is not a thinking, consciously motivated being. She is pure emotivity” (Deutsch, 31). This quote remarks upon one of the authors that will be analyzed. As this paper will demonstrate, Carolina Coronado’s writing is based upon more than emotion and is hidden in imagery and metaphors. Women are remarked as lacking as proper writers. In that same chapter the author gives an example from a text titled “A una poetisa”, which essentially states that a poetisa/ poetess can potentially emasculate her husband because she is subverting the traditional roles accorded to her (Valis, 31). Therefore, to be a poetess is a dangerous proposition entailing rejection and criticism. In summary, women who wrote during the 19th-century were scrutinized by their gender.

## **Women’s Influence**

Grammatical structures in Spanish allowing for a separation between the writers based upon their gender creates an atmosphere where “a woman is defined by her sexual difference, not by her person; and once more, professional identity as a writer is denied her” (Deutsch, 32). This excerpt is useful because it serves to reveal how, during this time period of the 19th-century, to be a woman writer was to be judged by one’s sex and not on their merits as an author, and to be seen as posing a danger to society by subverting the traditional positions that women occupied.

Another important facet of the subjugation of women to stereotypes based upon her gender derives from images such as “el ángel del hogar,” which viewed women as domestic angels occupying the home, as in the book *La perfecta casada* (1583) by one of Spain’s most revered canonized writers, Fray Luis de León which relays the same message. In her chapter, author Susan Kirkpatrick states that women writers were perceived as potentially alarming for the social norms of the time but would ironically become beneficial to society. For example, it is stated that during this time books began to be marketed at a faster pace than before (Deutsch, 74-75). But,

the fear that the novelesque might contaminate the daily lives of women was exacerbated by the seductive strategies through which the serial novel secured buyers for its proliferating instalments: exalted romantic passions, melodramatic dilemmas, sensational plots played upon the erotic fantasies of its readers. (75)

This fear was, as Kirkpatrick states, a method that would be used by women who wanted to begin writing during this time to contradict the “novelesque” (Deutsch, 75). For example, Cecilia Böhl de Faber declared that her literary works were meant to contradict the “novelesque” (Deutsch, 75). Kirkpatrick notes that a contemporary of the time, Sinués de Marco, suggested women should read literary works produced by women who, like Cecilia Böhl de Faber, wrote to

enforce the proper social norms for women (Deutsch, 75). It should be noted that Cecilia Böhl de Faber published under the male pseudonym Fernán Caballero. This would prove to be insufficient for certain women writers who began to explore different ideas that were important to women such as their oppression (Deutsch, 76). The two authors being analyzed in this paper, Carolina Coronado and Gertrudis Gómez de Avellaneda, would also explore such ideas. Thus, allowing women to write in order to contradict the novelesque opened the door for some women writers to explore other ideas concerning women.

### **The authors**

Carolina Coronado and Gertrudis Gómez de Avellaneda are both extraordinary women. They wrote during a period that largely rejected women authors or worked to categorize them so as not to be obtrusive. Both authors would write prose and poems that would demonstrate both their talent for writing as well as their rejection of the cultural and social norms of the era during which they wrote and lived.

First, Carolina Coronado would grow to be revered as an important writer during the 19<sup>th</sup>-century (Kirkpatrick, 62). Her family life and educational instruction would cause her grief. First, her family was punished for their non-traditional opinions, which were compassionate to liberal ideas which would eventually influence Carolina Coronado later in life (Kirkpatrick, 63). Early on, she would have to overcome obstacles in her personal life, some of which would influence her as a writer as well. Her education would become one of her greatest resentments since she claimed that it limited her ability to write. Her education was not in a classroom instead she received her education privately (Kirkpatrick, 68). Moreover, the education that she received was not comprehensive, instead it focused on reading some very limited and selective literature (Kirkpatrick, 68). Therefore, she would rely on herself to make up for her unequal education.

This would consist of teaching herself two different romance languages as well as seeking male mentors that could help her catch up on the education that was needed for someone who wanted to write in the Romantic style (Kirkpatrick, 68-70).

In summary, her education was not sufficient for someone who wanted to be a writer, yet Coronado was able to fill in the gaps in her education by herself. She was not deterred by her lack of formalized education. Furthermore, one of the most important relationships she would have would be with Juan Eugenio Hartzenbusch, who she would use as a confidant for her writing, frustrations, and education (Kirkpatrick, 62). Their correspondences show the confidence that she had with him. For example, in one instance in their correspondences, she wrote to him about her frustrations with mothers, and how they deterred daughters from reading because it had not be permissible to them (Kirkpatrick, 67). In another correspondence, she wrote to Hartzenbusch to explain how her attempt to write based upon a certain style caused her grief because she struggled to understand how to compose the structure needed for this type of text (Kirkpatrick, 69-70). These correspondences illuminate the confidence Coronado had with him, and also demonstrating her rebellious opinions on her upbringing.

The second author whose work will be analyzed is Gertrudis Gómez de Avellaneda. Her life and literary works would leave her as an important figure amongst the very few women writers during this time. Her own life would be filled with unique experiences. Her life, unlike Carolina Coronado's, was not as fraught with early tragedies. Instead, her father was a ranked officer who at one point was given a post as a commander (Davies, 3). Also, her mother was part of an important family in the area of Puerto Príncipe, Cuba (Davies, 3). Born into a wealthy family, she also had the privilege of being waited upon by slaves and her young life was filled with the time and ability to devote herself to reading (Davies, 4). Unlike Coronado, her education

would consist of reading poetry and being exposed to a well-structured education (Davies, 4). For example, “her indulgent mother and doting grandfather supplied the precocious young Gertrudis with what she wanted, namely tutors (the Cuban poet José Maria Heredia among them) and books” (Kirkpatrick, 134). This is in direct contrast to the education that Carolina Coronado would receive and torment her. Finally, Gómez de Avellaneda’s life would take a rapid change with the death of her father, and her mother’s subsequent remarriage, which would lead her from her native Cuba to Spain (Davies 4-5). She also greatly displeased her family with a rejection of a prominent suitor, which would leave her less financially stable as it would have her excluded from her grandfather’s will (Davies, 5). Her life may have begun privileged and idyllic but would shift to a more tragic life; yet this created an author who would challenge preconceived notions of women and slaves in her book *Sab*. Nevertheless, it is very important to understand Gertrudis Gómez de Avellaneda not only as a person, but also her writing content as they influenced each other. As Kirkpatrick states Gertrudis Gómez de Avellaneda was able to fuse together a subject that is a minority with less power with the literary movement of the time (Romanticism) creating a writing structure that could find fault with the structures of her society (Kirkpatrick, 147).

### **Archetypes**

Another important aspect related to the Romantic Literature movement are the various archetypes used. There are several different archetypes that have added importance because they are both popular in Romantic literature and they can also be recognized in contemporary cultural products. An important aspect of archetypes is that they tend to appear in conjunction to a specific gender. For example, one of those prominent archetypes is the “donjuán” who is typically an attractive young man whose primary goal is to engage in romantic endeavors

through less than gentlemanly conduct (Sanders, vii). Moreover, two other important archetypes are the la Virgen (the virgin) and la celestina (the procuress) (Sanders, vii). First, la virgen (the Virgin) is described as “es una idealización de la inocencia y como un ser incorrupto, representa una potencialidad redentora para el hombre que la posee” (Sanders, vii). Moreover, “Este personaje frecuentemente está destinado a la vida religiosa, hasta que tropieza con el donjuán” (Sanders, vii). This archetype of the virgin is seen as the standard of innocence and purity. She is the perfect woman because she embodies the idealized values for women. This archetype corresponds to the idealized women during 19th-century Spain. It is important to note that while the virgin is seen as the “proper” woman there is also a gendered archetype that corresponds to the bad woman. That archetype is called the la celestina (the procuress). The celestina is a type of witch but can be a procuress or madam facilitating romantic meetings between virgins and more commonly with a donjuan (Sanders, Vii). The procuress is an interesting archetype because this archetype is like the donjuán someone who is morally compromised whereas, the virgin is morally righteous. Though the virgin may be naive or innocent she is also often not the master of her own fate instead someone such as the donjuán seduces her or is procured by a celestina. Therefore, an important aspect to this analysis is the virgin is seen as a dependent archetype as opposed to the autonomous.

### **Sab by Gertrudis Gómez de Avellaneda**

Gertrudis Gómez de Avellaneda wrote *sab* which would be her first publication (Davies, 1). This book is extraordinary for several reasons, but one of those would be that it would be the first novel that spoke out against slavery (Davies, 10). Gertrudis Gómez de Avellaneda would eventually make the move from her native Cuba to Europe (Davies, 11). There her book would take on a life on its own. Circulating through parts of Spain to those with predominantly liberal

viewpoints (Davies, 12). The novel would eventually face problems due to feminist and anti-slavery ideas within the book. This came to be through political fear of black independence in Cuba (Davies, 12). Therefore, *Sab* was censored and not allowed to be read in Cuba (Davies, 13). This helps reaffirm the importance of this novel as the first of its kind. The editor of *Sab* Catherine Davies states “women wrote the majority of abolitionist narratives. *Sab*, a sentimental narrative that advocates both the liberation of the slave and of married women, is possibly the only Spanish language example of the feminist-abolitionist genre published in the nineteenth century” (Davies, 16). Davies also mentions that some of this type of literature could also be found in Britain but was not developed until later (16). *Sab* was an extraordinary novel that would bring forth ideas that had not been previously discussed. Finally, Davies also states something that is very important to the overall construction of this novel. She states “Feminist-abolitionist writers exploited the representation of the mulatto slave for their own purposes, by portraying the institutions of slavery and marriage as coextensive...” (Davies, 19). This combination will also serve as an important aspect of the analysis of the novel and the archetypes presented because it combines two different institutions of power to subject an “other”.

Next, the novel of *Sab* by Gertrudis Gómez de Avellaneda consists of many different characters whose lives will become intertwined through greed, ambition, and injustice. This novel will look critically at slavery, marriage, and virtue. As well as to the nativity of the woman protagonist and how she interacts with her world as it continuously changes from what she envisioned to the greedy reality. In this novel, virtue is superior in those who are marginalized, and those with power although they have a higher place in society are ultimately false. The story centers itself around four characters: Carlota de B, Enrique Otway, Sab, and Teresa. The story is centered and concluded with the engagement/marriage of Carlota de B and Enrique Otway. This



engagement would be the demise of the main character named Sab. Sab was a slave raised alongside Carlota and cousin Teresa who falls in love with Carlota. Nevertheless, Enrique Otway the handsome youth engaged to Carlota is mostly interested in her financial status which is dwindling. Therefore, Sab whose love for Carlota is unquantifiable by chance wins the local lottery but decides to provide it to Carlota as a dowry. This dowry entices Enrique Otway to honor the engagement. This causes Sab so much pain that he dies from a broken heart. Theresa also faces unrequited love for Enrique Otway also perishes a few years after Sab. Carlota suffers from disillusionment as Teresa and Sab did with life. In conclusion, the novel looks at those with virtuous souls who suffer by those with hearts who are only interested in their own well-being.

Furthermore, although Sab is the protagonist since his viewpoints are the subject of the story until his death towards the end of the story. It is also essential to look at the women characters whose story lines also enrich the topic of marginalization. Their storylines are often part of Sab's overall development, but they also develop themselves as independent characters. Sab, Teresa, and Carlota are also important characters because they have "superior" souls as opposed to those who are socially superior. Especially Carlota who is seen as pure and innocent. On the other hand, Enrique and Jorge Otway who are father and son are the antagonists. Yet, Enrique Otway's antagonistic attitudes are propagated by his father. The novel is a critique of societies who reward certain groups of people who embody inferior virtues to the marginalized persons they control.

At the beginning, the first scene is between Bernabé nicknamed Sab and Enrique Otway the intended suitor of Carlota de B (Avellaneda, 44). We quickly learn some information about Sab. We learn that he is descended from a Congolese princess and an unknown father (45). During this conversation we come to learn how Sab feels about Carlota. He states "seis años

tenía yo cuando mecía la cuna de la señorita Carlota, fruto primero de aquel feliz matrimonio. Más tarde fui el compañero de sus juegos y estudios, porque hija única por espacio de cinco años, su inocente corazón no media la distancia que nos separaba y me concedía el cariño de un hermano” (46). Since the earliest pages of the novel we are made to see that Carlota is an innocent. Throughout the novel it is mentioned with frequency that Carlota is either beautiful, innocent, or virginal. For example, her cousin Teresa with some jealousy says “Hija adorada, ama querida, esposa futura del amante de tu elección,?” (49) and “¿Como lloras, pues?... Hermosa, rica, querida... no eres tú la que debes llorar” (49). Teresa throughout the novel as is shown here with jealousy praises Carlota while also being resentful for being the illegitimate, orphaned cousin (51). Once again even in the first parts of the novel Carlota is seen as beautiful and innocent. Moreover, the narrator of the story writes in regards to Carlota’s engagement to Enrique “...juramentos que eran para su corazón tierno y virginal tan santos e inviolables como si hubiesen sido consagrados por las más augustas ceremonias” (53). Once again, we are shown that Carlota’s being is innocent in that she imagines herself to have a charmed and pure existence in how she reacts to her engagement. With almost childlike happiness. We once again are shown her innocent disposition. The narrator states that Carlota imagines herself being joined to a man who will complete her (57). The narrator goes on to say that “¿Y cuál es la mujer, aunque haya nacido bajo un cielo menos ardiente, que no busque al entrar con paso tímido en los áridos campos de la vida la creación sublime de su virginal imaginación?” (57). Here the narrator expresses as do other characters Carlota’s innocence and that her dreams/ aspirations are natural to her virginal soul. We the readers also read some of Carlota’s childlike outburst such as when Enrique must leave for a business trip (62). Carlota implores that he postpones and stay with her instead (62). This little outburst reinforces her childlike disposition as well as her innocence. In

spite of that, the main antagonists of this story are Enrique Otway and his father who will cause problems for Carlota's innocent dreams. Nevertheless, it is important to note that Enrique does have amorous feelings towards Carlota. As the narrator states "Es indudable que Enrique Otway amaba a Carlota de B...y ¿cómo no amar a una criatura tan bella y apasionada?" (69). As we come to understand Enrique is torn between his love for Carlota and his adherence to his overbearing father. While Carlota is around her home that narrator takes the opportunity to mention that "Al verla tan joven, tan pueril, tan hermosa, no sospecharían los hombres irreflexivos que el corazón que palpitaba de placer en aquel pecho por la prisión y la libertad de una mariposa fuese capaz de pasiones tan vehementes como profundas" (79). This is a critical moment in the story where we come to see that Carlota is a complex character. Throughout the beginning she is seen to be simple minded for the most part. Yet, what she feels for Enrique is a fierce passion transgressing her "virginal" appearance. Her innocence is also shown when she orates that she will free all the slaves once she is married to Enrique and is mistress of the house (80). This is received without much emotion (80). Conversely, Carlota's good intentions are undermined by her fiancé and his father. Enrique frequently visits or talks to his father throughout the novel. In one meeting their conversation begins with an emphasis of Enrique's physical beauty juxtaposed to the malice of the conversation. In this conversation his father says "—No me queda duda, Carlota de B... aun después de heredar a su padre no poseerá más que una módica fortuna: y luego en fincas deterioradas, ¡perdidas!... ¡Bah! estos malditos isleños saben mejor aparentar riquezas que adquirirlas o conservarlas. Pero en fin, no faltan en el país buenos caudales; y no, no te casarás con Carlota de B..." (84). This is the conflict in the story. Enrique's father is interested only in helping Enrique establish himself with someone with money so that he may restore their own fortunes. While his father acts repulsively in his thoughts

and actions surrounding his son's marriage Enrique acts less harshly. For example, he says to his father "—¡Es tan bella! —repuso el joven, no sin alguna timidez—, ¡es tan buena, su corazón tan tierno, su talento tan seductor..." (85). Enrique shows that he does in fact care for Carlota and for the most part sees her as an innocent party in his father's quest for bettering their economic situation. Upon saying this his father balks at him saying that the point of marrying is to elevate one's station (85). Moments such as these between Enrique and his father show their maliciousness against an innocent soul such as Carlota. An important plot moment appears in this conversation because we are told that among the drama there is a lottery in which Enrique's father hopes to win to restore his fortune (85). This fortune is an important aspect as it will cause Sab to sacrifice everything to ensure that Carlota is happy. Sab who is in love with Carlota doubts Enrique sincerity and love for Carlota (89). But Enrique also expresses his respect of Carlota's virtues (91). Because Sab is in love with Carlota, he is becoming more embittered as Enrique continuously visits Carlota (91). Furthermore, on a trip with her family, Enrique, and Sab to another estate that they own Carlota once again shows her fragile and innocent soul. After hearing a story told by Sab about a woman who claims to be a descendent of the indigenous people who inhabited Cuba and their subsequent mistreatment by the colonizers (100). Carlota begins to cry for the unfairness that indigenous people passed which did not allow them freedom or the ability have a romantic life (101-102). This example reinforces once again Carlota's innocence about the world. She has lived a very sheltered life, so her thoughts are often naive. In another important scene we met Martina who is the caretaker of the house (108). Martina begins telling the family and Enrique that Sab saved her and her grandson which eventually made Sab her adoptive son since she has lost most of her family (112). This story causes the family to admire Sab's beautiful heart (113). This a very interesting because we come to learn that Sab and

Carlota have the same kind and gentle nature. Furthermore, an important aspect of this story is the love square between Enrique, Sab, Carlota, and Teresa. This is further exacerbated when Theresa gives Sab a brooch with a portrait of Carlota which he forcibly takes from his adoptive brother (117). This empowers Sab to act on his love for Carlota with the help of Theresa who is also a victim of unrequited love. Sab and Theresa have a pivotal meeting where he tells her “¡Bendita seas mujer! ¡Y bien! A las doce, a orillas del río, a espaldas de los cañaverales del sur” (124). Sab tells her this after receiving the brooch from her, and tells her to meet with him that night to talk. This conversation initiates the climax of the story. But, before Theresa can go meet with Sab, she and Carlota talk (126). Teresa chastises Carlota for being so doubtful of Enrique’s love for her to which Carlota accepts after her doubts of Enrique’s insincerity are put to rest (126-127). Theresa goes on to meet Sab which concludes the first part of the story.

During the second part of the story we witness Sab and Theresa’s sacrifice, Enrique’s betrayal, and Carlota’s unhappiness. Theresa and Sab meet. Here Sab will give one of his most impassioned speeches aside from his final letter. Sab says “—¡Bendita seáis Teresa! Habéis venido como un ángel de salvación a dar la vida aun infeliz que os imploraba; pero yo también puedo daros en cambio esperanza y consuelo: nuestros destinos se tocan y una misma será la ventura de ambos” (130-131). Here Sab is saying that he can give Theresa what she desires the most which is Enrique Otway, and for himself he can have Carlota (131). Of course, Theresa shows pity to Sab as she sees that he may be delusional (131). But Sab passionately tells her how he covets Carlota. Sab begins by mentioning that he has “loved” her since childhood when they were playmates (131). All the while Theresa attempts to dissuade this passionate rant of his love since they would cause racially motivated problems (132). To which he says that those dangers are of little consequence to him (132). He says that “En efecto, cuando yo consideraba aquella

niña tan pura, tan bella, que junto a mí constantemente, me dirigía una mirada inefable, parecíame que era el ángel custodio que el cielo me había destinado, y que su misión sobre la tierra era conducir y salvar mi alma” (132). This quote helps the reader understand how deeply Sab feels for Carlota. His love was a love that began in childhood to passionate love in his adulthood. To him her beauty is unparalleled. He says about Carlota “Luego la niña creció a mi vista y la hechicera criatura convirtióse en la más hermosa de las vírgenes (132). Once again, we hear about Sab’s love for Carlota. The virginal aspect is mentioned once again. This reaffirms Carlota as an exemplar of the virgin. Sab in his speech also mentions that his love for Carlota is impeded by his status as a slave which alarms Teresa, but Sab reaffirms that he is not attempting a rebellion or anything of that sort (133). Yet, he does mention that he would rebel against his white oppressors, but only to be able to pursue Carlota (136). Teresa sympathizes with Sab but resigns to the fact that she cannot do anything for him (140-141). To which Sab says that she can in fact help him (141). Because as he says “...Enrique Otway no ama a Carlota” (141). The quote states Enrique Otway does not love Carlota. Sab goes on to say that Carlota’s fortunes are dwindling (141). This initiates Sab’s plan based upon Enrique’s interest in money. He plans to unite Teresa and Enrique through the promise of money (142). His plans to give Teresa his winning lottery ticket (142). This would make Teresa a better match for the Otway family who are more interested in material and financial status. Teresa rejects this for a noble cause. This cause is to protect Carlota’s heart. Teresa tells Sab “Tú te engañas, pobre joven, o yo conozco mejor que tú el alma de Carlota. Aquella alma tierna y apasionada se ha entregado toda entera: su amor es su existencia, quitarle el uno es quitarle la otra. Enrique vil, interesado, no sería ya, es verdad, el ídolo de un corazón tan puro y tan generoso: ¿pero cómo arrancar ese ídolo indigno sin despedazar aquel noble corazón” (143). Teresa mentions in this quote that regardless of

Enrique's insincerity to part him from Carlota would destroy her fragile and pure heart. This reaffirms Carlota's image as the innocent party. Sab is dissuaded from his original plan by her words. He eventually decides to give his lottery winnings to ensure that Carlota marries Enrique (150). In a pivotal scene Sab rides to tell Enrique news that Carlota's brother has died, but that she is lottery winner (159). This causes Enrique who has traveled for business purposes to go and find Carlota and her family as soon as possible (160-161). As Enrique leaves Sab who is weakened after the ride goes to visit his adoptive mother (164). This will be his final resting place. As the author writes "Sab expiró a las seis de la mañana: en esa misma hora Enrique y Carlota recibían la bendición nupcial" (170). Tragically, after Sab's noble deed he dies, and it seems as if Carlota and Enrique lived happily ever after. But as we will see Sab's death is only the first of a string of tragedies. It begins with a confusion that Teresa was the true love of Sab (175). This coincided perfectly with Teresa's decision to leave Carlota and to take up a religious life (177). Carlota and Enrique reaffirm their commitment to each other (178). This affirmation of love could have led to a fairytale ending. But, the story will show us the misery that Carlota will incur in the five years that follow her affirmations of love.

After five years the remaining main characters: Carlota, Enrique, and Teresa have changed. Carlota is very unhappy. This unhappiness stems from her marriage. The narrator writes "Aquella atmósfera mercantil y especuladora, aquellos cuidados incesantes de los intereses materiales marchitaban las bellas ilusiones de su joven corazón" (182). As the quote states Carlota's innocent soul has been crushed and her illusions dissolved. These illusions that she has are largely based upon her imagined illusions of marriage and love. The disillusionment begins with the death of her father. As her father is dying Enrique's father encourages the dying father to change his will and leave Carlota as a sole heiress (183). Carlota protests to her

husband, but the greedy Enrique upholds the new will (184). Tragically, Carlota becomes trapped. The narrator states “Su único placer era llorar en el seno de su amiga sus ilusiones perdidas y su libertad encadenada; y cuando no estaba con Teresa huía de la sociedad de su marido y de su suegro” (184). The quote exemplifies the loss of freedom that Carlota endures. She is effectively financially dependent to her husband’s family. She is no longer free. Teresa become her only confidant. But sadly, Teresa is dying (185). Teresa’s parting words are to be cautious of the ways of men, and to leave behind her illusions (186). But one of Teresa last parting acts is to give her Sab’s letter (186).

Finally, the letter sent by Sab is a powerful tool where he proclaims what position women are offered in society. In Sab’s letter he expresses how even as a slave he has experienced great love, and questions why as a slave his soul is any different than Teresa’s (189). Sab also angrily states that he was cursed to have been born a mulatto when he has dreamt of so much more (191). He goes on to say that it is not his fault that he has wanted more than he should but says that God instilled these ideas into him (192). He then strongly states that it is men who have taken away his natural gifts and made him reject his many gifts (193). Towards the end of his letter Sab gives the most powerful words in the entire book. He says

¡Oh, las mujeres! ¡pobres y ciegas victimas!. Como los esclavos, ellas arrastran pacientemente su cadena y bajan la cabeza bajo el yugo de las leyes humanas. Sin otra guía que su corazón ignorante y crédulo eligen un dueño para toda la vida. El esclavo al menos puede cambiar de amo, puede esperar que juntando su oro comprará algún día su libertad: pero la mujer, cuando levanta sus manos enflaquecidas y su frente ultrajada, para pedir libertad... (194)



This quote is the crucial message of this entire novel. The message is that women are powerless. As Sab states a slave can change master or buy his freedom. Whereas, women are forced to ask for freedom (194). Therefore, Carlota who was born to wealth, privilege, love, family is stripped of all these things through her marriage. She is left enslaved. She is the perfect image of a virgin and woman, and she suffers the same fate as other women.

In summary, the novel finishes with a short ending. The narrator writes that the true ending of Carlota's life is unknown, but her husband with his newfound wealth moved himself to a better area to live (197). The end for Carlota came after her father changed his will and left out her sisters, and she as sole heiress. After that moment she became as Sab once was enslaved. She would lose all her support namely Teresa and would be left in the world alone. Carlota was the image the absolute virgin in this novel. She was pure, innocent, beautiful, and virtuous. Yet, she became enslaved in her own home and life. Therefore, the author Gertrudis Gómez de Avellaneda provides the virgin not as a secondary character, but as a person who stripped of all her privileges and power based on false dreams. False dreams that are appropriate for a virgin. Moreover, the virgin in this story is never corrupted or fooled. She must instead accept her fate. Thus, the author presents the idea that women share the same or less freedom than a slave. Even the perfect woman becomes enslaved.

### **Poesías by Carolina Coronado**

Poesías is a compilation of the works by Carolina Coronado of her poetry and correspondences ranging in topics from memories of her childhood to personal correspondences. Her correspondences with Juan Eugenio Hartzenbusch illuminate her frustration with her own insecurities as a writer and the reason as to which she fell short. One of those following letters sent between them outlines some of her insecurities and resentment. These correspondences

emphasize the amount of confidence that Carolina Coronado has for him. In one of the correspondences between them Carolina Coronado writes

Los hombres, con más confianza en sus talentos o más fortaleza para arrastrar las censuras pueden, sin desalentarse, sufrir un fallo desfavorable y atreverse a conquistar otro más lisonjero; pero en las de mi sexo, a lo que entiendo, la primera alabanza o desaprobación que el crítico da a sus obras influyen en sus resoluciones de un modo decisivo; o se retroceden con presteza y confusión los pocos pasos andados en un camino que se emprendió con miedo, o se continua por él con la fe y seguridad que faltaban al emprenderlo.(164)

This excerpt from a correspondence between Carolina Coronado and Juan Eugenio Hartzenbusch illuminates some of her opinions. She mentions that women writers have a certain level of insecurity that is absent from men regarding criticism. She goes on to state that when a woman writer is criticized, she goes down two paths. She will press forward confidently, or she will go backward on the progress she has already made. This letter reflects on the type of person that Coronado was. Her life was marred with various tragedies both personal and academic. Those different impositions in her life were mitigated by her ability to overcome them through her own independent spirit. This letter is one of many instances in correspondences where she overtly states an opinion of the current state of women as writers. This is a change from her own writings which encode criticism of society that are not so bold. This example serves to present Carolina Coronado as more than a writer who expressed herself through her poems, but also as an outspoken women writer.

Furthermore, the two poems chosen will exemplify how her work is both overt and covert in messages. The first poem is titled “Los quince años”. This poem emphasis Carolina

Coronado's dual writing. This poem is more overt in its message of purity and innocence. It relates to the image of virginal as its emphasis is the purity of a woman at the age of 15. The poem begins with, explaining how the unknown subject is leaving their childhood behind. The poem says "Dejas apenas la risueña infancia; juegos, placeres de su dejaste. Ya el dulce brillo de los quince mayos cerca tus sienes" (Coronado, 100). These first lines explain how the unknown subject is leaving her childhood, yet it will not be the end of her innocence. The poem goes on to say that this transition into a new chapter of her life does not leave her without traces of her previous "child-like" features. Coronado writes "Niña aun graciosa, la infantil sonrisa bulle en tus labios, como el aura tenue" (100). Here the author writes that the "girl subject" is funny yet, even at her new age she still retains some of her girlhood physical attributes such as her smile. This beginning section is important because it emphasizes the continuous virginal image that a young woman retains. The following lines are amongst the most powerful because they allude to the Virgin herself. Coronado writes "Virgen, tu bella juventud al mundo muéstrase alegre, candorosa y pura..." (100). This is the first allusion to the Virgin Mary. This is important because the Virgin is juxtaposed with the growth of the unknown woman subject who is entering her fifteenth year. Thus, the divine Virgin is perhaps an aspiration for the young virginal girl. Furthermore, referring to the subject of the poem Coronado writes "¡ah, que tu bella juventud al mundo muéstrase alegre, candorosa y pura Mas ¡ay! ¡cuán presto la serena vida tuerce su paso!" (101). This excerpt from the poem is a return to the original subject of the poem who is youthful, and most importantly pure. However, as the poem states "¡cuán presto la serena vida tuerce su paso!" (101). Here we see a different tone that will persist until the end. That tone is that of a passion that is being awoken that will torture the pure, untouched soul. The poem states "Ya el adormido corazón despierta voz misteriosa, que de amor le inflama" and "Ya las mejillas de

encarnado vivo tiñe la nueva confusión del alma. Fijos en tierra los turbados ojos lágrimas brotan” (101). Those two excerpts from this poem demonstrate the transition and confusion into passion that is previously unknown to the pure, virginal fifteen-year-old. The poem finishes with these final lines “Ansias, cuidados, agitadas horas, largos afanes tras ventura escasa por solo y triste galardón espera virgen amante. —” (101). The final lines of the poem contrast with the beginning. At the beginning, the first lines with an almost bittersweet tone of remembrance of the lost childhood, but the end shift is towards a tone of disparity. The final lines start out with different descriptive words that set up the tone for the ending. The ending lines says “...y triste galardón espera virgen amante. —” (101). The final lines say that a sad reward awaits this virginal lover. Therefore, here in this poem we have the exemplification of the virginal image that this young woman has continuously maintained. The mention of the Virgin also serves as an example of the most prominent image of the virgin used together with the 15-year-old subject as a parallel story. Yet, the virgin's life in this poem will be tragic from the passions that will come.

The previous poem by Carolina Coronado was an example of Coronado’s practice of overtly sending a message of the virginal image as a superior aspiration. The following poem in turn uses more abstract imagery to further its message. The poem is titled “A La Palma” which uses imagery of a personified palm tree as the main subject of the poem. There is also a brief mention of a secondary character who interacts with the palm tree. But, the Palm tree remains as the main subject.

The poem begins with a description of the palm tree. The author writes “Alza gallarda tu elevada frente, hija del suelo ardiente, y al recio soplo de aquilón mecida, de mil hojas dorada, de majestad ornada, descuella ufana sobre el tallo erguida;” (83). This quote starts the poem by describing the palm tree as a daughter of the burning ground (83). This description of the palm

tree presents this tree as magnificent through its physical attributes. Furthermore, the palm tree is also described by what it does as well. This following excerpt from the poem introduces the second character. The poem states “Y arrojando tu sombra allá a lo lejos, del sol a los reflejos, al árabe sediento y fatigado, desdeñosa levanta tu bendecida planta en el desierto triste y abrasado” (83). Here the palm tree is casting its shadow far away to nearby to a tired man. Interestingly, the tone of endearment towards the palm tree shifts to a bitter tone. The narrator writes “desdeñosa levanta tu bendecida planta en el desierto triste y abrasado” (83). We see that the palm tree is both revered and chastised as if it were a person who could respond to reproaches. Furthermore, the author continues to express admiration for the tree. The author states “Y tú, entre nubes de encendida arena majestosa y serena, o ya del recio vendaval batida, elevas tu cimera, orgullosa palmera, contando siglos de gloriosa vida” (83). Here the poem once again praises the tree. The tree is in between clouds and is standing proudly in the glorious years its lived (83). This is once again an adulation of the tree and its beauty. It is important to note that the poem will once again mentions the tree’s purity. The poem states “Tú, virgen sacrosanta y peregrina, de las nubes vecina, tú signo le das a la victoria, y corona esplendente de tus hojas luciente al héroe ciñes de radiante gloria” (84). In this excerpt we find two themes that appear. One is that the palm tree is described as virginal and pure. The other is that the tree has a relationship with royalty and warriors (85). The palm tree gives them strength. This theme of a king and crown continues for several stanzas until we return once again to the palm tree (85). The author writes “Guarda tus ramos para el vate augusto premio a su lira justo, o a ceremonias santas consagrados, entre el canto sonoro de religioso coro, en el altar del templo colocados” (86). Here the narrator is urging that the palm tree protect its branches to be used in religious ceremonies or anything religious (86). This is important because the connection between the palm tree and religious morals are

intertwined. The second to last quote is a powerful pre-ending for the poem, and end point for the analysis. The narrator states “Guarda tus ramos, virgen soberana, bella y noble africana, formando airosos tu lucido manto; ...” (86). In this fragment we have once again a moment of adulation and admiration towards the tree. The narrator describes the tree as virginal, beautiful, and petitions the tree to safeguard her branches. The palm tree in this story serves as a comparison to a woman. The tree and its description as virginal are a metaphor for a woman who are also praised for the virginity and innocence. The author here uses virginal imagery as praise. This is important for this analysis because instead of overtly demonstrating rejection of societal norms Carolina Coronado instead paints the imagery of the virgin as important and divine. But, Carolina Coronado interjects within the adulation of the virginal palm tree warnings to protect herself as well as praising her for her protection of others. Therefore, Coronado is not as overt in her criticisms of society. As Susan Kirkpatrick, Carolina Coronado maintains themes of the time in her poetry. To which Kirkpatrick writes “...by employing a trope that seems to emphasize the modesty of her poetic aspirations, Coronado simultaneously conforms to the norms of femininity...” (Kirkpatrick, 213). This trope is in reference to a poem that Coronado wrote about a bee and eagle (Kirkpatrick, 212-213). She juxtaposes the eagle and the bee which correspond to respective genders. The bee is feminine, so Coronado brilliantly place the bee below the eagle (masculine), but by putting the bee in the very same sky she is stating a level of hidden equality (Kirkpatrick, 213). She employs this same tree with the palm tree. She does not outrightly state the importance of the tree, but she does so through warnings and petitions to the palm tree to protect itself. A warning that could have been given to *Sab*'s Carlota de B. In summary, Carolina Coronado's poetry stay in line with feminine themes of the time (Kirkpatrick, 213). However, she can within those confines suggest her own ideas about women and their place in life.

In conclusion, the central thesis of this paper is how the virginal image, based upon Romantic archetypes, demonstrates women's literary and social independence. This paper examined the progression of women's place in society historically to women's place in Spanish society in the 19th-century, specifically, the progression of Carolina Coronado and Gertrudis Gómez de Avellaneda. This progression begins with *The Second Sex* by Simone de Beauvoir, followed by Susan Kirkpatrick's study of women during Romanticism and their influence, as well as the gendered language of the time where it predetermined the criticism that women received. Both authors studied, and their works, demonstrate use of the virginal image as a contrasting point to the preconceived woman based on the image of *El ángel del hogar* and of the text *La perfecta casada*, which heavily influenced women's place in society. This paper also examined the origins of Romanticism brought forth by Johann Nikolaus Böhl von Faber, and the archetypes attached to that movement, namely the virgin. The virgin archetype whose attributes are innocent and pure were examined in the novel *Sab* and the two poems from the book *Poesías*, where the subjects are either fitting of the virginal image or interact with a subject who possesses those attributes, but are ultimately in danger because they occupy the virgin archetype. These archetypes are often portrayed negatively as stereotyped images, but they can also be manipulated to criticize society, as seen in *Sab* and *Poesías*.

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