

Reading Jorge Figueroa Dorrego's *Tecendo tramas, fiando ficcións: Narrativa inglesa de autoría feminina (1621-1688)*.

Jorge Figueroa Dorrego. 2002: *Tecendo tramas, fiando ficcións: Narrativa inglesa de autoría feminina (1621-1688)*. Vigo, Universidade de Vigo, Servicio de Publicaciones. 136 pages. ISBN: 84-8158-216-6

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As the old saying goes, some books are just bought by the cover. However, the one written by Jorge Figueroa Dorrego can certainly boast of being, at least, one step ahead, since it also attracts its would-be readers by the intriguing play on words of its title. Juggling with etymological meanings is quite an effective procedure in Galician, the language in which the author chose to write his work. The comparison between spinning thread and weaving a piece of cloth and spinning thread and interweaving the many episodes of a fictional intrigue builds up an ironic metaphor of the new role that some women took upon themselves in the seventeenth century, that of writers.

Taken as a whole, the book by Jorge Figueroa Dorrego seems to be primarily meant to impart information on a subject which had been neglected, avoided or even conveniently forgotten until the second half of the twentieth century, when it was rescued from oblivion by the feminist literary criticism, as the author repeatedly underlines.

The first chapter can be considered an introduction. It presents a detailed summary (no contradiction in terms) of most of what has been written about the matter by the various scholars that have dealt with it. Its thoroughness coupled with a straightforward discourse provides the students who approach this theme for the first time with all the information they need and may prompt their interest to engage further in research. Even those scholars who have already delved into the matter will find that reading the chapter in question can prove to be a quick way of testing how much or how

little they can still remember of the vital guidelines that compelled them to expand their quest.

In the next four chapters, Jorge Figueroa Dorrego widens the scope of the subject by choosing the work of four different female writers —Mary Wroth, Anna Weamys, Margaret Cavendish and Aphra Behn— brought up as examples of what has been stated before. By analysing their writings and the influence they exerted in their authors' everyday lives, he conveys the picture of a society where being a woman and daring to intrude in a male's exclusive 'club' could actually mean public difamation and ridicule and, in Mary Wroth's case, a ban on, at least, one of her books. However, Jorge Figueroa Dorrego proves beyond any possible doubt, that the analysis of their work carried out by all the scholars who have done research on the subject is invaluable to understand the role of female writing not only in the development of the English novel as such, but also in the subtle reversal and/or ingenious criticism of the male-oriented set of values that it traditionally conveyed.

The last chapter is really a conclusion. In it Jorge Figueroa Dorrego ties together all the lose ends of thread that have been left behind and weaves them into a final pattern where general and specific issues intermingle to build a coherent and enlightening whole, which sums up the gist and matter of his work.

Having reached what can be considered the end of the book, it would be unfair not to mention one of its most important assets —a ready-made, extensive, carefully chosen and up-to-date list of Reference Books which is a downright bonus for all those who want to further their research on the subject. The fact that this list of Reference Books consists mainly of works written in English may help to counteract the unfortunate limitations imposed on a wider recognition of the work by Jorge Figueroa Dorrego arising from the language in which it is written, the author's native Galician.

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