Grotesque humour in Contemporary Women Writers from Latin America

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Abstract

The main focus of this paper is the analysis of humorous discourse used by Latin American women writers not only through their representation as women but through the writing of texts using parody, irony and the grotesque as a form of transgression. This research into the strategic use of humour by Latin American women writers aims to supply missing critical material on the topic. It is significant in that it will promote a genuine understanding of the transgressive nature of women’s writing. It will at the same time shed light on the larger question of feminism in Latin America.

Recent studies of women’s humour have argued convincingly that women’s humour, particularly in contemporary texts, is frequently used as a strategy for protesting traditional codes of behavior and in the demythification of taboos. One of the first to point this out is a Mexican writer and critic, Rosario Castellanos. In one of her essays about Latin American women writers, she proposes to wage a campaign in which women would expose and ridicule the absurd expectation of the patriarchal order that oppresses them by the use of humour as a strategy of both criticism and liberation “because laughter is the most immediate way of freeing ourselves from that which oppresses us [women]”.

In fact, the most important attribute of humour from a feminist perspective may be its ability to challenge the dominant ideological discourse and, by association, the power structure that discourse supports without openly confronting them. Humour successfully weakens the dominant ideology by meticulously representing its contradictions and absurdities and, in doing so, exposing it to ridicule. Women, particularly from Latin American countries, who write in a subversive way risk rejection not only by men but by women as well and yet continue to write because writing is a form of confrontation.

(The paper will be presented in Spanish)