Transversal Analysis of the Ibero-American Anthology
Coordenadas Gráficas: Cuarenta Historietas de Autoras de España, Argentina, Chile y Costa Rica

Beatriz Moriano
Centre for English, Translation, and Anglo-Portuguese Studies, Departamento de Línguas, Culturas e Literaturas Modernas, Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities, NOVA University of Lisbon, Lisbon, Portugal
Conceptualization, writing – original draft, writing – review and editing

Neus Lagunas
CHAM – Centro de Humanidades, Departamento de Línguas, Culturas e Literaturas Modernas, Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities, NOVA University of Lisbon, Lisbon, Portugal
Conceptualization, writing – original draft, writing – review and editing

Abstract
This review analyses the Ibero-American anthology Coordenadas Gráficas: Cuarenta Historietas de Autoras de España, Argentina, Chile y Costa Rica (Graphic Coordinates: Forty Comics by Women Authors from Spain, Argentina, Chile and Costa Rica), published in 2020 in open digital access by a team of curators under the Ventana programme of the Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation. It outlines the essential characteristics of these comics and the introductory articles for the four sections. It examines their structure and explores their thematic, stylistic, and ideological aspects by following the path laid out by the selected works. It highlights the anthology’s portrayal of women’s historical contributions from recent decades to the present and its role in raising awareness about the challenges various women authors have encountered and addressed over 40 years. Although this work is organised by country and thus delves into each context, each section offers an intersectional and intergenerational perspective. Ultimately, this review represents an inclusive platform for women comic authors, fostering their growth and presenting future proposals to challenge heteronormative patriarchy.

Keywords
anthology, women authors, comics, Ibero-America, feminism

Análise Transversal da Antologia Ibero-Americana
Coordenadas Gráficas: Cuarenta Historietas de Autoras de España, Argentina, Chile y Costa Rica

Resumo
Esta recensão tem como objeto de análise a antologia ibero-americana Coordenadas Gráficas: Cuarenta Historietas de Autoras de España, Argentina, Chile y Costa Rica (Coordenadas Gráficas: Quarenta Bandas Desenhadas de Autoras de Espanha, Argentina, Chile e Costa Rica), publicada em 2020, em acesso digital aberto, por uma equipa de curadoras, no âmbito do programa Ventana da Agência Espanhola de Cooperação Internacional para o Desenvolvimento. Nela, apresentamos as principais características destas bandas desenhadas, assim como os
artigos que introduzem os quatro blocos, examinamos a sua organização e os seus componen-
tes temáticos, estilísticos e ideológicos através dum percurso definido pelos trabalhos selecio-
nados. Destacamos a sua visão panorâmica sobre a produção historietista feminina desde as
últimas décadas até o presente e a sua contribuição para visibilizar as problemáticas que, ao lon-
go de 40 anos, as diversas autoras têm enfrentado. Ainda que esta obra apresente uma divisão
nacional e, consequentemente, centrada em cada um dos seus contextos, cada secção oferece
uma perspetiva interseccional e intergeracional. Definitivamente, este trabalho constitui e define-
-se como um espaço aberto de mulheres autoras de banda desenhada que procura crescer com
futuras propostas para combater o patriarcado heteronormativo.

Palavras-chave
antologia, autoras, banda desenhada, Ibero-América, feminismo

Published in December 2020, the anthology Coordenadas Gráficas: Cuarenta
Historietas de Autoras de España, Argentina, Chile y Costa Rica (Graphic Coordinates:
Forty Comics by Women Authors from Spain, Argentina, Chile and Costa Rica) is the
outcome of a collaborative effort involving curators Elisa McCausland (Spain), Mariela
Acevedo (Argentina), Paloma Domínguez Jería and Isabel Molina (Chile) and Iris Lam
(Costa Rica), with coordination by Carolina Chávez and cover and back cover design by
Daniela Ruggeri. This anthology, described as an “open atlas” (McCausland et al., 2020,
p. 11), is currently under construction to showcase the work of 40 women comic authors
from the respective countries. The genesis of this publication has noteworthy origins.
Firstly, it traces back to the travelling exhibition “Presentes: Autoras de Tebeo de Ayer y
Hoy” (Present: Women Comic Authors of Yesterday and Today), inaugurated at the Royal
Academy of Spain in Rome. This exhibition was produced by the Colectivo de Autoras
de Cómic (Collective of Women Comic Authors; CAC) in collaboration with the Ventana
Secondly, it is connected to Nosotras Contamos. Un Recorrido por la Obra de Autoras de
Historieta y Humor Gráfico de Ayer y Hoy (We Count. A Journey Through the Work of
Women Comic and Graphic Humour Authors of Yesterday and Today; Acevedo, 2019).

This anthology’s merit lies in its comprehensive presentation of diverse women
comic authors from multiple Hispanic-American areas, styles and generations. It adopts
a creative and inclusive approach in its language. Furthermore, its structure and format,
available online, make it easily accessible and readable because, on the Cultural Centre
of Spain in Costa Rica — Spanish Cooperation for Culture/San José website, you can find
the exhibition materials, introductory texts, and a selection of works and read the entire
book in PDF format on the same page.

The book opens with a broad introduction, written by Carolina Chávez (Director of
the Spain Cordoba Cultural Centre in Argentina), followed by an introductory text, writ-
ten jointly by the project’s curators, titled “Mapear el Territorio, Construir Genealogías”

1 This same collective also organised the exhibitions “Mujeres de Tinta” (Women of Ink) at the Museo ABC in Madrid (2014) and “Ellas
Toman los Lápices, el Espacio y la Palabra” (They Seize the Pencils, the Space, and the Word; 2016) in the cities of Valencia, Seville and
Barcelona.

It is then divided into four parts, one dedicated to each country: Spain, Argentina, Chile and Costa Rica. Each part follows a consistent structure, featuring an introductory text by the curator responsible for selecting the artworks and roughly equal sections dedicated to each. Thus, there is a progression of artists presented with concise biographies showcasing their notable works and self-portraits, sketches, or signatures. Some examples of their work are included, which may encompass full pieces, excerpts from comic book narratives, or graphic novels, whether previously unreleased or published in recent decades. The four parts maintain a consistent structure, all with a shared goal: to establish a cross-border and enduring sisterhood among women comic authors to combat heteronormative patriarchy, particularly in the editorial and political spheres. Upon closer examination, these anthologies display a degree of autonomy, as they individually present their themes in distinct styles and are divided into national sections with limited interconnection and cross-border dialogue.

The first section, “España” (Spain), begins with a statement of principles from the curator, Elisa McCausland. In this introduction, “Una Hermandad Transnacional de Autoras de Historieta” (A Transnational Sisterhood of Women Comic Authors), the curator reiterates her support for the concept of a sisterhood of women who weave networks, continually meet, and mutually acknowledge each other through cultural artefacts and creative projects in order to transform these networks into communities of affection and knowledge all while persistently challenging and questioning andronormative power structures through critical reflection.

The curator goes on to state that the obscurity or disregard for women authors, cartoonists or illustrators, particularly in the past, stemmed from their gender, their status as women, the influence of the Franco dictatorship and its damaging consequences, which led to the erosion of most of the principles established during the Second Spanish Republic, and finally, the precarious working conditions that agents of this form of artistic creation endured for years.

McCausland proceeds to enumerate the most influential women authors spanning from the 1960s and 1970s up to 2014, a pivotal year marked by the publication of the story anthology Enjambre (Swarm) and the establishment of the CAC2 forging connections with other collectives, such as the Collectif des Créatrices de Bande Dessinée (Creative Comics Collective; 2015) and Moleste Collettivo per la Parità di Genere nel Fumetto (Moleste Collective for Gender Equality in Comics; 2020), an Italian collective dedicated to advocating for gender equality in comics. The CAC also created the Wombastic platform (2014) and later established relations with the Argentinian group Línea Peluda. The curator underscores the transoceanic dialogue facilitated by Coordenadas Gráficas and many of its voices, which were previously featured in the precursor anthology Viñetas de Tortas y Bollos. Cómics Lésbicos Desde dos Orillas (Panels of Pies [Lesbos] and Cakes [Dykes]. Lesbian Comics from Two Margins; Castro & Ortiza de Zárate, 2019) and in the catalogue of an equally essential anthology titled Papel de Mujeres (Women’s Paper; INJUVE, 1988).

2 The Colectivo de Autoras de Cómic is a product of the Asociación de Autoras de Cómic (2013).
The second section features 10 authors from different generations, born between 1946 and 1993, and different origins: Badajoz, Barcelona, Cádiz, Castellón, Madrid and Valencia. To begin, Laura Pérez Vernetti presents “Extraños en un Tren” (Strangers on a Train) from 1985, which drew inspiration from Patricia Highsmith’s novel of the same name. This work was published in 1985 in Barcelona’s leading adult magazine, El Víbora. Furthermore, the same author contributes a segment from the erotic comic “Susana”, published by Amaniaco in 2004. The second artist is Mayte Alvarado with “Los Amantes” (The Lovers), a fragment from the graphic novel La Isla (The Island; Penguin Random House). It identifies the woman self with the sea, employing an expressive narrative set in a Mediterranean atmosphere in the colours blue, white, red and black, where this woman embraces a sailor. It somehow communicates with Carla Berrocal’s unpublished piece, Variaciones Orbitales (Orbital Variations), which delves into the theme of sex and the myth of Adam and Eve in an unpublished piece of science fiction. Taking a different perspective, Susanna Martín presents, with two Evas, a portrayal of the everyday life of a lesbian couple striving to become mothers in her play Pajuelas (Straws). This work adopts an autobiographical approach in two voices: Spanish and Catalan. The same author in “Chicazo” (Tomboy), a series of comic strips published in 2017 and 2018 in Pikara Magazine, questioned the identity and gender construction we are given in childhood, lesbophobia and the violence experienced at the hands of others. Pioneer Montse Clavé also delves into this theme in “Betty de BUP”3, where she humorously portrays the young girl’s interactions with her mother, friends, and the wider world. Years later, Raquel Gu, without the boundaries of age, explores the same topic from the adult woman’s perspective in her comic strips for El Jueves magazine. She employs the imagery of cut-out dolls in feminist activism, emphasising that a woman’s body is the freedom that no one can take away. The youngest among these artists, Núria Tamarit, uses the postcard format to denounce the challenges and barriers of her generation, marked by unstable working conditions and gentrification, in her story “En el Suelo” (On the Ground; 2019), where she portrays an early morning stroll through a bustling city in the company of her canine friend. A contemporary young woman, although different from the energetic and resilient protagonists of Maria Colino’s works in the comic strip Margarita (Margaret; Horas y HORAS, 1991), where a strong line and humour intertwine.

Lastly, Laura Pérez, in “Atávico” (Atavistic) from the comic Ocultos (Astiberri, 2019), presents a visceral, wordless visual narrative that underscores her contemplation of the profound changes wrought by the act of observation. A theme Maria Llovet also explores in Insecto (Insect), published by Norma in 2016, as she reflects upon the perspectives of women of the millennium as observed bodies.

In the second section, dedicated to Argentinian production, Mariela Acevedo reconstructs the history of women comic authors and illustrators in the country, examining some pivotal moments. She highlights the significance of Nosotras Contamos. Un Recorrido de Autoras de Historieta y Humor Gráfico de Ayer y Hoy (Buenos Aires, 2019),

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3 The BUP (Bachillerato Unificado Polivalente) was the name given to upper secondary education when the General Education Law of 1970 was passed. It consisted of three school years that, once completed, allowed access to a university programme.
an exhibition with a book catalogue that Acevedo coordinated herself (2019). This exhibition underlines the growth of graphic productions created by women over the past decade. The increased participation of women is not merely a result of individual efforts; rather, it reflects their collective involvement across various facets of the literary ecosystem. Notably, through collective anthologies, *Pibas* (Girls; Hotel de las Ideas, 2019) and *Historieta LGTBI* (LGBTI Comics; EMR, 2017); self-published works that foster new collaborations (Club Vampire and Las Fieras Fanzine, 2018); literary exhibitions, meetings and festivals (“¡Vamos las Pibas!”); and feminist magazines (*Clítoris*, 2010). In short, various platforms where women’s comic production can be promoted and encouraged, thus establishing points of contact.

In the second part, Patricia Breccia opens the selection. She has been contributing prolifically since the 1970s, and her work is represented by “A Sangre Fría” (In Cold Blood), published in 1987 in the magazine *Fierro*. This piece explores a fantastic theme and employs the concept of *monstrification* to depict a woman subjected to patriarchal pressures. Following is La Lejana with her unpublished work from 2020, *Pumita* (Little Cougar), a dynamic, intensely coloured sequence that draws parallels with Patricia Breccia’s story. It uses the theme of fantastic transformation as a form of resistance against the violence perpetuated by the patriarchal system. Then there is Dani Ruggeri, the head of editorial design for this publication, who, with *Nísperos* (Loquats; 2020), presents a portrayal of a free-spirited and adventurous female childhood; and Mariana Salina, a contributor to *Clítoris* magazine (2011–2013), with “Karate-Do” (2020), an unpublished story about violence against women in the public space and their empowerment through martial arts.

Nacha Vollenweider’s *Mujeres Volando* (Women Flying; 2013) delves into the existence of fears that threaten us in the street and the need to find ways to escape them. Along these lines, Gato Fernández explores the struggle against a fantastic being that hinders survival in an extremely precarious environment in “Quieta” (Be Still; *Fierro*, Volume 3, 2017). Femimutancia, a non-binary author, analyses the family as a space for abuse and multiple forms of violence in her fanzine *Les Niñes* (The Children; self-published, 2017), while Sole Otero explores the same topic in *Naftalina* (2020), specifically addressing issues of repression and rape. Concluding this section is María Alcobre in “La Nena (Cuarentena)” (The Girl, Quarantine), published sequentially in the magazine *Fierro* (2016–2017). This work examines the topic of abortion within a family from a child’s perspective. Lastly, the duo Muriel Frega and Ariela Kreimer with *SkatePark* (Albatros, 2020) present two models of romantic relationships (toxic/healthy) during adolescence.

The third section, focusing on Chile, opens with an introductory text titled “El Germen de una Genealogía Feminista” (The Germ of a Feminist Genealogy), authored by curators Paloma Domínguez and Isabel Molina. This introduction provides insight into the circumstances faced by the earliest Chilean women comic creators during the 1960s and 1970s, who were constrained to producing content for children, adhering to the traditional roles assigned to women as mothers, educators, and caregivers. Moving into the 1980s, they underscore the significance of Maliki, one of the few women of that era to contribute to a magazine of denunciation, satire, and humour like *Trauko* (1988–1991),
which resisted the Pinochet dictatorship and endured its censorship. Fast-forwarding to 2008, we see the emergence of the first feminist fanzine, *Tribuna Femenina* (2008–2014), created by Melina Rapimán, as an alternative to prevailing androcentric narratives where there was no room for women. As we arrive at the present day, we witness the rise of authors who have started their creative journeys through self-publishing, sharing their work on social media, contributing to fanzines, creating webcomics, and coming together in feminist resistance collectives to denounce issues such as patriarchal violence, the imposition of hegemonic beauty standards, the roles assigned to women, and matters related to reproductive processes, among others.

The collection begins with Estefani con E, a fragment from *Por Ti, por Mí, por Todas* (For You, for Me, for All; RIL Editores, 2019). This piece narrates the journey of a teenage girl as she becomes aware of the feminist struggle, starting from her domestic sphere and working her way up to the public arena. Following is *La Barba* (The Beard; 2020), presented in fanzine format under the banner of Visual Disobedience. This work confronts us directly, without any artifice, urging us to embrace our bodies and the hair that comes with them. In this story, a teenage girl dealing with hirsutism, a condition more common than often realised, chooses not to take hormones as she learns to accept her physical appearance. Melina Rapimán, touchingly and humorously, introduces us to another young woman who experiences shame and confusion during her first menstruation, lacking guidance and support from the adult women in her life. In a similar vein, the renowned Maliki contributes a comic strip that poignantly addresses fatphobia and her struggles with body image and the pursuit of ideal weight in an excerpt from *Diario Oscuro* (Dark Diary; Reservoir Book, 2019), which served as her therapy. Moving forward, Supnem presents a story inspired by real events astonishingly dating back to 2005 in Chile, when little or nothing was known about the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV). In the comic strip *Mi Sida* (My Aids), which was published in 2015 in a fanzine format, Supnem educates and raises awareness by depicting the challenges of undergoing an AIDS test during a time of widespread misinformation, particularly among young people and even more so for a transgender individual. Panchulei's *Carta Abierta a Mis Amigxs Artistas* (Open Letter to My Fellow Artists; 2019), which she published on her website, underscores the notion that art must be resistant and a vehicle for struggle and confrontation. This assertive stance is also apparent in Lesbiais, where the girl in “El Milagro” (The Miracle; 2017) confronts the religious institution, challenges the oppressive nuns, and questions God himself, all in her pursuit to live her lesbianism with her head held high. Devil Katy contributes to this confrontation with her fanzine piece *Acoso Callejero* (Street Harassment; 2016), in which she describes sexual harassment on the streets to put an end to it: “what truly counts is that we must never stay silent again”. Margarita Valdés offers an intimate perspective in “Diario” (Diary; 2017), featured in the magazine *Carboncito*, as she draws the reconstruction following an emotional breakup. The last Chilean author, Sol Díaz, co-founder of the inclusive feminist magazine *Brígida* (2018), presents the maternal story of *La Cuidadora del Huevo* (The Egg Carer; 2017) in shades of blue, white and red. In this story, a woman exhausts herself while tirelessly protecting an
egg, symbolising her child. Eventually, the egg transforms into a giant human with a flat face, who finally places the woman in the palm of the hand, reminiscent of King Kong, and says: “gracias [thank you]”. The only word in the story.

Iris Lam profiles the panorama of women’s comics and illustrations in the last section of this anthology, dedicated to Costa Rica, titled “La Incipiente Escena del Cómic Hecho por Mujeres en Costa Rica: La Ilustración Como Acto de Resistencia Feminista” (The Emerging Scene of Women’s Comics in Costa Rica: Illustration as an Act of Feminist Resistance). She highlights the importance of graphic humour illustrations published in national newspapers to disseminate the work of mainly male authors, who still predominate in the Costa Rican comics scene today. In this context, the organisation La Pluma Sonriente, dedicated exclusively to graphic humour in Central America and active from the 1980s to the present, is particularly noteworthy. The curator states that women’s names have remained largely anecdotal, hence the relevance of an anthology such as this one, which has the merit of bringing together the work of a group of women authors for the first time on the Costa Rican scene. This section introduces eight authors who are part of the history of comics produced in Costa Rica by women. Although pioneers, these individuals are not featured in this anthology, unlike the previous sections, as it focuses on new authors. However, Lam clarifies the criteria for selecting the 10 authors chosen, unlike the previous sections. They were chosen through a national call for submissions conducted intentionally to select professional illustrators and contemporary visual artists. Selection was based on the quality and relevance of their work within this project’s scope. The result is a group of authors born in the 1990s, most of whom are both illustrators and visual artists, who explored the world of illustration in this call, reflecting the “emerging scene” mentioned in the section’s title. However, there is a notable absence of representatives from previous generations.

The concluding selection in this anthology features the work of transfeminist artist Emma Segura, who in “Amiga de las Flores” (Friend of Flowers) explores the concept of the body as a garden, a motif further pursued by Ariel Bertarioni Barquero in “Clase de Natación” (Swimming Lessons), where the body transforms into an aquatic flower. The debate around hegemonic beauty takes centre stage in “Conversaciones Filosóficas con una Gata Señora en una Caja de Cartón: Los Pelos” (Philosophical Conversations with a Cat Lady in a Cardboard Box: The Hairs) by Raquel Mora Vega. Chabela Lazo Rosales delves into the intricacies of a creative and precarious daily life in “Domingo” (Sunday). “En lo Profundo de Mi Pecho” (In the Bottom of My Breast) by Daniela Acuña Carmona portrays various forms of pain. In the same vein, Karen Pérez Camacho alludes to disappearances and, probably, femicides in “La Última Vez” (The Last Time). The short format is represented by “Microcómic” (Micro Comics) by Ruth Angulo Cruz, offering a series of imaginative and ecocritical hyper-reports, and “Microrrelatos” (Micro Stories) by Angélica Solís, where the artist tackles the different forms of harassment women experience in the street. “Tiempo de Vivir en Peceras” (Time to Live in Fishbowls), by Mónica Morales Argüello, explores environmental and intimate stories, and Man Yu, in “Todo por Amor” (All for Love), expresses the struggle for self-esteem in a depressive tone.
In summary, this anthology presents a diverse and representative collection of women comic creators in open access, which is worth reading and exploring from different scientific and educational perspectives and should be related to each other across national borders. It is a commendable work that reflects the different concerns and issues of women comic authors from different places and generations. However, the absence of some recognised figures and the clarification of certain selection criteria remain notable aspects to consider.

Translation: Anabela Delgado

REFERENCES


Biographic Notes
Beatriz Moriano has a PhD in Languages, Literatures and Cultures from the NOVA University of Lisbon, with a thesis dedicated to the teaching and learning of Spanish as a Foreign Language through literary texts approached from an intercultural perspective. As well as a basic degree in Hispanic Philology from the University of Extremadura (Spain), she has a master’s degree in Teaching Spanish as a Foreign Language from the Antonio de Nebrija University (Spain). She has been a lecturer in Portugal since 2006, currently at the Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities of NOVA University of Lisbon, in the Department of Modern Languages, Cultures and Literatures, where she teaches undergraduate and master’s courses on the Master’s in Teaching programme. She is a member of the Centre for English, Translation, and Anglo-Portuguese Studies and collaborates with the European research project iCON-MICS - Investigation on Comics and Graphic Novels from the Iberian Cultural Area (Spain, Portugal, and Latin America), 2020–2024.

Email: bmoriano@fcsh.unl.pt
ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9375-3156
Address: Departamento de Línguas, Culturas e Literaturas Modernas, Faculdade de Ciências Sociais e Humanas, Universidade NOVA de Lisboa, Av. de Berna, 26 C, 1069-061, Lisboa, Portugal
Neus Lagunas has a master’s degree in Didactics for Second and Foreign Languages from Universidad Nacional de Educación a Distancia and a degree in Hispanic Philology from the University of Barcelona, where she also completed her Curso de Aptitud Pedagógica. She is currently a lecturer in the Department of Modern Languages, Cultures and Literatures at the Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities of NOVA University of Lisbon. She has worked at the Portuguese Catholic University and the Instituto Cervantes in Lisbon, and has also collaborated in the training of teacher classifiers for the Portuguese Ministry of Education – Instituto de Avaliação Educativa. She is a member of CHAM – Centro de Humanidades, and works on the relationship between reading and multimodal texts in the perception of collective identities. She regularly participates in the external evaluation of articles and scientific conferences and collaborates with the European research project Comics as a Tool for Teaching, Learning and Communication of the European project iCON-MICS - Investigation on Comics and Graphic Novels From the Iberian Cultural Area (Spain, Portugal, and Latin America), 2020–2024, European Cooperation in Science.

Email: nlagunas@fcsh.unl.pt
ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6924-7691
Address: Departamento de Línguas, Culturas e Literaturas Modernas, Faculdade de Ciências Sociais e Humanas, Universidade NOVA de Lisboa, Av. de Berna, 26 C, 1069-061, Lisboa, Portugal

Submitted: 30/03/2023 | Accepted: 26/04/2023

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