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Publication Date

2010

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UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, SAN DIEGO

**Women Rewriting the Nation:
Gendered Violence in Colombian Narratives (1950-2004)**

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the
requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy

in

Literature

by

Annie Mendoza

Committee in charge:

Professor Milos Kokotovic, Co-Chair
Professor Sara Johnson, Co-Chair
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Professor Rosemary M. George
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2010

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2010

DEDICATION

I would like to thank my dissertation committee: Professor Milos Kokotovic, Professor Sara Johnson, Professor Jaime Concha, Professor Rosemary M. George, Professor Nancy Postero, and Professor Laurence E. Prescott for their support during my research process. I especially thank Professors Kokotovic and Johnson, without whose advice, guidance, and editing I would not have been able to complete my doctoral research.

I also thank my parents Aicardo and Ana Luisa Mendoza, and my sister Tina Mendoza-Kolacz for their lifetime of encouragement towards my academic pursuits. You have taught me the value of education, and for that I am eternally grateful. I also would like to thank Eduardo Navas for his undying support—creatively and morally—during the process of my dissertation writing. I could not have completed this project without you. This project is dedicated to our son, Óscar Eduardo, who will be born within months of my doctoral defense, and who served as my inspiration during the last phase of the writing process.

EPIGRAPH

Me reconocí en ella
y dijimos ser barricada.
Salimos cabalgando en nuestros deseos
para ser mujer futuro
para ser mujer mañana.

Yvonne-América Truque

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

**Women Rewriting the Nation:
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by

Annie Mendoza

Doctor of Philosophy in Literature

University of California, San Diego, 2010

Professor Milos Kokotovic, Co-Chair

Professor Sara Johnson, Co-Chair

This dissertation is an analysis of Colombian feminist novels inspired by three interrelated historical periods: the 1928 massacre of striking union workers on the Caribbean coast, the mid-century era known as La Violencia in which Liberals and Conservatives engaged in an unofficial civil-war played out in the nation's Andean region, and finally the Drug Wars of the 1980s which took place in Colombia's urban centers. My examination reveals how, throughout the course of the past six decades, Colombian female writers disengaged slowly from predominant literary productions by bringing attention to the types of violence that women have endured as a result of state-

sponsored hostility.

I argue that since the 1960s female novelists have been situated at the forefront of Colombia's literary production as they portray the specific challenges of women in a nation plagued by successive cycles of violence. More importantly, they bring attention to the specific types of violence that women have endured as a result of state-sponsored hostility: loss of shelter and stability, domestic abuse, savage gendered aggression such as the killing of pregnant women, and sexual violence including incest and exploitation in the form of prostitution. I argue that these feminist narrations expose how each new cycle of violence in Colombia is intertwined with previous generations of hostility, as well as the resultant tragic outcomes that women continue to face, including lack of access to land, education, protection, and security.

In addition to its literary value, my project aims to further this collective effort of establishing commonalities between and amongst Latin American feminist narratives as they relate to history and culture. Using gender as a category of analysis, this project provides insight into how feminist novels on violence are inclined towards contesting patriarchal power structures in times of conflict. These cultural productions highlight how women challenge not only the limitations to their participation in the public sphere, but also their subordinate position within the national identity.

Introduction

Representations of national violence generally focus on the erosion of society based on the breakdown of relations among masculine agencies. Cultural critics like Mary Louise Pratt have made substantial contributions in this area in regards to Latin American literature. Pratt discusses the construction and ongoing endorsement of gendered violence in a society in which aggressors are usually conceived as masculine, while victims are feminine. In Spanish this is represented linguistically in the gender of the word victim for both female and male subjects: *la víctima*.¹ Pratt exposes how representations of violence are intimately linked to hierarchical social and sexual codes when she affirms “la violencia entre hombres se lee lógicamente como ruptura del contrato social. La violencia entre hombre y mujer, por contraste, se lee como afirmación o actuación del contrato sexual, o como evidencia de su poder excesivo” (93).² Throughout my dissertation I make reference to Pratt and other literary critics to argue that literature has historically been used as a vehicle to represent the disintegration of social codes between men and women, in direct relation to the concept of threat to the national identity that occurs in the face of political hostility.

Taking examples from Latin American literature, we see that national identity as constructed by male subjects is a tradition set in place since the emergence of foundational post-colonial texts from the nineteenth century. For this reason, literary representations of violence, in historical terms, have often failed to include the agency of women, along with other gendered or racialized groups that have challenged power

¹ Mary Louise Pratt, “Tres incendios y dos mujeres extraviadas: El imaginario novelístico frente al nuevo contrato social” in *Espacio urbano, comunicación y violencia en América Latina*. Ed. Mabel Moraña. Pittsburgh, Pa.: Instituto Internacional de Literatura Iberoamericana, 2002. 91-105.

² Pratt bases her discussion of sexual codes on Carol Pateman’s *The Sexual Contract* (1988).

relations, defined in accordance to political unrest. In terms of Colombia, representations of women are primarily constructed according to hierarchical power relations based on the sexual code that Pratt discusses in relation to Latin American literature. Literary representations by women emerging from the middle of the twentieth century onward, on the other hand, have been specifically inclined to contest power structures that keep subordinated groups excluded from the national identity, which in Colombia are hegemonic associations historically based on gender, race, and class dominance.

It is against this historical background of violence and subordination that I examine the literature of Colombian female novelists that began to emerge in the middle of the twentieth century. Their literary productions, I argue, have been influenced by how Colombia has contended with continuous eras of political and social hostility since the nineteenth century. Yet it is also informed by their intent to move out of the marginal position in which they have historically been placed because of these situations. I suggest that the word feminist can provide a useful framework for approaching these women's work. The definition of feminism that I employ in this project is concerned with the heterogeneity of women's experience. The feminist novels that I analyze are dependent on the development of a point of analysis that accounts for not only gender, but also for race and class in presenting the female experience. I define a "feminist novel" as one concerned with women's agency and resistance to their subordination in Colombian society. The novels I analyze allow a space to imagine possibilities of women overcoming different manifestations of violence in a way that social science or anthropological works about violence do not. I argue that these

authors envision a society in which egalitarian relationships between women—regardless of race, class, or sexual orientation—allows them to surpass their violent situations and become the agents of social transformation.

The way that the words “feminism” and “feminist” are used in this dissertation is informed by my academic formation in the United States, an important consideration to take into account due to these words’ shifting meaning depending on the location. Hence, my intention is not to conflate a U.S.-centric definition with how “feminism” is defined and perceived in Colombia. Nor do I contend that the authors I study are concerned with a “feminist position,” per se. I deliberately use this complex term to align the novels along with the tradition of social critique exercised by women globally. Therefore, even if the women whose work I analyze may repudiate the concept of feminism, as defined in the U.S. or Europe, the relation with resistance that they propose for their own intellectual anxieties is directly relevant to feminism as a form of discourse.³ This stance allows Colombian literary critics to recognize these authors’ contributions to bringing awareness to the distinct experiences of women—the feminist heterogeneity that I argue is the unifying marker of these novels—within the nation’s violent history.⁴ This is in spite of the fact that the great majority of female novelists in

³ This argument is made based on my extensive discussions about women in Colombia with Colombian filmmaker Patricia Montoya. Montoya discussed with me at length that there is a complex ideological web at play in Colombia regarding U.S.-based ideas and in particular the notion of “feminism” as it has been informed by the experiences of women in U.S. The fact is that this and other ideas that may benefit the subaltern may be rejected by Colombian intellectual culture because of their being deemed as part of U.S. imperialism. For Montoya’s research on this vacillation within Colombia and how it becomes complicated in other areas of Latin America, see her three films: *Sometimes walking. Sometimes sitting. Always carrying our own chairs.* (2007), *Candide* (2009), and *Medellin, how can I turn you into an object?* (2009).

⁴ See María Mercedes Jaramillo, Angela Inés Robledo, and Flor María Rodríguez-Arenas, *¿Y las mujeres?: ensayos sobre literatura colombiana* (1991); María Mercedes Jaramillo, Betty Osorio de

Colombia have emerged from the white elite of the nation. My analyses across the following four chapters show that the conditions of women living in as violent a society as Colombia's has been the catalyst for their creative production. In spite of their relatively privileged background, these novelists' literary productions maintain as a central concern the heterogeneity of women's experience—across identities marked not only by gender but also by race and class—as they survive within historical conditions perpetuated by the nation's violence.

Thus, Audre Lorde's explanation of and discourse against the supposed homogeneity of experience covered by women influences how I use and define feminism throughout this study. In her essay "Age, Race, Class, and Sex: Women Redefining Difference" (1980) Lorde discusses how feminism has often been misinterpreted, both by those who supposedly practice it as well as by those who intend to classify it, as a term that encompasses all of women's experiences: "By and large within the women's movement today, white women focus upon their oppression as women and ignore differences of race, sexual preference, class and age. There is a pretense to a homogeneity of experience covered by the word *sisterhood* that does not in fact exist" (116).⁵ We can interpret Lorde's reference to "white women" as meaning white feminists from the United States and Europe, as it is this group of women who have historically become the representational voice of a worldwide feminist movement. I concur with Lorde that this representation is erroneous. Indeed, the novelists that I include in my project show that identity categorizations based on race, class, and sexual

Negret, and Angela Inés Robledo, *Literatura y diferencia: escritoras Colombianas del siglo XX* (1995); and Patricia Aristizábal Montes, *Panorama de la narrativa femenina en Colombia en el Siglo XX* (2005).
⁵ "Age, Race, Class, and Sex: Women Redefining Difference." *Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches by Audre Lorde*. Freedom, CA: The Crossing Press, 1984. 114 – 123.

preference are linked to women's distinct experiences of subordination within violent conditions, the type of feminism that Lorde discusses. The texts I discuss show how these novelists maintain a consciousness of not only women's experience within Colombian violence, but also the particular experiences of those individuals, both women and men, marginalized by said categories. Violence within these texts is precisely informed, as well as fueled by, an intolerance of difference within and amongst these categorizations.

I examine Colombian feminist literary productions inspired by three interrelated historical eras of violence—the 1920s struggle of union workers on the Caribbean coast that led up to the 1928 Masacre de las Bananeras, the mid-century period known as La Violencia in which Liberals and Conservatives engaged in an unofficial civil war, and the Drug Wars of the 1980s. Beginning in the second half of the twentieth century, Colombian female authors strove for cultural legitimacy and literary recognition amongst the canon of male-dominated representations of the nation's violent history. Before this point, female novelists sparsely contested the dominant patriarchal ideology, and literary representations of women adhered to traditional maternal and domestic themes.

The purpose of my present analysis is multifold. I aim to first demonstrate how novels that maintain women's agency as a core concern of their texts are defined by women's experiences within the periods of violence in Colombia. Feminist novelists, I contend, use formal innovation and narrative experimentation that represents a definite rupture with past literary traditions to portray this gendered violence: forced displacements of women and their families, rape and assault as a mode of threatening

entire communities, physical and psychological abuse within the domestic space, and forced prostitution, amongst other disturbing circumstances.

The second purpose of my analysis of these texts is to expose how this recurring ideology of challenging patriarchal violence with feminist literary texts is relevant to women's studies at large, Latin American studies, and literary studies. Consequently, the objective of feminist novelists has been to challenge the power relation that frames women in a subaltern role in which their literary voices have been consistently overshadowed. This is of particular importance to Colombia because, while the country has enjoyed substantial literary recognition within the past few decades, the amount of scholarly research about Colombian literature written by women in relation to women's agency is not as exhaustive. For these reasons, I hope my analysis will foment an interest in a feminist point of view on Colombia. In what follows, I trace the history of Colombia since the end of the nineteenth century to argue that "gender," "violence," and "nation" are fundamental terms for the women who attempt to "rewrite the nation," as the title of my dissertation suggests.

The feminist novels I examine in this dissertation—*El hostigante verano de los dioses* (Fanny Buitrago 1963), *Estaba la pájara pinta sentada en el verde limón* (Albalucía Ángel 1975), *La multitud errante* (Laura Restrepo 2000) and *Delirio* (Restrepo 2004)—present the construction of the individual according to discourses on violence. By raising new questions on official history's recording of violence, these novels present their protagonists' complicated search for self within the societal turbulence that so strongly influences their identity.

A continuing thread, in which one era exacerbates the events that spark the origin of the next cycle of violence, connects all of these moments. It is therefore important to talk about this violence as cyclical, especially as it informs artistic production by women, because feminist novelists use their literary works as a way of understanding how national violence affects women's individual agency. Studying Colombian violence through literature adds to our understanding of the nation's history because, as I noted above, literature has historically been used as a vehicle to represent social codes. This is especially the case since they connect the micro relationship between individual men and women with the macro patriarchal construction of the nation.

Literature, as with other creative media such as music or visual arts, has been the way in which subordinated groups have been able to express the particularities of their oppressive realities. In producing literary works, these feminist writers challenge the categorizations used as determinants of the dominant Colombian identity to include the diverse identities of female, queer, poor, black and indigenous—categories that, while heterogeneous, may also overlap in each subject's experience. Feminist literature in Colombia is thus used as a space for imagining possibilities in which those who share one or several of these identities can envision a society in which they are able to contest the hegemony that has kept them in a subordinated position. Although the experience of women in Colombia is similar to other historical eras of violence across the globe, and particularly throughout Latin America, the evolution of representations of gendered violence as tied to each one of Colombia's interrelated manifestations of national aggression calls for new dimensions of analysis.

In the novels that comprise this project, feminism is expressed differently in each era, yet horizontal relations of solidarity between women prove to be a pivotal factor for survival. Within the era of union struggles on the Caribbean coast, women's solidarity against economic and cultural dominance demonstrate the struggle against regionalism and racism—in particular as a challenge to the Hispanic, center-Andean dominance of Bogotá. During the age of La Violencia, alliances between different social classes, as well as amongst rural and urban women, allowed a way to overcome the violence of the war as it specifically targeted women and children of entire communities in appalling sexual crimes such as murder and mass rapes. The memory of women's agency and survival during La Violencia thus becomes an inspiration for survival within continuing rural violence, such as among the millions who comprise Colombia's displaced population, and the urban violence that has evolved due to the nation's drug economy and that continues to plague the nation's major cities today. The feminist novelists included in this dissertation expose the exclusionary nature of the dominant national identity, not only for women, but also for other subordinate groups such as queer communities as well as Afro-Colombian and indigenous communities, categories that, again, also comprise the multi-faceted identities of women. This focus on the case of women in Colombia permits critical assessment of the complex intersections of history, violence, and female agency that feminist and literary historians can apply when examining women's historical role in other parts of the globe.

Women and violence in Colombia

As a means of exploring the inter-dependent influence of historical and literary productions on violence—and how women are strategically included or omitted from these representations—an overview of Colombia’s violent twentieth-century history is necessary. One of the greatest examples of the interconnection of literature and history is seen in the worldwide sensation caused by Gabriel García Márquez’s masterwork, *Cien años de soledad* (1967). The fact that this novel placed so much attention on the case of the “Masacre de las Bananeras”—the December 6, 1928 massacre of striking sub-contracted United Fruit Company workers in Ciénaga-Magdalena (part of Colombia’s Caribbean region)—shows how both literature and the recording of history have influenced each other. Many Colombians outside of the Caribbean region did not even know what this massacre was before the publication of García Márquez’s text, four decades after the tragedy. However, a collective memory kept alive via the Caribbean oral tradition is responsible for not allowing the massacre to be forgotten.⁶ The Masacre de las Bananeras, I argue, is the first tragedy that sets up the nation for repetitions of violence from the second half of the twentieth century to the present. This contests the widely believed idea that the era of La Violencia, which dominated the rural Andean center of the nation in the middle of the twentieth century—also the area with which Colombia’s hegemonic and cultural identity is affiliated—was the turning

⁶ The sources I primarily used to research the history of the United Fruit Company in Colombia are: *The Colombian Caribbean: A Regional History, 1870-1950* (1996) and “Fiction as History: The Bananeras and “Gabriel Garcia Marquez’s One Hundred Years of Solitude” (1998) both by Eduardo Posada Carbó; “Living in Macondo: Economy and Culture in a United Fruit Company Banana Enclave in Colombia” (1998) by Catherine C. LeGrand; *Bananas and business: the United Fruit Company in Colombia, 1899-2000* (2005) by Marcelo Bucheli; and *Banana: the Fate of the Fruit that Changed the World* (2008) by Dan Koeppel.

point for subsequent generations of political violence. My historical analysis demonstrates that Colombia's current violence was actually rooted in hostility against the communities of the nation's Caribbean region.

The opportunity for the United Fruit Company to exploit Colombian soil began during the 1890s when Minor C. Keith constructed a railway in the Magdalena region of Colombia with the permission of the Colombian Land Company.⁷ Keith began to export fruit to the United States via the Snyder Banana Company of Panama, still Colombian territory at the time. In 1899, Keith entered into a deal with Andrew Preston and Dow Baker, owners of the Boston Fruit Company and the biggest exporters of bananas from the Caribbean market (mainly Jamaica). The three men merged their companies on March 30, 1899 and formed the United Fruit Company (UFC).⁸ That year, the UFC, taking advantage of the lack of consolidation that had characterized Colombia since 1830 as well as the political instability the country faced during the War of a Thousand Days (1899-1902), entered the nation and established plantations

⁷ Minor C. Keith was the man responsible for creating railway systems in Chile, Perú, and Costa Rica, and capitalizing on the bananas he had planted along the length of the railway in the latter nation with his Tropical Trading and Transport Company.

⁸ The United Fruit Company by the beginning of the 1990s—almost 100 years after their arrival in Colombia—became known officially as Chiquita Brands International; this name was adopted when Chiquita became the most widely known subsidiary of United Brands (the name that the United Fruit Company officially adopted in 1970). Although the production of bananas drastically decreased from the 1930s onward in light of the tragedy of 1928, transnational violence continued until very recently via the unethical practices of Chiquita. The past few years have exposed how the company made extortion payments to the FARC (Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia) rebel group from the 1980s through the 1990s for use of land in the Urabá region, just south of Panamá, and that from 1997 – 2004 the Chiquita group paid AUC (Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia)—the main paramilitary group in Colombia—\$1.7 million dollars throughout these seven years to protect their land from guerrilla groups as well as to insure their presence there. This is in spite of the fact that in 2001 Washington listed the AUC as a terrorist organization. In 2007, Chiquita agreed to pay a \$25 million fine to the U.S. government for these actions.

throughout the Magdalena area.⁹ Rafael Reyes, the Conservative president who was in power immediately following the war, offered incentives to foreign businesses such as the UFC to operate in Colombia and therefore help jump start the economy. The UFC took advantage of this offer to construct more railroads and purchase more land for banana cultivation. After the War of a Thousand Days, a great number of soldiers from the interior departments, the majority of them Liberal sympathizers, migrated to the Magdalena region in search of work and soon became part of the banana industry's labor force. The UFC hired workers via subcontractors, thus creating distant relations between the company and the actual labor. In addition to a lack of recognition as official UFC employees, the company paid these sub-contracted laborers with vouchers and tokens, instead of Colombian currency, that could be used only in UFC run stores in and around the banana-producing zone.

Some historians have written about the first strike by the UFC workers in 1918 as having been directly influenced by the Russian Revolution of the previous year, stating that the bananeros were inspired to take the fruit cultivation into their own hands and work to oust the UFC from Colombia. Although I agree that the Russian Revolution inspired union activism for banana and fruit laborers not only in Colombia, but also throughout Central America, my research regarding labor practices in the Magdalena and the demands of the Unión Sindical de Trabajadores de Magdalena (USTM, formed in 1926), suggests that during this era the workers did not want the fruit company to leave, but rather to recognize their labor as officially part of the

⁹ 1830 is the year that Venezuela and Ecuador separate from La Gran Colombia, the nation formed by Simón Bolívar and led into independence from Spain in 1823.

company. As the workers' situation remained unchanged, in January of 1928 several union leaders from Colombia joined together to focus on the situation of the Magdalena workers.¹⁰ In November of that year 32,000 workers went on strike officially under the USTM when Thomas Bradshaw, UFC company manager, refused to negotiate with them. The UFC approached the government to allow them to hire strikebreakers to cut the bananas, a plan that they not only allowed, but also supported by offering the army to help in the endeavor. The first trainload of this fruit cut by strikebreakers and soldiers arrived in Santa Marta on December 4. When news of this reached the USTM they decided to gather in Ciénaga's main plaza on December 5 to demonstrate and

¹⁰ Although the combination of the UFC members, the bananeros, and the movement leaders may have seemed like an exclusive "boys club," in this dissertation focusing on women's connection to Colombian violence, I must make reference to the involvement of one particular activist who became known as the "Revolutionary Red Flower": María Cano. As I have stated previously, I echo the views of other scholars who have investigated the 1928 tragedy as a labor movement that pleaded for contracted recognition by the UFC, rather than an anti-imperialist movement to oust the fruit company from Colombia. Nevertheless, it is important to make an aside to discuss María Cano, the only woman known to have participated to such extent in support of the workers. Her involvement in the labor movement of the late twenties is often overshadowed in most discussions of the events surrounding December 6, 1928. Cano was born in 1887 to a middle-class family in Medellín. She became a journalist in 1922 and was active throughout Colombia as a Marxist labor agitator in the 1920s and 1930s. She was known for holding reading sessions for small groups of workers after she was exposed to Socialist literature from the Russian Revolution. She died in 1967 at age 80. Some studies and productions that have been dedicated to her are the biography written by Ignacio Torres Giraldo (a fellow Marxist activist and Cano's supposed lover), *María Cano, apostolado revolucionario* (originally released in 1972 as *María Cano: mujer rebelde*), and a movie released in 1991, "María Cano" starring the Colombian actress María Eugenia Dávila. In spite of the fact that she was the only woman known to have participated so heavily in the labor movements of the 1920s, the latter decades of the twentieth century did bring some warranted criticism of her legacy as a feminist pioneer. Various scholars note how she never once directed herself towards the female work force, which, by the 1920s, was already increasing in numbers. Jana Marie DeJong in "Recuperación de las voces de una década: feminismo y literatura femenina en los años veinte" (1995) discusses how Cano was no symbol for early feminism, as she was in reality supporting the patriarchal dichotomy of women in the domestic space, men in the space of labor: "A pesar de los logros que María Cano alcanzó como mujer en el mundo político varonil, fue criticada por dejar atrás, en la lucha a favor del obrero, a las trabajadoras. En ninguno de sus discursos de los años veinte ella habla a favor de este tan importante y explotado sector de la mano de obra barata. Al contrario, ella sostuvo que la mujer debía estar pendiente de la comodidad del obrero, y de hacer del hogar un nido" (34). DeJong goes on to discuss how in the aforementioned *María Cano: mujer rebelde* by Torres Giraldo, the author praises how Cano's focus towards women was to urge them to continue to support their husbands in the labor force, and quotes one of her speeches in admiration: "Mujeres: cultivad el jardín de vuestras almas, que será el oasis del hombre" (1972, 28).

demand again that the UFC recognize their petitions. Throughout the course of the day as hundreds of people gathered in the plaza waiting for the UFC company manager to appear and negotiate, General Carlos Cortés, leader of the Colombian army, dispatched his troops to the area. The crowd became discouraged upon learning that neither Thomas Bradshaw nor any UFC representative would appear. Cortés ordered the demonstrators to disperse by 11 p.m.; they refused and at midnight Cortés ordered the troops to open fire. “The army’s violent response to the strike, known as *la masacre de las bananeras*, is the single event for which United Fruit is most famous among Colombians” (Bucheli, 132). A number of explanations were published after this tragedy detailing the events that led up to the massacre. One of these viewpoints was that of Jorge Eliécer Gaitán, still a young lawyer and emerging politician at the time, who led the outcry against the UFC upon the heels of the tragedy.

In spite of the attention gained during the late 1920s and early 1930s regarding the plight of the bananeros, in general, many only learned about the tragedy after reading García Márquez’s *Cien años de soledad*. Eduardo Posada Carbó’s “Fiction as History: The Bananeras and Gabriel Garcia Marquez's One Hundred Years of Solitude” (1998) details how secondary-school students are required to read Álvaro Tirado Mejía’s “historical” account of the tragedy, based widely on García Márquez’s literary description (398). Therefore, those that learn of the tragedy because of *Cien años* cannot help but to associate the images they have formed of Macondo with the actual events they may have learned about in historical texts. In the 1991 documentary “My Macondo” directed by Dan Weldon, García Márquez talks about the event that he had

heard about all his life, claiming to inflate the number of victims in order to fit the dimensions of the novel he was creating:

Fue una leyenda, llegó a ser tan legendario que cuando yo escribí *Cien años de soledad*, pedí que me hicieran investigaciones sobre cómo fue todo y con el verdadero número de muertos. Porque se hablaba de una masacre, de una masacre apocalíptica; no quedó muy claro nada pero el número de muertos debió ser bastante reducido. Ahora lo que pasa es tres o cinco muertes en esa circunstancia en ese país en ese momento debió a ser realmente una gran catástrofe. Y para mí fue un problema porque cuando me encontré con que no era realmente una matanza espectacular, en un libro donde todo era tan descomunal como en *Cien años de soledad*, donde quería llenar un ferrocarril completo de muertos, no podía ajustarme a la realidad histórica, de decir que todo aquello se dio para tres o siete muertos o diecisiete muertos, no alcanza llenar ni un carrito... ni un vagón. Entonces decidí que fueran 3,000 muertos porque eran más o menos lo que estaba dentro de las proporciones del libro que estaba escribiendo. Es decir, que ya la leyenda llegó a quedar establecida como historia.

No one would argue against what García Márquez states at the end of his quote, that until the discussion of this “catástrofe” in *Cien años de soledad*, the history of the event had been kept under wraps. Nevertheless, other fictionalized accounts of the tragedy that appeared in that decade cite victims in the thousands as well. Efraín Tovar Mozo’s often-ignored *Zig zag en las bananeras*, published in 1964 (three years before García Márquez’s text) also claims 3,000 victims died in Ciénaga’s Plaza de la Estación del Ferrocarril (254). *Los muertos tienen sed: el drama de las bananeras* (1969) by Javier Auqué does not refer to the exact number of victims, but instead describes the bloodbath that ensued after Carlos Cortes Vargas and his troops moved into the Banana Zone to combat the supposedly violent protests that had formed against the fruit company. Although this novel was published two years after *Cien años*, it is safe to say Auqué Lara was writing during the same period as García Márquez and most likely was

not aware of the project, or the figure that García Márquez would be utilizing.¹¹ Ligia Aldana's doctoral thesis *Violencia, Raza, Mito e Historia en la Literatura del Caribe Colombiano* (University of Miami, 2003) also discusses the importance of the Costa's oral tradition in maintaining the memory of the Masacre de las Bananeras, saying that it has been believed throughout the Caribbean that the victims of December 6, 1928 were indeed in the thousands. Aldana argues that García Márquez's dismissal of the 3,000 figure "revela su propia falta de compromiso en el proceso de recuperar la masacre en su novela" (24) and that the phrase repeated in chapter fifteen—"Acuérdate siempre de que eran más de tres mil y que los echaron al mar" by the twin brothers José Arcadio and Aureliano Segundo is in reality "un eco de lo que siempre ha circulado en la memoria colectiva costeña en referencia a lo que supuestamente pasó, pero que nunca se confirmó oficialmente" (24). We can therefore say that such a globally renowned book like *Cien años de soledad* (where the use of oral history, oral traditions, and oral narratives have been (mis)interpreted as "magical realism") thus serves as the conversion of the memory of the massacre—kept alive for forty years because of oral traditions—into literary form which would serve as a testimonial to the events. Although there had been limited national political attention to the tragedy, for example the outcry led by Gaitán, García Márquez's detailed fictionalization of the massacre brought a much-delayed awareness to the events that surround December 6, 1928.¹²

¹¹ For a more detailed description of Tovar Mozo's and Auqué Lara's work, see David H. Bost "Una vista panorámica de las respuestas literarias a la huelga de las bananeras de 1928" (1991).

¹² García Márquez does not fictionalize the entire episode, however, and creates some instances where fiction meets history. He refers to the actual General Carlos Cortés Vargas who, during the union members' meeting in the plaza in Ciénaga in chapter fifteen, tells the gathered crowd they have five minutes to disperse; after giving them their last warning José Arcadio Segundo shouts to Cortés Vargas

The relation between the Masacre de las Bananeras and the subsequent violent era in Colombia that I analyze—the period known as *La Violencia*—is joined symbolically by the figure of Jorge Eliécer Gaitán.¹³ His ardent support of the plight of the bananeros after the 1928 tragedy and dedication to not only bringing justice to the victims, but also ridding Colombia of foreign dependence allowed him to rise to prominence as a radical political leader and the head of the far-left faction of the Liberal party. In 1929 Gaitán ardently spoke before the House of Representatives, the press, mass crowds, etc. to show how the Conservative government enabled the United Fruit Company to carry out their actions in the banana zone. His exposing their actions was influential in the Conservative party's loss of the 1930 presidential elections, thereby ending the 43-year long "hegemonía conservadora." Gaitán became the Liberal party's official candidate for the presidency in 1946, a position he lost to Conservative Mariano Ospina Pérez. He was again the official candidate for the 1950 elections, a campaign that was cut short on April 9, 1948. Gaitán's assassination in the capital city of Bogotá on that day—a tragedy referred to as the *Bogotazo*—is popularly considered the moment where the violence that had been brewing for almost two decades came to its most brutal and aggressive moment. In the aftermath of Gaitán's assassination there

"¡Cabrones! [. . .] Les regalamos el minuto que falta." The General in turn gives the order to fire (García Márquez, 319).

¹³ Gaitán, a mestizo who came from a poor family in Cucunubá-Cundinamarca, has often been referred to in historical discussions as a "charismatic leader" and was popular amongst many rural peasants as well as urban intellectuals. Although in 1936 he briefly served as mayor of Bogotá—not only the capital but also the hegemonic center of culture and politics in Colombia—he was given the derogatory nickname by Conservatives as "El Negro Gaitán," a term that he later appropriated throughout his campaigns. This nickname was in contrast to the physical appearance of another Liberal leader: Alfonso López Pumarejo, who's blonde-haired, blue-eyed complexion allowed him to be more trusted by the Liberal elite. Such a "safe" image helped lead to López Pumarejo's becoming president of Colombia on two separate occasions; first as the nineteenth president from 1934-1938 and then as the twenty-first president from 1942-1945.

were riots in and around Bogotá resulting in destruction of many parts of the city as well as thousands of injuries and fatalities. Gaitán's assassination was attributed to Juan Roa Sierra, a 22-year-old native of Bogotá.¹⁴ Roa Sierra was lynched within minutes of shooting Gaitán by an angry mob of liberals that had gathered downtown to hear the candidate deliver an address at the Plaza Bolívar for the Congreso Latinoamericano de Estudiantes.¹⁵ The liberals accused the Conservative Party leader, Laureano Gómez, of ordering the murder. Within a few hours of Gaitán's assassination, riots enveloped Bogotá, and by nightfall the city was engulfed in flames; the day's victims totaled 1,500 killed and 20,000 injured. The hostility of that day shifted from the urban riots and added to the rural aggression that had begun since the 30s and continued over the course of the next two decades. La Violencia ended "officially" in 1958 with the signing of the National Front. By the time rural violence actually declined in the early 1960s, more than 300,000 victims were claimed by the civil war, the majority of them poor peasants.

Of utmost importance to my project, is the fact that the growing insecurity in both the rural and urban areas of the nation led to a transformation of life for women as well during the decades of the civil war. In *La Violencia en Colombia* (originally published in 1962 with new editions in 1988 and 2005) by Germán Guzmán Campos, Orlando Fals Borda, and Eduardo Umaña Luna, the authors discuss the revoltingly large number of sexual crimes committed by army officials, policemen, as well as

¹⁴ In the numerous investigations of the assassination that have been carried out in the decades since the Bogotazo, medical documents have showed that Juan Roa Sierra—whose family was considered faithful Liberals and supporters of Gaitán—suffered from a mental illness. In regards to Roa Sierra's motives to murder Gaitán, literary critic Rigoberto Gil Montoya says: "[. . .] fue asesinado en una calle céntrica de Bogotá, a manos de un hombre humilde que parecía responder a intereses que hasta la fecha son motivo de especulación" (<http://www.utp.edu.co/~chumanas/revistas/revistas/rev23/gil.htm>).

¹⁵ At this conference a young unknown Cuban law student—Fidel Castro—was in attendance (Roldán, 2002).

“pájaros”—an early form of mafia assassin or paramilitary who carried out heinous actions against victims such as liberal leaders or union organizers (165). The text consists of first-hand testimonies of atrocious acts that occurred throughout Colombia’s interior departments. One of the most harrowing accounts involves mass rapes that occurred during La Violencia:

La policía política inicia su intervención con vejámenes, golpes e insultos; después roba, incendia y asesina; a la postre viola, estupra y remata en actos nefandos [. . .] A poco andar violenta chiquillas de ocho y menos años hasta matarlas [. . .] Más adelante se registra el caso monstruoso de violaciones colectivas cuando una sola mujer es arrojada a la tropa, con abierta incitación al delito por algunos oficiales psíquicamente lesionados (233).

After this account that appears in the section entitled “Crímenes sexuales” the authors provide numerous individual testimonies including specific names, dates, and locations of grotesque sexual violence against women of all ages. Further, peasant women who were widowed as their husbands became victims of partisan bloodshed, found themselves not only as the sole providers for families, but also in a constant state of movement, being displaced from one area to another.

This constant state of movement leads me to the third and final repetition of violence that I examine: the urban crime that proliferated as a result of the 1980s U.S. declared “War on Drugs.” In the aftermath of La Violencia and the Frente Nacional, the migration of hundreds of thousands of people from rural to urban spaces occurred at an alarming rate. Colombia’s Internally Displaced Population (IDPs) constitutes a large portion of the nation’s major cities such as Bogotá, Cali, Medellín, Cartagena, and Barranquilla. According to Mabel González Bustelo in *The Dispossessed: Chronicles of the Desterrados of Colombia* (2005) this population displacement began to occur in

condensed waves since the 1950s and 1960s. Currently, about 73% of Colombia's population lives in urban areas, whereas before the 1940s, the opposite was true. The great majority of people who fled rural violence were campesinos that settled throughout the undeveloped outlying areas of the major cities. Often referred to as simply "comunas" or "barrios populares," these marginalized urban areas in Colombia's major cities are much like slums or shantytowns in cities across the globe. One alarming example is that Colombia has the third and the twenty-seventh largest *megaslums* in the world, located in Bogotá and Cali, respectively.¹⁶ Known by the dual names of *El Sur* as well as, ironically, *Ciudad Bolívar*, Bogotá's megaslum is home to two million residents and *Aguas Blancas* in Cali has half a million (Davis 28).

Although the nation's urban areas did offer some opportunities for work in the industrial center, employment opportunities for former campesinos were scarce at best. One of the answers to lack of resources was found in the exploitation of coca cultivation and illicit drug production. In the 1970s and 80s the nation saw an alarming rise in illegal drug trafficking, an economy that flourished mostly in and around the major metropolitan centers of Medellín and Cali, where Colombia's most notorious cartels proliferated. In this examination, I do not include a detailed analysis of how this industry rose to power within the nation's economy. Nevertheless, I do not wish to simplify the evolution of drug trafficking in Colombia. What is important to my analysis is to emphasize how irregularity in education, employment, and housing are best exemplified in the populations that inhabit the outlying areas of Colombia's major

¹⁶ According to Mike Davis in *Planet of Slums* (2006), a "megaslum" is the merging of a shantytown with a squatter community.

cities. Thus, when opportunities came about for marginalized populations to somehow benefit from the illicit drug trade, new waves of violence as tied to the male-dominated power of the drug cartels were experienced.

Feminist literary representations of Colombia's violence

Tracing the evolution of women's writings in Colombia is a unique way to comprehend the generations of violence that, as I have shown, have so discouragingly formed Colombian history since the end of the nineteenth century. Feminist novelists' portrayals of historical conflict, primarily surfacing from the 1960s onward, have shed light on the previously under-investigated ways in which victimization of women and specifically gender-based violence became a norm throughout these generations. In a sense, these feminist novelists embarked upon "re-writing" history, with the aggression Colombian women experienced throughout these violent repetitions as their main lens of analysis. Echoing Joan W. Scott's view on history in relation to gender (1988), my concern is not to examine women's participation or role within history in order to acknowledge their agency and then simply move forward. Rather, I use gender as a category of historical analysis, because, as Scott maintains, this "requires analysis not only of the relationship between male and female experience in the past, but also of the connection between past and current historical practice" (31). Based on this idea, examining the category of gender in relation to violence allows for an exploration of how women challenge the dominant, patriarchal order that allows for continuous cycles of conflict within the nation. Feminist novels challenge patriarchy by forcing the reader to question what it means to be a woman in a country that validates hierarchical

constructions of power based on gender, along with other categories such as race and class. The way I examine literature in this project is in accordance with Scott's two-part definition of gender: "gender is a constitutive element of social relationships based on perceived differences between the sexes, and gender is a primary way of signifying relationships of power" (42). In effect, these portrayals offer an invaluable space for exploring social relations based on power, a notion not exclusive to Colombian or Latin American literature or history. Rather, feminist literary representations account for women's distinct ways of challenging their subordinate gender roles that can be applied to other cases worldwide. In the Colombian feminist novels that I examine, such a challenge is presented not only through women's agency—as represented by the protagonists—but by the writers' actual literary endeavors that contribute significantly to the evolution of a feminist literary tradition. Just as female novelists face various obstacles to the process of writing and publishing in Colombia, the protagonists they create are confronted with the dilemmas involved in surviving as a woman within a violent society. Their breaking with traditional domestic themes or the overused symbol of women as victim has allowed for formally innovative and unconventional works—both in form as well as in theme—that continue to present an alternative history to what has been presented in official history.

Violence is a key element of this examination, and in particular its inherent link to power relations based on gender. Within each of the three intertwined generations of violence, the protagonists encounter an ever more hostile society based on political disruptions. The texts embark upon the task of exposing how the state actually promotes war in the public sphere, not only leading to the loss of lives, but also to

increasing economic disparities such as poverty and inequality. The Masacre de las Bananeras, which occurred on the brink of the worldwide economic depression, only served to decrease opportunities for viable employment throughout the Caribbean. During La Violencia, danger and insecurity forced entire communities to be displaced to different rural areas as well as the peripheries of the nation's urban centers, both leading to poverty and instability. The urban crime that expanded with the power of the drug economy forced many individuals throughout these peripheries to choose a life involving violence against others in similar situations in order to supersede their individual victimization. All of the texts I examine, to varying degrees, link these forms of violence carried out in the public space to more subtle forms of violence carried out in the private, domestic space. In particular the novels make evident how sexual and psychological abuse within the family is inherently tied to hierarchical codes of power that are framed socially. Violence, thus, becomes a main protagonist of the novels examined precisely because of the intrinsic nature in which it becomes associated with the private sphere as well. This is clear in the way violence is reproduced by those subordinated (by gender, class, or race) in an attempt to somehow associate with the dominant, social order of the nation. This shifts violence into more generalized categories that range from lack of access to land in both rural and urban areas, into social practices that lead to sexual and psychological harm. In this sense the term nation, within my project, is associated with how women have been historically alienated from the national consciousness. The novels I discuss present the ways in which physical identification is tied to the dominant ideology of Colombia, not only according to a heteronormative male/female binary, but also against categories of class

and race, to the exclusion of Colombians of African or indigenous descent. Thus, Colombian female novelists whose works emerged after the 1960s, appropriated the historical connections of “gender,” “violence,” and “nation” into their work. In this endeavor, I use the work of literary critic Francine Masiello throughout this project to analyze how feminist novels respond to and challenge violence as it is connected to both the ideology of the state and relations of power within the domestic space.¹⁷

The first two chapters of this dissertation explore how the Colombian novel, until the middle of the twentieth century, continued with the literary convention of realist descriptions of the nation’s Andean provinces and people as representative of the national identity. This allowed for an emphasis of Colombian identity as rooted in a tradition of Hispanic patriarchal heritage from the center highland regions (Raymond L. Williams, 1991). Alternative literary depictions of a national culture that included the agency of both women and racialized communities (specifically from the regions other than the nation’s interior) were practically non-existent. Eduardo Caballero Calderón’s *El Cristo de espaldas*, as discussed in chapter one, is one of the most celebrated examples of the social realist, Andean novel that represented La Violencia. The cultural hegemony associated with these literary portrayals maintains the still widely believed association that the era of La Violencia was the first manifestation of widespread political hostility in the nation, as opposed to the Masacre de las Bananeras. *El Cristo de espaldas* was part of a sub-genre of “novelas de La Violencia,” where violence was not only a force created by man, but a force against which man had to grapple. However, more than merely representing the rural-Andean violence between campesino

¹⁷ "Texto, ley, transgresión: especulación sobre la novela (feminista) de vanguardia" (1985).

populations with opposing political views, I argue that Caballero Calderón's novel is indeed an early example, albeit limited, of women's victimization as well as survival during civil war. Although *El Cristo de espaldas* does adhere to the conventional literary and thematic structures of the time, Caballero Calderón's portrayal of women is progressive in moving away from characteristically romantic female protagonists that had grown redundantly typical by the middle of the twentieth century. By contrast, Caballero Calderón presents women as not only victims, but also the embodiment of survival within the appalling conditions of this era. This tactic would be followed by novelists such as Álvaro Cepeda Samudio, whose female protagonists in *La casa grande* question their supposedly weak positions in relation to men as well as the direct connection between violence in the public and domestic sphere.

Cepeda Samudio's novel, which I discuss in chapter two, emerged amongst depictions of the Masacre de las Bananeras during the 1960s, after the sub-genre of La Violencia waned in popularity. I juxtapose *La casa grande* against Fanny Buitrago's *El hostigante verano de los dioses*, which also presents the events surrounding the workers' struggle while outlining how both national and domestic spaces are interrelated. However, in Buitrago's text, the architect of the state-level violence against the bananeros is a female protagonist, who, in order to obtain both social and economic power, reinforces patriarchal systems of discrimination and exploitation. This thematic contrast is important because Buitrago reverses the traditional social order represented in literature before the 1960s, where women were solely seen in the role of the victim. This feminine resistance to traditional gender signifiers that *El hostigante verano de los dioses* represents is in accordance with Francine Masiello's

discussion of how vanguardist feminist novels transform the symbolic processes that support patriarchal ideology. As I also discuss in this chapter, exposing the relation of violence and power in accordance with race and ethnicity was a main concern for the writers, like Buitrago, who emerged from Colombia's Caribbean coast. In effect, Buitrago's first novel also challenges hegemonic ideology, as she explores the marginalization of the Caribbean from Colombia's cultural identity through relations of power based not only on gender, but also on racial categories, specifically as they maintain Afro-Colombians in a subordinated position.

El hostigante verano de los dioses created an unprecedented literary space for feminist narrations on violence, one that begins to be inhabited in later decades by such Colombian female writers as Albalucía Ángel and Laura Restrepo, whose works I focus on in chapter three. Ángel's *Estaba la pájara pinta sentada en el verde limón* and Restrepo's *La multitud errante* revisit La Violencia to account for a specifically female experience during this age and in order to present an alternative version of official history according to a popular, collective memory. In *Estaba la pájara pinta sentada en el verde limón*, the main protagonist Ana is torn between her bourgeois lifestyle and her political ideals. These political ideals are symbolized through her friend Valeria and lover Lorenzo who have both chosen to form part of the nation's growing rebel insurgency. *La multitud errante*, on the other hand, questions the divisions of public and private spheres as the novel focuses on Colombia's internally displaced population forced to live in a constant state of movement from one NGO operated camp to another. In effect, the campesina figure of *La multitud errante*'s Matilde Lina reminds us of María Encarna in *El Cristo de espaldas*: they are both symbolically joined by two

distinct yet intertwined eras of hostility, and their existence is most appropriately defined by displacement as a result of violence. Further, Restrepo's *La multitud errante* calls attention to the harrowing classification of Colombia having one of the largest internally displaced communities of the world, second only to Sudan.

Violence also defines the existence of the protagonists in *La Virgen de los sicarios*, *Rosario Tijeras*, and *Delirio*, the focus of chapter four. However in these novels set in urban spaces plagued by drug trafficking, violence takes a turn into sexual exploitation as well as psychological trauma. Literature that represents the nation's urban spaces in the 1980s—when Colombia was targeted as the culprit for international drug use—is primarily concerned with revealing attempts for individual survival that have created new incarnations of violence such as *sicarismo* and sexual exploitation as directly related to the male-dominated power of the drug economy. In Fernando Vallejo's *La Virgen de los sicarios* and Jorge Franco's *Rosario Tijeras*, both set in the slum areas of Medellín, teenagers reproduce violence in their role as assassin, while being simultaneously exploited sexually. Laura Restrepo's *Delirio*, which depicts the generations of the Londoño family who pertain to Bogotá's oligarchy, reveals how the maintenance and acceptance of gendered violence crosses over various societal and class levels, as well as back and forth from the public to private spheres. Gendered violence in *Delirio* results in a variety of physical and psychological trauma, not only for Agustina, but also for her brother Bichi as well as Dolores, who is brutally murdered and then easily disposed in an act of violence tied into the drug economy. This notion of the disposable individual is presented in similar fashion against the figures of teenage assassins Alexis, Wílmur, and Rosario, as depicted in both Vallejo's and Franco's texts.

Nevertheless, and as proven by the popularity of the different forms in which *Rosario Tijeras* has taken—pop song, movie, and telenovela—Colombian identity is increasingly defined against notions of urban violence and sexual exploitation, which have become part of the few viable options for those marginalized by gender, race, and class.

Chapter One

Novel, Patriarchy, and Ideology: The “novela de La Violencia” and *El Cristo de espaldas*

The “novela de La Violencia” is the social realist, Andean novel commonly used to portray the civil war that took place primarily in the interior departments of the nation from about the late 1940s to the early 1960s. My argument in this chapter focuses on how, throughout the middle of the twentieth century, the narrative portrayal of the nation’s violence was still being represented by a literature characterized by an overabundance of realist and meticulously detailed descriptions of Colombia’s Andean provinces, as well as the people that inhabit them. I examine Eduardo Caballero Calderón’s *El Cristo de espaldas* (1952) as the prototype of the novela de La Violencia. The era of the novelas de la La Violencia was the culmination of an adherence to patriarchal literary structures that had been dominant since the inception of the Colombian novel in the nineteenth century; it was not until this type of literature had subsided, in part due to literary movements that began emerging in Colombia’s Caribbean, that an opportunity opened up for feminist narratives that challenged domestic themes and traditional literary strategies.

The novela de La Violencia, I argue, continued with the convention of the nationally ideological novel of the nineteenth and early twentieth century (Raymond L. Williams, 1991) that portrayed the culture of Colombia’s interior Andean region as

synonymous with the identity of the nation.¹⁸ This ideological novel is best exemplified by two of Colombia's most celebrated texts: Jorge Isaacs's *María* (1867) and José Eustacio Rivera's *La vorágine* (1924). *María*, considered Colombia's national romance (Sommers, 1991), parallels the love story of María and Efraín with praise for the western Andean province of the Valle del Cauca. In Isaacs's novel, María is a girl who arrives at a young age to her uncle's hacienda, aptly named "El Paraíso," after surviving a voyage from Jamaica, where her family was part of the land-owning Creole aristocracy. Another reference that romanticizes the Valle del Cauca as geographic model of the nation is the inner narrative within *María* chronicling the "amor imposible" of hacienda slaves Nay and Sinar, which serves as a parallel to that of María and Efraín. Isaacs traces the couple's lives from their native Western Africa as members of the Achanti nation, their kidnapping, separation, Nay's trans-Atlantic voyage, and finally subjugation, at the ironically named Hacienda el Paraíso. Complete with *costumbrista* descriptions that illustrate the plantation and slave society/economy still in place decades after independence from Spain, *María* is continuously revered as one of Latin America's master works of the nineteenth century as well as the pinnacle of the sentimental novel (Sommer, 1989). Rivera's *La vorágine*, part of a more

¹⁸ In *The Colombian Novel, 1844 – 1987* (1991), still the most comprehensive survey of Colombian literary production from independence through the end of the twentieth century, Raymond L. Williams delineates his discussion of the interior Andean novel within regions, including the Caribbean coastal tradition. Williams discusses the interior Andes in three distinct categories and related literary traditions: the Interior Highland (Bogotá and surrounding areas), the Greater Cauca (the Valle del Cauca including Cali) and Greater Antioquia (Medellín and surrounding area). Although I do recognize that the interior region of Colombia—as any region of the nation for that matter—is not culturally homogeneous, for the purposes of my study, I designate the interior Andean region as encompassing all of the Highlands, the Greater Valle, and Antioquia. I do agree with Williams that these regions have each had distinct literary traditions, influenced by cultural and political factors, nevertheless, I argue throughout this project that the Andean interior as a whole has historically assumed the ideological and hegemonically dominant cultural identity of Colombia; an identity that has served to marginalize the Pacific and Atlantic regions of the nation, and their respective cultural and literary traditions.

naturalist tradition in realism showcased in the early twentieth century, is also in tune with Isaacs's regionalist literary praise for the Andes. *La vorágine*'s main protagonists—Arturo and Alicia—leave the safe confines of Bogotá and face impending danger when they witness the appalling conditions of the Amazon, both natural and social. According to the novel, not only is the climate of the Amazon not appropriate for humans, but the exploited rubber laborers there—the *caucheros*—represent the antithesis of Arturo and Alicia: the classic “civilización versus barbarie” theme is apparent.

When partisan violence reached its peak in the middle of the twentieth century, an age officially given the vague title of “La Violencia,” literature that emerged to represent the conflict primarily affecting the nation's interior continued to utilize the prototypical model of the novel for which works like *María* and *La vorágine* were celebrated.¹⁹ In the present discussion, I use Eduardo Caballero Calderón's *El Cristo de espaldas* as an example of how Colombian writers' continued to adhere to traditional literary structures through the middle of the twentieth century, both in terms of theme as well as narrative strategies. Nevertheless, I do propose that Caballero Calderón's preoccupation with how La Violencia particularly affects the female protagonists in his novel would be a tendency that later Colombian writers such as Álvaro Cepeda Samudio (*La casa grande*, 1962) would follow in their depiction of other generations of Colombian violence. This in turn ushered in an opportunity for female writers to look at violence via a particularly gendered lens beginning in the 1960s.

¹⁹ Even today, more traditionally conservative literary critics believe that within the Colombian canon, three novels continue to reign as superior to all others: Isaacs's *María*, Rivera's *La Vorágine*, and Gabriel García Márquez's *Cien años de soledad* (1967). More discussion of *Cien años de soledad* follows in chapter two of this dissertation.

Before that could occur, however, the trend of the prototypical novel of La Violencia, such as *El Cristo de Espaldas*, began to dissipate toward the end of the 1950s. Up until this point, novels written by and about women continued to adhere to traditionally domestic themes and were in tune with periodicals such as *La novela seminal* and *Lectura breve* (both appeared in the 1920s) where women writers in Colombia were able to showcase their short stories and poetry. María Cárdenas Roa (who went by the pseudonym of Luz Stella) wrote *Sin el calor del nido* (1924), which was published as a series in the *Novela semanal*. *Sin el calor del nido* reinforces traditional values of honor, love and domesticity. One interesting example of the intent to break with the tradition that Luz Stella followed was Isabel Pinzón de Carreño's (who went by the pseudonym of Isabel de Montserrate) novel *Hados* (1928), published in the United States. As Jana Marie DeJong (1995) states: “[. . .] esta novela refleja las experiencias feministas de su autora en Colombia, Europa y Estados Unidos. Se reúnen aquí las preocupaciones de las mujeres colombianas que se encontraron atrapadas entre una sociedad tradicional religiosa y una modernizadora, progresista” (47). Of course the novel's publication in the United States reinforces the lack of ability for a female writer in Colombia to transmit these ideas to a reading public of her home country, and specifically during the era of political and economic turmoil occurring in the late 1920s.²⁰ Further, it seems as though Carreño makes a point to personalize her story in order to not call any attention to the widespread inequalities women faced back on her native soil.

²⁰ More discussion of the 1920s in Colombia follows in chapter two.

As important as these novels are, unfortunately, they are for the most part, unknown both within and outside of Colombia; thus reinforcing the nation's lack of outstanding female novelists such as María Luisa Bombal from Chile, Norah Lange from Argentina, or Teresa de la Parra from Venezuela whose works still resonate almost a century later. The adherence to maternal and domestic themes up until the 1960s, I propose, did not allow the opportunity for a feminist and avant-garde depiction of violence, in particular as it affected women. In general, by the middle of the century, there were still no Colombian novelists creating avant-garde, groundbreaking, internationally acclaimed works, as was the case in the rest of the Americas. Williams notes that:

[. . .] the Colombian novel in general did not fit the political contingencies necessary for its blossoming on the national scene. Colombia certainly did not provide favorable ground for the cultivation of the modern, innovative fiction that began to appear in the 1940s throughout Latin America, from the stories of Borges to the novels of Asturias and Carpentier (44).

However, after the 1950s, when the trend of the novels of *La Violencia* finally died out—parallel, of course, to the formal “end” of *La Violencia* by the beginning of the 1960s—more marginalized literary groups not only began to get the attention that they deserved, but they were at the forefront of the transformation in novelistic expression long overdue in Colombia. The works of writers from the previously ignored area of the Caribbean as well as Afro-Colombian writers from throughout the nation were noticed as the historic and literary age of *La Violencia* finally came to a close. This moment coincided with global feminist movements and advances in the rights of women in Colombia, such as gaining the right to vote in 1954. Therefore another

marginalized literary group—Colombian feminist writers—emerged with works that presented artistic strategies and thematic tendencies that broke with traditional paradigms. They too, depicted violence, but in a way that discussed particularly gendered aggression against women. I turn to this discussion in chapter two. Before I move on to that, in this chapter, I provide a discussion of the era of La Violencia, and how the novels of La Violencia became the literary response to this national conflict. Further, the emphasis on the female protagonists that Eduardo Caballero Calderón employs demonstrates an early concern with how women grapple with violence, and the gendered type of violence they confront. To varying extents, other male writers would later demonstrate such preoccupation, before it finally became a central concern for female novelists in Colombia beginning in the 1960s.

***El Cristo de espaldas* and the literature of La Violencia**

Central to this chapter is the mid twentieth-century civil war in Colombia known by the ambiguous title of “La Violencia.” Up to this historical moment, no female writers in Colombia had described within literary works the gendered violence that occurred during this era. Even by the 1940s, the only celebrated Colombian female writer was Soledad Acosta de Samper (1833 - 1913) who, throughout her lifetime, published several novels, short stories, and essays including *La mujer en la sociedad moderna* (1895), a book of six essays in which she discusses the fundamental role of women throughout history to emphasize how they should continue to work, in some aspect or another, for the greater good of society. An example of a very liberal outlook on gender roles, Acosta de Samper presents in her work “ejemplos de mujeres que han

vivido para el trabajo propio, que no han pensado que la única misión de la mujer es la de mujer casada, y han logrado por vías honradas prescindir de la necesidad absoluta del matrimonio, idea errónea y pernicioso que es el fondo de la educación al estilo antiguo” (Santiago Samper Trainer, 143). Raymond L. Williams also quotes a statement of Acosta de Samper’s regarding the lack of a feminist literature in Colombia: “While the masculine part of society occupies itself with politics, remaking the laws, and tending to the material progress of these republics, wouldn’t it be nice if the feminine part occupied itself in creating a new literature” (34). This quote from “La misión de la escritora en Hispanoamérica” in *La mujer en la sociedad moderna* is an early acknowledgement of such a lack. Of course a focus on acts of violence against women would not be fashioned from Soledad Acosta de Samper’s pen, as she was not only from Bogota’s privileged class, but also the daughter of one of Colombia’s most important military officers, as well as the wife of José María Samper, a member of congress. Nevertheless, Williams also discusses how Acosta de Samper’s *El corazón de la mujer* (1869) is one of the four major novels of the nineteenth century in Colombia, the other three being *María, Manuela* (Eugenio Díaz, 1858), and *Frutos de mi tierra* (Tomás Carrasquilla, 1896), noting that from 1910 – 1930, no woman reached the stature of Soledad Acosta de Samper and the novel in Colombia had been completely male dominated. My analysis of *El Cristo de espaldas* will help to demonstrate why things were this way.

In 1966, Robert Kirsner attempts an early understanding of the novelas de La Violencia in “Four Colombian Novels of «La Violencia»”:

Having begun as a political revolution, *la violencia* has deteriorated into sheer savagery, an unbelievably cruel remnant of the wars between Liberals and Conservatives. [. . .] Colombian novels of the last decade can be fully understood only if we are sensitive to the social conditions out of which the novelists have forged a new reality (70).

This prolonged and senseless age of violence triggered a huge increase in Colombian literary production, becoming its own sub-genre. Although many of the earlier and lesser known works did adhere strictly to a journalistic writing style, a whole array of authors used literature to re-create violence—*literaturizar la violencia* (Mena, 96)—and thereby reflected the nation’s violence in an alternative manner than what could be read in daily newspapers. Just as prior literature utilized the landscape of the Andean region as a protagonist whose existence was essential for the movement of the plot, these novelists turned violence itself into a central character—a force not created by man, but rather a force against which man had to grapple. Lucila Inés Mena says in “Bibliografía anotada sobre el ciclo de La Violencia en la literatura Colombiana” (1978):

La literatura para estos escritores no representa un medio para comunicar la realidad social, sino que se constituye en parte integrante de esta realidad. Es decir, las novelas no se subordinan a esta realidad sino que, a través de un lenguaje, crean su propia realidad y su propia autonomía (96).

The function of these works, according to critical consideration years after the culmination of this era, is a conscious, active writing in order to reflect on and understand the manifestations of La Violencia, as opposed to simple documentation of this time of bloodshed. Nevertheless, in order to keep Colombia’s reading public interested in the theme of La Violencia, these novelists did not necessarily break with the traditional literary realism that had dominated the nation’s literature up until the mid twentieth century. By not breaking with foundational literature, and thereby employing

the literary strategies that the dominant reading public was acquainted with—linearity, a single omniscient narrator, the overabundant and meticulously detailed descriptions of nature, the naturalist description of the “common” individual such as the rural peasant, domestic themes that reinforce the power of the patriarchal figure in each household, and the unquestioned power of religion and spiritual forces in the everyday movement of the world—the authors who wrote novelas de La Violencia assured themselves of a reading public among Colombia’s cultural elite. The authors of what are considered the “great” literary works that came out of the highland tradition have generally been Liberal in terms of their political ideologies, yet traditional in terms of their cultural productions. Therefore, these writers portraying La Violencia were not interested in shaking any cultural foundations in Colombia, but rather in using traditional paradigms, such as realist literature, to make the reading public aware of actual national occurrences. So it is no wonder then that the violence occurring in the highland region during the 40s and 50s became the gauge of what thematic principles were acceptable for Colombian literature as a whole, since the national identity had historically been tied to this area. As Williams discusses in his survey of Interior Highland literature:

Bogotá and the Interior Highland Region have been a privileged writing center since the Colonial period and dominant in most areas of literary production since independence. From the beginning of the Colonial era, “culture” in this region’s context has implied a literature produced by a relatively small but hypersophisticated lettered elite often active in political life [. . .] Characteristic of Highland culture are a dominant Spanish heritage, a sophisticated writing culture (frequently self-conscious), and a sparse presence of oral culture in literature [. . .] Directly linked to Spain’s literature, the Highland writers have been relatively uninvolved with the oral and literary cultures of Colombia’s other regions (56)

In terms of content, novels of La Violencia, all products of this specific situation of rural violence between peasant populations with opposing political views, have three characteristics in common. First, they criticize the Catholic Church as an institution that maintains power over the state in conjunction with the Conservative party, thereby oppressing Liberal peasants and other socially and politically marginalized groups. In the novels of La Violencia, this institution's hypocrisy is repeatedly revealed: the church, which supposedly follows the image and teachings of Jesus Christ, not only turns a blind eye to the violence that the peasant population suffers, but also supports the political hierarchy that governs Colombia. Second, in the novels of La Violencia, the main protagonist is often an anti-hero who tries to lead a group of people battling a chaotic situation. This person is normally a Liberal party sympathizer, although he often is not identified as such. He can be further classified as an anti-hero since his desire to support a Liberal cause is often in conflict with his own isolation and introverted personality. Lastly, a group of secondary protagonists exist in the background of these novels. These are the community of individuals, usually peasants, who are displaced and in a state of movement as a result of violence.

Some of the most recognized works of fiction on La Violencia, cited by Kirsner as well as a large group of literary critics are: *El Gran Burundún Burundá ha muerto* (1952) by Jorge Zalamea Borda, *Lo que el cielo no perdona* (1954) by Ernesto León Herrera; *El día señalado* (1964) by Manuel Mejía Vallejo and *Condores no entierran todos los días* (1972) by Gustavo Álvarez Gardeazábal.²¹ In addition, a number of

²¹ See Robert Kirsner, "Four Colombian Novels of "La Violencia" (1966), Lucila Inés Mena, "Bibliografía anotada sobre el ciclo de La Violencia en la literatura Colombiana" (1978), Augusto Mesa Escobar, "Literatura y violencia en la línea de fuego" (2000), Russel W. Ramsey, "Critical Bibliography

works by Eduardo Caballero Calderón are usually at the center of surveys of fiction of La Violencia. He is often cited as one of the most relevant authors from this era since his novels *El Cristo de espaldas* (1952), *Siervo sin tierra* (1953), *Manuel Pacho* (1963) and *El buen salvaje* (1966) are considered not only part of the vast bibliography of novelas de La Violencia, but are considered some of the most important in Colombia's literary canon.²² In "Eduardo Caballero Calderón y la historia de los años cincuenta" (2000), Helena Iriarte Núñez discusses how the age of La Violencia had a profound impact on Colombian intellectuals—such as the writers listed above—who felt it was imperative to write in order to provide a testimonial of the tragic occurrences plaguing the nation. Iriarte Núñez argues that it was Caballero Calderón's work, in particular, that shed light on the bloodshed among the rural population, where the core of La Violencia was situated:

Caballero Calderón conoció profundamente no sólo la geografía, la situación del campesino en el interior del país, su cultura, su psicología, sus frustraciones y sus sueños, sus necesidades y sus carencias, sino también la historia y lo que estaba ocurriendo durante esos largos años que conformaron la llamada época de la Violencia en Colombia. Frente a estas realidades, la visión que tiene del campo y de sus moradores es realista y crítica; no los idealiza ni los exalta; ni hace divisiones maniqueas. Penetra en los problemas sociales, políticos y económicos que los afectan y a esa problemática lo subordina todo. Del campo no le interesa el aspecto telúrico o paisajístico, sino la utilidad de la tierra, los beneficios que de ella obtiene el campesino y lo preocupa el sin sentido de su vida cuando no la posee o cuando le es arrebatada. Así, el trabajo de la tierra y su lucha por ella son temas centrales en la narrativa de Caballero Calderón (282).

on La Violencia in Colombia" (1973), and Raymond L. Williams *The Colombian Novel, 1844-1987* (1991).

²² Raymond L. Williams considers *El buen salvaje* to be one of the "four great moments" of the conservative, Hispanic, interior Highland novelistic tradition (56); the other three are Eugenio Díaz's *Manuela* (1858), Clímaco Soto Borda's *Diana cazadora* (1915) and Rivera's *La vorágine*.

Caballero Calderón wrote to try and comprehend the atrocities affecting the peasant population of Colombia, a group that he believed to be the heart of the nation. His work thus brought consciousness to the urban sectors of the atrocities that had been occurring in rural areas since the forties.

Eduardo Caballero Calderón was born to an upper-class family in Bogotá on March 6, 1910. His father was Lucas Caballero, a military officer who also wrote for various local newspapers. Caballero Calderón began to write at age 16 for *El Espectador* later founding the magazine *El Aguilucho*. After a brief stint as a law student, his passion for writing inevitably drew him back to journalism. Throughout the beginnings of his literary career, he continued to write for other newspapers and by 1938, published his first novel. During the next several decades he lived between Colombia and Europe, becoming involved in politics and securing a successful career as not only a journalist, but also as an author of many texts, both fiction and non-fiction.²³ His non-fiction works such as *Latinoamérica, un mundo por hacer* (1944) and *El Nuevo príncipe, ensayo sobre las malas pasiones* (1945) are “cuadros de costumbres” that detail Colombian life during the first four decades of the twentieth century. Apart from their cultural description, these works also caution against loss of Hispanic-American identity, and in a method reminiscent of José Martí’s political writings, critique the desire to follow foreign models of governance. As previously noted, Caballero Calderón is best known for his fictional depictions of La Violencia as seen in *Siervo sin*

²³ Caballero Calderón, alongside his colleague, the poet Eduardo Carranza, formed their own, albeit failed, political movement in the late 1930s (Castro, 8).

tierra and *Manuel Pacho*, novels that secured his place within Colombia's literary canon. He died in his native city of Bogotá on April 3, 1993.

Caballero Calderón's political and literary activities demonstrate his faithful advocacy of the more radical faction of Colombia's Liberal party. His literary techniques reveal how he utilized popular narrative prototypes in order to reach a wide reading public to educate them on the atrocities of La Violencia. *El Cristo de espaldas* is considered by many critics as *the* novel of La Violencia *par excellence*.²⁴ Russel W. Ramsey, in his extensive bibliography on fiction and non-fictional accounts of La Violencia calls it "the greatest piece of literature to emanate from the violencia" (38). Published only four years after the Bogotazo, *El Cristo de espaldas* (1952) narrates the story of a young priest who arrives to the fictitious town of Agua Bonita, a place we can assume to be based on pueblos in the interior Andean region of the nation such as that of Tolima, Boyacá or Cundinamarca.²⁵ The novel narrates only five days in Agua Bonita, beginning the moment that the priest enters the pueblo on Thursday night, until his forced exile by the region's bishop on Monday. *El Cristo de espaldas* is similar to a mystery or crime novel. The priest, who remains nameless throughout the novel, functions as the detective who attempts to resolve the problem that takes over Agua Bonita on the morning after his arrival, when Anacleto, a young Liberal, discovers that his father, Don Roque Piragua—the richest and most powerful man in Agua Bonita, and

²⁴ See also Kurt L. Levy, "Caballero Calderón: Autor en busca de personaje" in *Violencia y literatura en Colombia* (1989) and Raymond Leslie Williams, *The Colombian Novel: 1844-1987* (1991).

²⁵ Jorge Castro's 2004 analysis of the geographical space and use of language in *El Cristo de espaldas* validates the readers' suspicion that the regions that Caballero Calderón describes are indeed from the interior Andean region: "Al observarse con detenimiento las descripciones lugareñas del "pueblo de arriba" y del "pueblo de abajo," se puede presumir que efectivamente son pueblitos de las montañas andinas de nuestro territorio, es decir, lugares de clima paramuno, típicos de Boyacá o Cundinamarca. [. . .] Además, algunos usos de la lengua propia de la región boyacense, pueden ayudar a afirmar la hipótesis de que aquella región es, efectivamente, el escenario de la obra" (37).

a loyal Conservative—has been stabbed to death in his sleep. The previous night the mayor and the notary had been discussing the transfer of the estate of Anacleto's recently deceased mother to Anacleto, who is ready to sell his holdings—two homes as well as various farm animals—to the mayor for 20,000 pesos, in spite of its estimated worth of 40,000. Anacleto's wish is to take his earnings and leave the town as quickly as possible, in order to begin a new life elsewhere. (24-25). The reader is thus suspicious of Anacleto as prime culprit in his father's murder. *El Cristo de espaldas* follows the priest throughout the text, allowing the reader an in-depth view into his life, the anguish caused by the mystery of Don Roque's assassination, and the escalating partisan violence that ensues. But instead of trying to discover the guilty party in true detective style, the priest's main concern is to protect Anacleto, who has been unjustly accused of the crime. The priest suffers as he begins to realize that his greatest challenge is maintaining a neutral stance vis-à-vis the political division of Agua Bonita that has been present for generations, but in the last few years has become more violent. The priest rejects the idea that Anacleto would kill his father for reasons of his inheritance. However, Anacarsis, the illegitimate, yet preferred son of Don Roque, along with the mayor, the judge and the notary of Agua Bonita—protagonists who wear their Conservative loyalty and disdain of Liberals on their sleeves—all insist that the crime was indeed carried out by Anacleto for political reasons. Of course, almost everyone with some sort of "power" in Agua Bonita is a mere pawn under Don Roque, allowing the reader to suspect that one of his assumed faithful followers may actually be the individual who had him eliminated. To this combination of protagonists, Caballero Calderón also adds Don Roque's nemesis: Don Pío Quinto, Anacleto's uncle and

mentor in his Liberal points of view. During the narration, Pío Quinto, the former chief of Agua Bonita and the current leader of the “lower” pueblo—Llano Redondo—works to defend all those tired of being terrorized by the Conservatives.²⁶ The people of Agua Bonita describe Pío Quinto and his supporters as “reds” and “bandits.” War is declared against the “reds” of Llano Redondo by Don Roque’s followers, who wish to penalize them for his death.

What is developed throughout *El Cristo de espaldas* is a reflection on the historical circumstances of Colombia during the escalation of La Violencia shortly after the Bogotazo. Since the town is fictitious, yet nevertheless modeled after many areas in the nation’s interior, the narration emphasizes how adherence to violence does not allow the town or its people to progress: all those who are led by partisan hatred are described as ignorant and almost animal-like. For example, upon bringing the priest to his new home in the church rectory, the church’s warden, known as *el Caricortao*, is presented via an almost repulsive description: “Un hombre de mediana edad, rostro abotargado, barba descuidada, ojos legañosos, más dientes desportillados en la boca [. . .]” (20). Other characters in the story—Don Roque, the notary, the mayor, Pío Quinto—although not illustrated as barbaric, are presented as fanatics for allowing their political views to manifest themselves in every aspect of their lives. The notary also remarks on the lack of development in the pueblo, proving his lack of faith in the Conservative government, in spite of his blind adherence to it: “¡Por Dios compadre! ¿Cuándo tendremos luz eléctrica en este pueblo? Ya la tienen los de la provincia, hasta los más infelices, menos

²⁶ In the novel, the geographical space of Agua Bonita is divided between *el pueblo de “abajo”*—Llano Redondo—and *el pueblo de “arriba”*—Agua Bonita proper.

éste” (22) and later “¡Parece mentira la debilidad de estos gobiernos!” (26). The only individual who is removed from the town’s fatal destiny as intertwined by the inseparable entities of politics and violence is the priest. However, the narrator emphasizes how the priest’s decision to not accept a scholarship opportunity he had in Rome shortly after he becomes ordained is in itself a huge mistake, as he instead chooses to become spiritual leader of a town that is beyond salvation.

Although the narration does not indicate an exact time reference for the story, the publication of *El Cristo de espaldas* in 1952 alludes to a more precise date. In 1950, Laureano Gómez, Colombia’s Conservative party leader since 1932, won the presidency. Gómez’s securing of the presidency also maintained the Conservative party in control of Colombia’s government continuously, as they had won the presidential ticket with Conservative Mariano Ospina Pérez’s 1946 election as well, bringing sixteen years of Liberal leadership to a close. The extreme-right dominance that the nation began to experience since Ospina Pérez’s win manifested itself in increasingly violent ways against sympathizers of the Liberal party, especially since it had been Conservative forces that were in control when the Bogotazo and ensuing *Violencia* occurred. Various indications in the novel confirm this political climate, further emphasizing how some protagonists take advantage of Conservative control, while fearing what may result in the upcoming 1954 elections. Without mention of exact years, the following dialogue between the mayor and the notary is an example of such an exercise of control during the first years of Colombia’s rural violence:

–¡Mal tiempo, mal tiempo para las elecciones que ya se vienen! –
sentenció el alcalde.

–¡Peor nos tocó hace algunos años [pre-1946, as the Liberals had been in power 1930 - 1945] para las elecciones presidenciales! –recordó el notario, sonriendo–. Por eso, por mal tiempo, no pudieron bajar aquella vez los paramunos de Agua Bonita, y Don Pío Quinto Flechas se quedó con los crespos hechos.

–Ahora que hablamos de eso, compadre: ¿quedan todavía liberales en Agua Bonita?

–Tres o cuatro... sobrevivientes, que dice don Roque, porque los otros se encaramaron en Llano Redondo, con los bandidos, por ser el que le maneja Agua Bonita a don Roque... (71).

Colombia's national history including the class and political divisions that define it are played out on the micro-level here in this tale of political warfare between Agua Bonita and Llano Redondo. Additionally, the figure of the old priest and his alliances with Don Roque embody the all-powerful union of Church and state, while the figures of the mayor and the notary represent the fanatical affiliation and un-questioned obedience towards these institutions. What further reinforces this dominance is that some peasants blindly obey this powerful alliance while others, tired of being terrorized by state-sponsored violence, join the armed insurgency—the “bandidos” as described by the mayor and notary above. Only a handful of people who once held positions of power sympathize with the Liberals, as they represent the generation whose authority was removed with the Conservative take-over of power in the 1946 presidential election.

As I noted earlier, in the literature of La Violencia there is often an individual who is completely unconcerned with notions of power and, in contrast, sacrifices his own personal interests in a quest for social improvement. The figure of the young priest, an individual in constant distress due to the situation that he encounters upon his arrival to Agua Bonita, is contrasted with that of the old priest, who has retired from his official position as leader of the church. The old priest fashions his religious principles

according to current political powers and understands that the authority the church enjoys over Agua Bonita is due to its alliance with the Conservatives. This generational distinction emphasizes the feeling of anguish that the young priest experiences upon trying to contribute positively to a violently deteriorating society. In this regard Robert Kirsner notes: “La obra de Eduardo Caballero Calderón, inexorablemente ligada a la tierra colombiana dentro de un patriotismo angustioso personal, expresa la violenta visión del hombre solitario” (34). The priest, whose view of the role of the church may coincide more with that of Camilo Torres in the decade that followed, feels powerless as a new spiritual leader in a town where belief in the church goes hand in hand with the power of the Conservative party, and thus, a continuation of the brutality against Liberal supporters.²⁷ Via his humanizing of the old and young priests—emphasizing their distinct personalities and respective flaws—Caballero Calderón reminds the reader that the church is an institution run by men, no more powerful than others. This is of course in accordance with his goal of reaching a reading audience from that time period who were witnessing divisions not only caused by the government, but also by the church, during the historical era in question. Regarding this, Kurt L. Levy says “A mí me parece que Caballero Calderón acierta precisamente haciendo a su cura más humano que santo. Fracasa porque vive en la teoría del seminario. Es incapaz de dialogar, de comunicarse eficazmente [. . .]” (133).

Sadly, all of the protagonists in *El Cristo de espaldas* who would like to improve

²⁷ Father Camilo Torres Restrepo (1929-1966) was a Roman Catholic priest and proponent of Liberation Theology. He was one of the earliest members of the National Liberation Army (ELN) and was killed during combat against Colombian military forces. See Brienza, Hernán: *Camilo Torres: Sacristán de la guerrilla*, 2007.

social conditions fail in their efforts as they realize that they have no power against the church and state, locked as they are in a corrupt union. Perhaps the young priest finally recognizes that he can do nothing to help diminish the bloodshed in Agua Bonita when he witnesses the plan of destruction against the Liberal enemies in Llano Redondo during a town council meeting. In the final chapter of the novel, the town's main authorities—the sergeant, mayor, and notary—decide in a matter-of-fact fashion that Anacleto, Pío Quinto, and any remaining Liberal followers must be killed at all costs:

El sargento [. . .] dio un golpe seco sobre la mesa y manifestó que su plan consistía en rodear a Llano Redondo de una corona de llamas, acorralando a los bandidos para coger, ojalá vivito y coleando a don Pío Quinto Flechas [. . .] (229).

As the town's authorities unanimously accept this plan, the priest's failure to change the violent ways of Agua Bonita is confirmed. The town ignores his plea that violence cannot continue to be used as the sole vehicle of authority. He uses the illustration of María Encarna and of other women as those who are enduring the worst impact of the war between the two towns.

[. . .] trataba el cura de ablandarles el corazón con la pintura de lo que había visto en el páramo y de lo que le había contado María Encarna en el despacho parroquial. Hombres que emigran por los caminos con un costal de trapos al hombro; mujeres mutiladas; niños sacrificados; ranchos que arden como antorchas, sabe Dios si con criaturas o inválidos que no pudieron escapar; sementeras perdidas, campos arrasados y el hambre y la desolación por todas partes (235).

The priest emotionally illustrates the plight of the suffering peasant woman. It is here that we see an early reference to what will become later in Colombia a larger crisis: the displaced individual.

Although a traditionally feminist critical analysis of this novel may have dismissed Caballero Calderón's depiction of women as essentialist or typical in presenting female characters that are seemingly powerless, my reading of this text recognizes his early emphasis on women being the prime victims of La Violencia. Whereas Caballero Calderón's narrative strategies in *El Cristo de espaldas* do adhere to the conventional literary structures of the time, this was, as previously noted, to assure a reading public that was as large as possible in order to place continuous emphasis on the atrocities of La Violencia. Although this may be in tune with the mediocrity of this generation of novels, as Raymond L. Williams has correctly noted, to his credit, Caballero Calderón's portrayal of women in *El Cristo de espaldas* most definitely was progressive in moving away from the characteristically romantic nineteenth century depiction of women, as exemplified in Isaacs's *María*.²⁸ The success of this foundational romance institutionalized the prototypical gendered power relation between men and women as presented in literature over the course of the rest of the nineteenth century and into the twentieth. Simply speaking, this was the cliché of the objectified love over a female who possessed an idealized standard of beauty while at the same time being a "weak and helpless victim[s] of destiny and other forces," and who lived in an environment where "human beings and nature are depicted as inextricably bound" (Williams, 58). By contrast, Caballero Calderón presents such women as María Encarna and Úrsula (the notary's wife) as not only victims, but also

²⁸ In a direct observation regarding the literature of "La Violencia" which relates to his explanation regarding Colombia's delayed literary development, Raymond L. Williams says: "Si hay un género colombiano más mediocre y tedioso que la novela de La Violencia, probablemente es la crítica sobre "La novela de La Violencia"" ("*Manuela*: la primera novela de "La Violencia" in *Violencia y literatura en Colombia*, 1989).

the embodiment of survival within this appalling historical era. Such a tactic will also be followed by other novelists as Álvaro Cepeda Samudio in the early 1960s, where the female protagonists in his text *La casa grande* (1962) question their supposedly weak positions vis-à-vis men and in particular the assumed role of the male figure as leader of the household and society. These new portrayals of women, I contend, help fashion the opportunity for female writers beginning in the 1960s to examine, via a particularly feminist and gendered lens, how these aggressive forces continue to affect women within each new generation of Colombian violence.

In his focus on María Encarna, Caballero Calderón depicts early on the plight of Colombia's displaced population. This, again, is a theme that will be repeated in the decades that follow *El Cristo de espaldas*. Such preoccupation with the millions of individuals who have had to constantly move in order to escape violence is discussed, albeit to a minor degree, in almost all novels about the era of La Violencia.²⁹ In the literature of La Violencia the displaced person, and in particular the displaced woman, is first uncovered in her constant state of movement to escape violence. María Encarna, one of the few female characters in this novel, is a protagonist widely ignored within literary criticism of *El Cristo de espaldas*. She is a mother of five whose husband was killed because he was a Liberal and is described by the notary as a “desconocida [. . .] nadie sabe de dónde vino a este pueblo [. . .] es una roja” (34). Aware of how the town sees her family, she must continually flee, as she knows their existence is threatened by Agua Bonita's goal of cleansing the town of Liberals. She shares her story with the

²⁹ To various degrees Fernando Vallejo's *La Virgen de los sicarios* (1994), Jorge Franco's *Rosario Tijeras* (1999), and Laura Restrepo's *La multitud errante* (2000) also consider the plight of Colombia's displaced community. Although my focus in this dissertation is not necessarily on the displaced of Colombia, I do examine these texts in the last two chapters.

priest upon asking for shelter in the rectory: “Cambiaron los tiempos, señor cura: quiero decir los alcaldes, y los agentes de la policía comenzaron a perseguirnos. Todos los liberales se fueron, menos nosotros, porque a mi marido le aconsejaron los conservadores decentes que se quedara” (138). María Encarna’s husband, who sustained the family by running a general store, became a target of Don Roque when the latter learned of the family’s compassion towards many of the unwelcome groups of the town, thus destroying their hope for a peaceful existence. Their kindhearted acts to groups considered “reds” by Don Roque are their downfall in a town that split between political parties that control the nation. Their lives become impossible as they are threatened daily, including Anacarsis’s sexual harassment of María Encarna’s twelve-year-old daughter. The political convictions of María Encarna’s husband subsequently cost him his life as he is stabbed to death in his own store upon failing to exclaim “¡Viva el partido conservador! ¡Abajo los rojos bandidos!” (140). After months as a widow suffering constant persecution in Agua Bonita, María Encarna decides to escape the area upon Anacarsis’s declaration that all “reds” be punished for the death of his father. The novel ends without the reader’s knowledge of María Encarna’s final whereabouts or circumstances.

The other female protagonist whose characterization is largely unexplored within reviews of *El Cristo de espaldas* is Belencita, the daughter of Úrsula and the notary. I argue that María Encarna and Belencita are the actual victims of the novel and the symbols of futile bloodshed during this era. As I established above, the priest—who represents the only voice of reason in an area divided by political hatred—uses María Encarna’s predicament as an example of senseless violence; her story is pivotal to the

larger narrative of how violence itself affects the area, although not necessarily to the secondary plot involving the mystery of Don Roque's murder. Belencita, the daughter of Úrsula and the notary, is central to the mystery plot, although she appears only briefly. At the end of the novel Úrsula makes a confession to the young priest: Don Roque Piragua fathered Belencita's child. The shame of her condition forces them to send Belencita to carry out her pregnancy and deliver the child in Llano Redondo at the nuns' convent with the pretext of avoiding scandal for Don Roque. Úrsula reveals to the young priest that her husband, the notary, has paid the church's warden, the "Caricortao," to kill Don Roque for two reasons: to seek vengeance for the dishonor that he caused to the family, and to eliminate the only person who stands in his way of gaining complete power over Agua Bonita. Taking advantage of the Cain and Abel rivalry between Anacleto and Anacarsis, of which the entire town is aware, the notary attempts to eliminate Don Roque without being discovered.³⁰ This sibling rivalry also points to the cyclical nature of partisan hatred: the conflict between Don Pío Quinto and Don Roque is repeated in the younger generation amongst Anacleto and Anacarsis, providing in them the leaders that can carry on fanatically charged violence.

Although I do maintain that Caballero Calderón's depiction of women is quite groundbreaking for the time, especially from a male author writing from the vantage point of Colombia's geographic interior, Belencita's portrayal as overly coquettish does succeed in sending a mixed message to the reader. The depiction of her giving birth is shown as animalistic: "[. . .] como las muchachas del páramo que son fuertes y sufridas

³⁰ Various literary critics such as Helena Iriarte Núñez as well as Luis Iván Bedoya M. with Augusto Escobar M. in "Religión y contexto social en *El Cristo de espaldas*" (1989) discuss the parallel between the brothers' rivalry and that of the biblical myth of Cain and Abel. The notion of hatred and murder between campesino brothers is one that Caballero Calderón repeats in his 1969 novel *Caín*.

como cabras, ni siquiera requirió la intervención del médico” (199); her personality is described as demonic by the nuns at the convent where she has been sent to live: “[. . .] Belencita era el Diablo, y le rogó por Dios que se la llevase inmediatamente para el otro pueblo [. . .]” (200); and overall she is portrayed as incapable of rising above the rural environment and its lack of resources:

Se veía que era ingenua, y en oyéndola hablar se comprendía que era ignorante. Adolecía de todos los defectos que la educación pueblerina suele depositar no sólo en el alma sino en el cuerpo de las provincianas. [. . .] Su máxima aspiración en este mundo consistía en casarse con alguien, su máximo temor era quedarse soltera [. . .] Belencita pasara por ser una de las muchachas más seductoras de toda la provincia; y vivía muy contenta de sí, pues se creía el centro del mundo ya que desde el punto de vista sentimental y erótico era el ombligo del pueblo (198-199).

The paradoxical portrayal as both victim and femme fatale suggests the narrator’s intention to blame Belencita for her rape at the hands of Don Roque, thereby reinforcing the notion of woman as responsible for her objectification. In spite of Belencita’s attributes, it can be argued that Caballero Calderón’s emphasis on the depiction of women underlines their importance at the center of the story, serving to give them agency within the movement of the plot as well as a symbolic importance throughout the historical account of violence that is being depicted.

The female protagonists, in addition, bring *El Cristo de espaldas* to a conclusion. After Úrsula’s confession to the priest that her husband is Don Roque’s murderer, she presents him with a letter sent by the bishop notifying him to leave Agua Bonita immediately. The bishop declares that the numerous complaints by the town’s inhabitants over his defense of Anacleto demonstrate his lack of experience. The

priest's emotions upon acknowledging his fate shed light on the continuing state of violence during that historical moment:

Estaba harto y conmovido en lo más profundo de su alma por aquella terrible ola de crímenes, saqueos, incendios, persecuciones, odios y venganzas que azotaban toda la provincia [. . .] Mientras hubiese hombres armados, con fusil al hombro, que eran torpes campesinos aunque se llamasen guardias, cualquier suceso desgraciado como el crimen de don Roque pararía inevitablemente en un combate sangriento (231).

The bishop reinforces the church's power as an institution with his insistence that the young priest, in refusing to accept the alliance of religion and politics in Agua Bonita, is not fulfilling his duties, even suggesting that disobedience has divine consequences: “[. . .] haz cuenta, hijo mío, que se te volvió el Cristo de espaldas” (257). However, the priest's final thoughts on the subject as he leaves town, with Llano Redondo in flames in the background, strengthen his convictions of what he believes to be occurring “[. . .] lo que ocurre es que los hombres le volvieron las espaldas a Cristo” (258). In the end, evil does triumph over good intentions, as the reader knows that La Violencia continues to ravage the rural areas of the nation for at least another decade from the chronological time of the narration. Helena Iriarte Núñez writes:

En esta novela el pueblo es sordo a las palabras del cura joven y tan sólo escucha a quienes desde siempre lo han fanatizado, explotado y conducido por caminos de la violencia. La voz que pregona amor, perdón y paz, la que intenta que llegue a ellos el mensaje del Evangelio y pretende desterrar el odio y sembrar la justicia, ésa no se escucha, y si acaso oyen sus palabras las desdeñan y suponen que carecen de sentido (284).

As Iriarte Núñez points out, violence itself functions as a protagonist, and its root in partisan fanaticism is the base of *El Cristo de espaldas*. Violence, then, as a product of patriarchal history displaces women from the center, although we can see that Caballero

Calderón does make a sincere attempt to relocate her back into the core of his intended focus on violence as she is undoubtedly the victim of aggression occurring in Colombia during this time period.

Eduardo Caballero Calderón's work, not only in *El Cristo de espaldas*, but also throughout his vast bibliography, maintains his commitment to describing the effect of political division on every level of society, creating an environment where hate and intolerance reign supreme. What I have intended to present within my discussion of *El Cristo de espaldas* is how this novel, both thematically and structurally, represented the end of a tradition of realist literature and its focus on the inhabitants of Colombia's interior. No doubt, the atrocities of the era of La Violencia maintained the focus on the Andean region of the nation. Nevertheless, authors whose works came out of the post-Violencia era, a subject to which I now turn in chapter two, helped to radically alter Colombian literature, bringing forth new cultural, thematic, and literary tendencies that a new generation of writers so desperately needed. This text recognizes the importance of women and their roles in these conflicts, giving them agency at a time when this was not the norm in literature. The intent to move away from the literary tendencies of *El Cristo de espaldas*, as well as other novels of La Violencia, can also be deemed a way for the newer generation of writers, who would emerge in the 1960s, to be able to focus on conflict during other phases of history and in more geographically marginalized areas of the nation.

Chapter Two

A Space for Feminist Depictions of Colombia's Violence in the 1960s: Reexamining the Masacre de las Bananeras

In chapter one, I examined the historical context in which Eduardo Caballero Calderón's 1952 novel *El Cristo de espaldas* emerged and was subsequently praised as the model for the novel of La Violencia. Regardless of the novel's literary merit—or as many literary critics have since contended, its lack thereof—*El Cristo de espaldas* and other novels from this period were acclaimed for representing national tragedies occurring simultaneous to their publication. Their existence complemented what national newspapers were presenting on the state of Colombia's mid-century civil war. These novels continued to adhere to conventional literary tendencies set in place since the nineteenth century—such as praise for the culture and geography of the nation's interior Andean region, as well as overly-meticulous, realist portrayals of this area and the ensuing violence. Due to these unchallenged literary conventions, the Colombian novel was characteristically mediocre in comparison to novelistic output in other areas of Latin America. In this chapter, I evaluate how Colombian literary works that emerged during the 1960s challenged this culturally dominant style of realist narrative responses to the nation's violence. I analyze the ways in which the events surrounding the *Masacre de las Bananeras*—the December 6, 1928 massacre of striking sub-contracted United Fruit Company workers in Ciénaga-Magdalena—were portrayed in literary works that emerged more than thirty years after the tragedy. With a focus on the Masacre de las Bananeras, I argue that Fanny Buitrago's *El hostigante verano de los*

dioses (1963) and its presentation of events surrounding the workers' struggle, represents a transition in Colombia's literary development. Buitrago attempts to move away from the prototype of the traditionally (Andean) regionalist and realist novel of La Violencia that became synonymous with the Colombian novel, and that defined the nation's literary scene by the end of the 1950s. Her discussion of circumstances related to a tragedy that occurred more than three decades prior to the publication of her text reveals a feminist preoccupation to reevaluate the nation's history, and in particular, history as tied to women and violence.

There are various questions to pose in this chapter. The first, obvious, question is why did literary representations of the events in the banana zone chronologically follow representations of La Violencia, since the Masacre de las Bananeras actually occurred two decades prior? Why weren't writers able to contend with these tragedies simultaneous to their occurrence, as exemplified by the novelas de La Violencia? To proceed with this topic, a literary historical discussion is necessary. Writers from Colombia's Caribbean were the leaders of a transitional phase for Colombian literature, in spite of the fact that they had been nationally marginalized before the 1960s. The activity of intellectuals from such Caribbean cultural centers as Barranquilla, Cartagena, and Santa Marta prove their insistence on producing literature comparable in theme, form, and quality to the artistic output of their contemporaries in other parts of Latin America and the Caribbean. These writers were concerned with exposing how the age of La Violencia was actually rooted in hostility that began in the Caribbean. To account for how this new literary outpouring brought the Masacre de las Bananeras to light, I compare *El hostigante verano de los dioses* to *La casa grande* (1962) by Álvaro Cepeda

Samudio. In both of these novels set in the Colombian Caribbean, women are also involved with the violence against the *bananeros*, the workers of the United Fruit Company's banana plantations. These two novels represent the relationship between women and violence, both state-sponsored and domestic, thereby outlining how both national and domestic spaces are interrelated. However, in Buitrago's text, the architect of the state-level violence against the bananeros is a female protagonist, who, in order to obtain both social and economic power, reinforces patriarchal systems of discrimination and exploitation. This thematic contrast is important because Buitrago reverses the traditional social order represented in literature before the 1960s, where women were solely seen in the role of the victim. According to Francine Masiello, "La resistencia femenina en la literatura de vanguardia equivale a una transformación de aquellos procesos ideológicos que apoyan el patriarcado [. . .] Por lo general, representan un esfuerzo por crear nuevos símbolos, por eludir el significado habitual de las cosas" (814-815).³¹ This feminine resistance of traditional gender signifiers that Masiello discusses in relation to 1920s vanguardist literature is applicable to the types of feminist novels that appeared in Colombia after the novels of La Violencia began to subside. But, as those novels are characterized by their adherence to a national identity based on notions of a patriarchal and Hispanic cultural tradition that had dominated Colombia since its inception, feminist novels are characterized by their questioning of widely accepted and unchallenged ideological characteristics. In this chapter, I argue that

³¹ I will turn to "Texto, ley, transgresión: especulación sobre la novela de vanguardia" later, in greater detail.

Fanny Buitrago and her first novel, *El hostigante verano de los dioses*, was at the forefront of this new wave of writers.

In my historical discussion of the Masacre de las Bananeras I will also be referencing *Cien años de soledad* (1967), to place the publication of Gabriel García Márquez's masterwork into context with his peers. Their novels, although not as widely praised, share a common political, geographic, and historical theme. The plight of the bananeros is a primary, albeit ambiguous, theme in *La casa grande* that is then dealt with directly in *El hostigante verano de los dioses*, before culminating in the so-called "magical-realist" narration that García Márquez gives the massacre in *Cien años de soledad*. In addition to the attention these novels give to the tragic circumstances surrounding the late 1920s in Ciénaga, these novelists' respective publications in the 1960s brought literary recognition to the nation's culturally marginalized Caribbean region as well. In *García Márquez: The Man and His Work* (1990), Gene H. Bell-Villada says: "García Márquez's informal explorations into the folklore and demography of the Colombian Atlantic coast constitute a pioneering effort toward understanding a world that, to this day, is still relatively unknown—for a number of reasons. Among them is the vestigial legacy of white chauvinism and Bogotá snobbery, forces that slight a region precisely because of its African element" (22).

I propose four reasons for the literary evolution led by writers from Colombia's Caribbean in the 1960s. First, writers from the Colombian Caribbean, and primarily the well-known *Grupo de Barranquilla*, were concerned with putting an end to the staunch focus on Andean regionalism found in literary tendencies since the birth of the

Colombian novel in the nineteenth century.³² Secondly, after the triumph of the Cuban Revolution in 1959, an anti-imperialist reaction in the Caribbean brought much needed attention to other atrocities that had occurred during the twentieth century. Thirdly, the Colombian literary tendency from the 1940s to the late 1950s of narrations on La Violencia allowed for a historic and artistic space to expose the events leading up to the Masacre de las Bananeras. Finally, an important presence of principal female protagonists and their connection to violence is seen for the first time within these Colombian Caribbean texts. All four elements highlight how novelists from Colombia's Caribbean were at the vanguard of a long-overdue shift in conventional literary tendencies.

Since Caribbean writers opened up the possibility to finally shake the foundation of narrative styles and themes that had been typical in Colombia through the first half of the twentieth century, women writers like Fanny Buitrago, Elisa Mujica, and Flor Romero publishing in the 1960s were also able to benefit from new tendencies in literature and the revolutionary currents of the time. Women's movements were beginning to appear overseas and, on a national level, Colombian women were enjoying their newly found right to vote, a law enacted in 1957.³³ A whole host of women's movements and associations across the nation—such as the Asociación Profesional Femenina de Antioquia and the Unión de Ciudadanas de Colombia—were created to

³² The three aforementioned novelists—Cepeda Samudio, Buitrago, and García Márquez—were involved with the Grupo de Barranquilla, to varying degrees. Other important members included Manuel Zapata Olivella, Germán Vargas, Alfonso Fuenmayor, and the only other female member known to participate, Marvel Moreno. More discussion on the Grupo de Barranquilla follows later in this chapter.

³³ On August 27 1954, Legislative Act Number 3 extended the right to vote to women in Colombia; a decision that was not carried forth completely until 1957. Colombia was the second-to-last nation in Latin America to allow women's suffrage; Paraguay followed suit in 1961. See Magdala Velásquez Toro and Catalina Reyes Cárdenas, "Proceso histórico y derechos de las mujeres, años 50 y 60" in *Las mujeres en la historia de Colombia, Tomo I: Mujeres, historia, y política*, 1995.

ensure that women of all socio-economic levels followed through with their recently acquired equal status by being active citizens.³⁴

Literature created by women began to portray these new feminist preoccupations and historical changes. In effect, *El hostigante verano de los dioses* explores and challenges the elitist and discriminatory ideals of the nation. Buitrago's novel explores not only gender, but also race within the Caribbean, intertwining these aspects in a transitional text for feminist writing as she presents one of the earliest examples of women's rendering of violence through the medium of literature. She is the forerunner of a new generation of Colombian female writers that began to appear towards the end of the 1960s who, along with their Latin American contemporaries, challenge traditional literary styles and the confinement of women writers to domestic themes. In breaking from obsolete paradigms, Buitrago helps to construct a more formally innovative and experimental literature. *El hostigante verano de los dioses* represents an unprecedented feminist narration for the time period in which it appears; Buitrago recounts racial, class, and gendered conflicts throughout Colombia through four separate female narrative voices. These voices, and their focus on a wide array of female protagonists, call attention to how opportunities for women's social improvement are often plagued with corruption and an adherence to patriarchal constructs. The lack of critical attention given to how *El hostigante verano de los dioses* confronts the situation of the bananeros attests to how novels by female writers were often ignored and dismissed. Nonetheless, *El hostigante verano de los*

³⁴ In 1958, more women's movements emerged to challenge the government on the lack of female participation with seats in congress and the senate (Velásquez Toro and Reyes Cárdenas, 256-257).

dioses creates a literary space for feminist narrations on violence, one that begins to be inhabited in later decades by such Colombian female writers as Albalucía Ángel and Laura Restrepo. The themes that they employ depict a general disagreement with official discourse and a need to re-write the nation's history, as it exists according to collective, popular memory.³⁵

Literatura Costeña: Colombia's Caribbean leads the nation's literary transition

By the middle of the twentieth century, Colombia's cultural identity was still widely associated with Bogotá as well as the nation's larger Andean outlying areas such as Antioquia and the Valle del Cauca. This identity was represented via nineteenth century literature in such foundational novels (Sommer, 1993) as Jorge Isaacs' *costumbrista* and romanticist model par-excellence, *María* (1867). To reiterate what I discussed in chapter one, the era of La Violencia that began in the mid to late 1940s and assailed the Andean areas of the nation such as Santander, Cundinamarca, and Antioquia caused the Colombian novel to become synonymous with the novel of La Violencia. However, at the time that these novels were being created, writers from the Colombian Caribbean were concerned with being able to express their socio-cultural identity as *also* being part of Colombia, while at the same time being resistant to subscribing to the realist and rural Andean novel that the nation's literature (and culture at large) had represented since the previous century.

³⁵ In Lucía Ortiz's essay "La historia reciente desde la perspectiva de la mujer colombiana" from *La novela colombiana hacia finales del siglo veinte: una nueva aproximación a la historia* (1997), she discusses the ever-increasing tendency of Colombian female writers in the last decades of the twentieth century to use fiction as a tool to re-write history: "Esta tendencia hacia reescribir la historia en la ficción indica que existe en la mentalidad colectiva una progresiva desilusión ante los sistemas de significación del discurso de la autoridad" (115).

To contest this hegemonic notion of literature and culture, a literary assemblage of some of the most important writers from the Colombian Caribbean was formed during the 1940s and stayed active in *costeño* culture until the late 1950s. They were known as *El Grupo de Barranquilla* for the city in which they gathered for their literary *tertulias*. The well-known *costeño* writer José Félix Fuenmayor originally founded el Grupo de Barranquilla, along with Ramón Vinyes, a Catalán expatriate who arrived in Colombia in 1940 to escape Franco's dictatorship.³⁶ He was known amongst the Grupo de Barranquilla and other literary circles of Colombia as "el sabio catalán" and even makes a cameo with that nickname in chapters eighteen and nineteen of *Cien años de soledad*. It is el sabio catalán who gives Aureliano the books to help him decipher the Sanskrit of Melquíades' texts, which can insinuate how Vinyes was the leader of a group that helped to usher in new literary trends in Colombia. By the end of the 1940s, the group grew to include other *costeño* intellectuals and writers such as Alfonso Fuenmayor (the son of José Félix), Germán Vargas, Álvaro Cepeda Samudio, and Gabriel García Márquez, who was perhaps the group's most well-known figure, and occasionally Manuel Zapata Olivella.³⁷ The only two women known to have participated in this group, albeit limitedly, were Fanny Buitrago and Marvel Moreno.

By 1950 the group had created the weekly magazine *Crónicas* where they featured literary works by the group's members. They admired and emulated the literary techniques of other Latin American writers such as Julio Cortázar and Jorge

³⁶ Fuenmayor's most celebrated text was *Cosmé* (1947) a humoristic novel about the fictional Cosmé's coming-of-age in Barranquilla during the 1920s at the point of the city's "modernization process." For more of a discussion of *Cosmé*, see Raymond L. Williams chapter: "The Costa Tradition: From *Ingermina* (1844) to *Cien años de soledad* (1967)" in *The Colombian Novel: 1844-1987* (1991).

³⁷ See *Crónicas sobre el Grupo de Barranquilla* (1978) written by Alfonso Fuenmayor, one of the group members and the son of José Félix, the founder.

Luis Borges, or European writers such as Franz Kafka, and they were particularly inclined towards U.S. writers from the first half of the twentieth century—Ernest Hemingway, Tennessee Williams, Truman Capote, and William Faulkner—both for the themes they employed as well as the literary styles they utilized. In particular, the theme of the decay of U.S. Southern Plantation society (Benítez-Rojo, 1989), as can be appreciated in Faulkner’s novel *The Sound and the Fury* (1929) or Williams’ drama *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* (1955), is a point of inspiration for the Grupo’s writers who transplant this literary subject matter to the Colombian Caribbean. The demise of the plantation economy after the abandonment of the foreign fruit companies who controlled the economic and cultural atmosphere of the area thus became a continuous point of deliberation for the Grupo’s members. Further, the prose styles of these U.S. Southern writers were specifically appealing since the narrative techniques they employed were useful to challenge the standard and realist narrative methods from which they were trying to move away. As Jacques Gilard says in “El Grupo de Barranquilla y la renovación del cuento colombiano” (1997) one of the goals of the group was to declare through their work what they felt were aspects of Colombian culture that had become passé: “Lo hicieron en forma despiadada, sobre todos los aspectos de la cultura nacional, que les parecía sumamente retardataria. Querían darle cuerda al reloj del país [. . .]” (40). Using these narrative techniques helped the Grupo to present themes and subject matter crucial to this historical moment that mattered not only in the Colombian Caribbean, but also throughout the nation in order to support their conviction that the cultural identity of Colombia was not homogenous.

A commitment of the costeño writers was to present subject matter that helped bring attention to historical realities of the Caribbean. As opposed to how the novelas de La Violencia focused on the fighting that had occurred during the 1940s and 1950s in the nation's Andean region, prior to the 1960s, there were relatively no references to the plight of the bananeros in literary texts, and thus little was known about the massacre outside of the Caribbean. One literary or artistic reference that may have some connection to the strikes of the 1920s is the poem "El líder negro" which appeared in the Cartagena-born writer Jorge Artel's collection of poetry *Tambores en la noche* (1940) and is in homage to Diego Luis Córdoba, an Afro-Colombian politician, active in the first half of the twentieth century. Córdoba founded the Department of the Chocó in 1947. Some of the verses in "El líder negro" read:

Ep pueblo te quiere a tí,
Diego Luí,
ep pueblo te quiere a ti.

[. . .]

Tú erej eggrito y la sangre
de locque ettamoj abajo,
de locque tenemoj hambre
y no tenemoj trabajo,
de loc que en la huegga sufren
la bayoneta calá [. . .] (my emphasis, 52-53).

We can interpret these verses to mean a connection that Artel draws between the leadership of Córdoba and the struggles of not just Afro-Colombians (who undeniably comprised a large part of the banana plantations' workers in the Magdalena region), but all of those socially alienated workers without a voice who could find their silenced "grito" with the leader. Laurence E. Prescott discusses Artel's work in *Without hatreds*

or fears: Jorge Artel and the struggle for black literary expression in Colombia (2000)

and how the 1920s in particular were a pivotal time in the young writer's awakening within historical changes occurring throughout Colombia:

The close of the 1920s also witnessed the end of the long period of Conservative political rule of Colombia, begun in 1884. In 1930, the very year that Artel went to Bogotá, Liberal candidate Enrique Olaya Herrera was elected president of Colombia. During that same period Marxist and other leftist ideas, spread by the triumph of the Russian Revolution and the successes of the Mexican Revolution, began to take hold in the country, particularly among Liberal youth (67).

Written in colloquial vernacular, such lines as “Tú erej eggrito y la sangre/[. . .] *de loc que en la huegga sufren/la bayoneta calá*” (Tú eres el grito y la sangre/[. . .] de los que en la huelga sufren/la bayoneta calada) refers back to a symbolic leadership found in Córdoba. Though Artel does not explicitly speak about the UFC workers of the 1920s, his position as a writer having grown up on the Caribbean coast, and who, at the time of the 1928 tragedy was already a published poet, can nevertheless be interpreted in these verses. And although Artel did not participate in the aforementioned Grupo de Barranquilla, like them, his awareness of his dual Colombian and Caribbean identity occurred within this crucial time period of the nation's history.³⁸ Further, as Prescott discusses in regards to Artel's poem “El líder negro,” “[. . .] the *grito* is not only a manifestation of coastal identity, but also, particularly, of black identity. The freedom and ability to “pegar un grito” that is, to let out a shout, is essential to the costeño's expression of self” (126). Although Córdoba's leadership was primarily associated within the interior region of Antioquia (from which the Department of Chocó was

³⁸ Artel, born in 1909, was about two decades older than the other writers participating in the Grupo de Barranquilla, the majority of who were born during the decade of the 1920s.

formed), his poetry also gains a symbolic meaning for Afro-Colombians from the coast; a group which indeed suffered not only during the 1920s strikes, but also afterwards upon the withdrawal of the UFC from this region during the 1930s at the height of the worldwide economic depression.

Artel's poem, published in 1940, is noteworthy in this study because it references the struggles of the laborers on the coast; further it is a poem in which we can perceive the caution to not explicitly refer to the events surrounding 1928. This caution is perhaps manifested for two intertwined reasons. One, the political atmosphere of the 1940 was one in which the hostility of the nation's Conservative and Liberal forces was morphing into rural violence spilling out amongst campesinos. Artel—most likely aware of other leaders such as Gaitán who also served as the voice of socially marginalized groups—may not have wanted to “fuel the fire,” so to speak, that was already burning within the nation. Secondly, Artel, as an Afro-Colombian writer, whose literary themes were committed to representing the circumstances of those who shared this identity, most likely knew the limitations that were imposed upon artistic production (especially artistic production of those belonging to socially alienated communities) during the first half of the twentieth century in regards to voicing opinions against the government or the United States.

The triumph of the Cuban Revolution in 1959 pressed Caribbean intellectuals to speak about the nation's violence as rooted in trans-national exploitation. The importance of the Revolution for Latin American intellectuals coupled with the aforementioned need to bring about a new type of narrative that could not only represent adequately the move away from realist tendencies but also bring to the

forefront themes that had not been previously at the center of Latin American literary production, was a concern for writers active in the *boom* era of Latin American literature. According to Bell-Villada, García Márquez himself knew that for Colombian literature to evolve, a major transition was needed to change Colombia's "sadly wanting" (39) literary scene that, since the nineteenth century, had not changed drastically in terms of stylistic resources and whose constant emphasis on rural violence had become overabundant during the age of La Violencia. Bell-Villada quotes the controversial 1959 essay "Dos o tres cosas sobre la novela de 'La Violencia'" in which García Márquez declares that the readers of the novels of La Violencia "seem to agree that all of them are bad" and that Colombia's lacking literary scene necessitated this new generation of writers to "start from scratch" since the descriptions of violence in the interior—with the explicit and over-detailed accounts of "decapitations, castrations and rapes"(40)—had grown painfully defunct. Since he had multiple novels published by the beginning of the 1960s we can speculate that García Márquez may have been speaking as the figurehead for his colleagues of the Grupo de Barranquilla when he began his tirade against Colombian literature. The mere title of another one of his infamous journalistic essays on the state of his nation's literary production—"Colombian Literature: A Fraud to Our Nation" (1960)—does not shy away from hinting at the literary revolution that would be coming in from the Caribbean, and that would condemn the supposed "authentic sense of what is national" (40). Bell-Villada adds that the official identification of the nation as culturally and ethnically homogenous would not address the lack of recognition of Colombia's coast: "a lack which, with his personal researches into the nation's history and coastal folklore, he

himself had been attempting to remedy” (40). Thus new themes and styles were about to be presented by a new group of authors, and the 1960s became the appropriate time and space to bring to light the theme of the violence against the *bananeros* of the Magdalena region that had occurred three decades prior.

Another important manner in which the writers of the Caribbean region created a rupture with realism was through the use of a narrative method directly influenced by the coast’s oral tradition. This tradition kept the memory of December 6, 1928 alive and therefore was able to be converted to a literary testimony of the massacre by Cepeda Samudio and Buitrago, before reaching its culmination with García Márquez’s chronicle of the Buendía family in 1967. We can appreciate the existence of a literary tradition rooted in *orality* in “El líder negro” by Jorge Artel (discussed above) where the use of a Caribbean colloquial vernacular is replicated phonetically.³⁹ This of course, was a common stylistic resource used by Caribbean writers since the end of the nineteenth century, as seen in the poetry of Candelario Obeso (Colombia, 1849-1884) and in the first half of the twentieth century, with the poetry of Nicolás Guillén (Cuba, 1902-1989). Although the Caribbean writers who took part in the Grupo de Barranquilla didn’t employ such linguistic and literary aesthetic resources, they

³⁹ In Walter J. Ong’s *Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word* (1982) he discusses “the literate mind and the oral past” saying: “Oral cultures indeed produce powerful and beautiful verbal performances of high artistic and human worth, which are no longer even possible once writing has taken possession of the psyche. Nevertheless, without writing, human consciousness cannot achieve its fuller potential, cannot produce other beautiful and powerful creations. In this sense, orality needs to produce and is destined to produce writing” (14-15). Raymond L. Williams utilizes Ong as one of the main theoretical bases for *The Colombian novel, 1844-1987* (1991) and Ligia Aldana reference Ong as well in her discussion of the Grupo de Barranquilla participants.

nevertheless made use of narrative strategies to emphasize a pattern of *storytelling* in which the use of exaggeration and “tall-tales” abound.⁴⁰

This use of exaggeration in orality has been associated ad infinitum since the 1960s with *Cien años de soledad* and “magical realism.” In the past two decades, however, many critics have agreed that the blanket term “magical realism” is in itself erroneous, and in reality an essentialist manner to account for the particularities of Latin American narrative tradition. Regarding this, Williams discusses: “What has often been identified by the now overused and frequently vague term *magical realism* in this novel [*Cien años de soledad*] is more precisely described as a written expression of the shift from orality to various stages of literacy. The effects of the interplay between oral and writing culture are multiple” (120). Although, again, this type of narration was associated primarily with Gabriel García Márquez, the use of literary orality was not limited only to him, and was embraced by other Grupo de Barranquilla participants. Writers from the coast thus employed oral traditions in their novels to discuss historical truths, often relying on exaggeration as a way to avoid referring explicitly to the actual events. The costeño writers of the 1960s felt that in Colombia, historical violence was not limited to the details of the mid-century civil war and they felt it imperative to emphasize how the bloodstained 1950s in Colombia had been rooted in instabilities brought about from international forces in prior decades. Bost says in his discussion on

⁴⁰ This was perhaps in tune with the Grupo de Barranquilla’s desire to utilize a so-called “universal” Spanish language; in other words, one that hadn’t been negatively associated by the literary and cultural elite as pertaining only to an Afro-Latin American community. Although in this examination I do not examine this factor, I do recognize that of the Grupo de Barranquilla participants, only Manuel Zapata Olivella—in works such as *Chambacú, corral de negros* (1962) and *En Chimá nace un santo* (1964) that were also set in the Caribbean region and were written within years of the other novels I discuss—maintains a concern for Afro-Colombians at the forefront of his literary production.

the literature of the banana strikes: “[. . .] Estos autores permiten que el lenguaje de la historia surja en sus novelas de tal manera que no se hace nunca la distinción entre historia y ficción (19). The vehicle to cause this rupture of narrative and thematic tendencies was indeed the Colombian novel of the 1960s.

Violence against women in the banana zone: *La casa grande*

La casa grande was published five years before *Cien años de soledad*. Even though it is considered one of Colombia’s canonical novels of the second half of the twentieth century, Cepeda Samudio’s uncovering of the massacre prior to García Márquez’s masterwork typically goes unrecognized in the shadow of Macondo. Like García Márquez’s work, *La casa grande* has often been placed in the category of texts from the era of La Violencia due to its description of violence in Colombia, and because the novel does not explicitly provide details of the massacre in Ciénaga.⁴¹ A recent publication, *The Flight of the Condor: Stories of Violence and War from Colombia* (2007) indicates how the placement of *La casa grande* within the “literature of La Violencia” category can often be sloppy if not dismissive. Compiled and translated by Jennifer Gabrielle Edwards, *The Flight of the Condor* is a collection of twenty fictional short stories inspired by Colombia’s violence.⁴² The collection includes “Soldados,” a

⁴¹ See Russell W. Ramsey *Survey and Bibliography of La Violencia in Colombia* (1974). Ramsey places García Márquez’s work in the category of “The fictional literature of the Violencia” (37).

⁴² Although this book was published in 2007, it sadly remains unsurprising that not one of the works of Colombia’s many female short story writers are included in *The Flight of the Condor: Stories of Violence and War from Colombia*.

re-printing of chapter one of *La casa grande* as a singular short story.⁴³ In the foreword to this collection of stories, Hugo Chaparro Valderrama states “the testimony of different authors writing in various periods of history offers a panorama of styles and visions that defies the simplification of violence. In Álvaro Cepeda Samudio’s ‘The Soldiers,’ the troops sent by the United Fruit Company to suppress the banana worker strike do not understand or entirely accept their mission...” (xviii). It is ironic that Chaparro Valderrama would discuss the violence that the United Fruit Company caused in the late 1920s as an example of how literary works contest the “simplification of violence” when he himself, one paragraph later, discusses the supposed link that all of the short stories of *The Flight of the Condor* have in common: “In these stories we find *variations of the same theme*: the political violence that engulfed Colombia *from the 1940s to the mid-1960s*” (xviii, my emphasis). In my opinion, such a general and obviously careless categorization of novelas de La Violencia for all novels of violence from the 1950s and 1960s, regardless of the actual historical event that inspired them, in reality simplifies the particularities of each cycle of violence. I discuss *La casa grande* here not only because of its position as the earliest work on the Masacre de las Bananeras, exemplifying the Grupo de Barranquilla’s commitment to new themes and narrative styles, but also because of the existence of a number of female protagonists central to the plot. This feminist reading of *La casa grande* will allow me to create a dialogue with the more detailed discussion of *El hostigante verano de los dioses* that follows.

⁴³ Inspired by the drama-like literary structure of the novel, chapter one of *La casa grande* was also adapted by Carlos José Reyes into the play “Soldados” in 1966. Reyes directed the stage version that debuted that same year.

Álvaro Cepeda Samudio was born in Ciénaga in 1926. He was a student of journalism in Barranquilla, as well as in the United States, with periods of study at the University of Michigan as well as Columbia University. He became a journalist with the newspaper *El Nacional* in 1947. With his collection of short stories published under the title *Todos estábamos a la espera* (1954), he established himself as one of the better-known figures of El Grupo de Barranquilla. García Márquez, not only a collaborator, but a dear friend of Cepeda, discusses his colleague's impact on his life in his memoirs *Vivir para contarla* (2002): "Álvaro Cepeda Samudio me sacó del purgatorio con su vieja idea de convertir *El Nacional* en el periódico moderno que había aprendido a hacer en los Estados Unidos" (497). This anecdote serves to emphasize an early preoccupation of the young writers with transforming the Colombian literary scene. This fraternity between the two would be seen until the last years of Álvaro's life. In *Cien años de soledad*, published only a few years before Cepeda died in 1972 at the age of 46 from lymphatic cancer, García Márquez pays homage to him and other members of the Grupo de Barranquilla in the last two chapters of the novel. The four friends that Aureliano Babilonia makes in el *sabio catalán's* bookstore—Alfonso (Fuenmayor), Germán (Vargas), Gabriel (García Márquez), and Álvaro (Cepeda Samudio)—each follow the lead of the tertulia figurehead once the Catalán flees Macondo to return to his native land:

Álvaro fue el primero que atendió el consejo de abandonar a Macondo [. . .] Luego se fueron Alfonso y Germán, un sábado, con la idea de regresar el lunes, y nunca se volvió a saber de ellos. Un año después de la partida del sabio catalán, el único que quedaba en Macondo era Gabriel [. . .] cuando Gabriel ganó el concurso y se fue a París [. . .] tuvo

que hacer señas al maquinista para que el tren se detuviera a recogerlo (479-480).⁴⁴

One of the events that made the biggest imprint on Cepeda Samudio's career was his having grown up with the recent memory of the Masacre de las Bananeras; he was only two years old when this tragedy occurred in 1928. As Raymond L. Williams discusses in *The Colombian novel, 1844-1987* (1991):

The participants in the Group of Barranquilla were born during a decade of intense social conflict in the Costa, and popular legend and collective memory kept these conflicts alive until they were inscribed in written form in *La casa grande* and *Cien años de soledad*. As a result of living in a dependent export economy, among other factors, the *costeño* writer [Cepeda] has expressed a notable social and historical conscience (Williams, 91).

Thirty-four years later, that social and historical conscience, nourished by the oral history in which the memory of the massacre was able to survive, would give fruition to Cepeda Samudio's first novel and most celebrated work, *La casa grande* published in 1962. *La casa grande* chronicles the days surrounding the Masacre de las Bananeras as experienced by the inhabitants of the "casa grande"—the house at the center of all of the actions in the unnamed banana-cultivating town. The violent events taking place in December of 1928 are presented in parallel to the violence that takes place within the house at the same time. The novel presents different narrative voices and different points of view of a few short but pivotal episodes in the history of the Magdalena workers' labor struggle. The literary resources Cepeda employs in this work go hand in hand with his taking advantage of the period in which he was writing—namely the passing of almost one and a half decades of La Violencia, coupled with Cuba's

⁴⁴ Plaza & Janés Editores, S.A. Octava edición, 2000.

revolution opening the door to a condemnation of imperialism. Regarding this experimental style, Bost says:

[E]s por medio del lenguaje y de la estructura narrativa como *La casa grande* reta de manera más efectiva las fuerzas dominantes que sofocaron el movimiento obrero. [. . .] El autor permite a cada uno de los personajes principales contar su propia historia, anulando así la cómoda centralidad omnisciente desde la cual se observa el curso de los acontecimientos. Esta falta de una voz narrativa singular es en sí un acto metafórico de resistencia (16).

The structure of *La casa grande* is extremely complex: in each chapter, the novel adopts a different narrative style, voice, and a mixture of techniques borrowed from other literary genres such as drama, newspaper articles, and decrees. These literary techniques were directly influenced by Cepeda's involvement with the Grupo de Barranquilla and helped him to move away from traditional realism. In the introduction to his 1991 translation of *La casa grande*, Seymour Menton notes that Cepeda had been looking towards the U.S. Southern writers group since the 1950s for inspiration in his writing, and in turn, Cepeda's work thus helps to usher in the new themes and styles that became part of the abovementioned *boom* era:

The publication in 1954 of Cepeda's first volume of short stories, *Todos estábamos a la espera* [. . .] created quite a stir in Colombian literary circles. Directly inspired by Hemingway, the lead story is narrated in the first person by the protagonist without any intervention by the traditional moralizing and artistic omniscient narrator. The open ending is in keeping with the process of forcing the reader to collaborate actively in the story" (x).

Although Hemingway may have inspired *Todos estábamos a la espera*, most critics have recognized that the structural, thematic, and narrative framework of *La casa*

grande emulates William Faulkner's 1929 masterpiece *The Sound and the Fury*.⁴⁵ In this novel, Faulkner relates the story of the Compson family, once part of the Southern upper class. Half a century after the Civil War, the Compsons find that they no longer belong to a supposed superior category of society that they formerly believed was their foundation; the four parts of the story relate the Compson's inevitable social and economic ruin within the decay of the Plantation economy and culture. Similar to *The Sound and the Fury*, each chapter of *La casa grande* centers on the downfall of the family members in "the big house"—the most powerful family in the town, as the male center of the family—the ambiguously named "Father," owns the plantation La Gabriela. The different viewpoints and interpretations of a tragic set of circumstances—the massacre outside and the domestic and sexual abuse inside—are all presented in connection to this house and the ways in which the members of the family, as both victims and victimizers, are intertwined with each narrative episode. Cepeda Samudio's Faulknerian inspiration is obvious in everything from the language to the organization of the chapters.

In *La casa grande*, a wide array of narrative voices abound, from third-person omniscient narrators, to drama-like dialogues as well as first and second person narrations that alternate in telling the story of the Father, who, as the possessor of this important land tied to the fruit company, is the root of the town's external violence and the family's internal destruction. Each of the ten chapter's titles—Los soldados, La hermana, El padre, El pueblo, El decreto, Jueves, Viernes, Sábado, El hermano, Los hijos—replicates the ambiguity with which Cepeda presents the story of the workers'

⁴⁵ See John S. Brushwood, Jacques Gilard, Seymour Menton, and Raymond L. Williams.

strike in the banana producing zone, the plantation La Gabriela, and the family's ties to the Casa Grande and to this historical tragedy. The time of the narration is December 1928 and the place is the Banana Zone of the Magdalena. This is evidenced in the story by the chapter titled "El decreto" where the actions of the troops against the workers of the Banana Zone are declared a defense by the Civil and Military Commander of the province of Santa Marta against the "rebeldes" and "pandilla de criminales" (66).

Important to how this work begins to open up a space for a discussion of violence and women, one that will be developed more with the publication of *El hostigante verano de los dioses*, are the representations of the three sisters in the novel. One sister is a narrator, the father sexually and physically abuses the second, and the third—whom the father also physically abuses—has formed a pact with the soldiers as well as the townspeople. In chapter two, "La Hermana," the arrival of the soldiers to the town—an action condoned by The Father in order to control the increasing conflict with the workers—is juxtaposed with the first instance of domestic violence presented: the memory of the father hitting the sister is recounted by another daughter who narrates this story eighteen years after it has happened. Using a second person "tú" narrative directed towards the third sister, she recounts how the father hit the second, that being the moment at which the violence in and out of the big house escalated. In a completely masculinized scene unifying various symbols of machismo—the horse, the spurs, and the father's dominance over the daughter—this violence is narrated to show how it has become an unsurprising part of the house's everyday existence: "El padre alzó el brazo y la sangre le inundó la muñeca: pero sangre de él. No le pegó otra vez. Siguió con la mano empuñada sobre la estrella de la espuela, pero no le pegó otra vez" (61-62). The

next morning, as the soldiers arrive to the town, the sister still has the dried blood on her face:

Esa mañana, mientras desayunábamos, Carmen llegó con la noticia de que la estación estaba llena de soldados. La Hermana levantó la cara: tenía la sangre apretada y seca sobre la mejilla rota. Y la Hermana [dijo]: no podrán matarlos a todos. Lo dijo simplemente, sin levantar la voz, pero con seguridad, con perfecta seguridad. Fuiste la primera en darte cuenta de que la Hermana no iba a ser ya la misma: a la hermana le había nacido una voz de palabras secas y seguras. Sobre todo seguras (63).

This confidence the sister displays could be rooted in the faith she has in an eventual vengeance against the father: knowing that the workers will not die assures the sister of the father's ensuing loss of power in the town, and thus, a loss of power he maintains of the big house. Literary criticism written about *La casa grande* provides a wide array of interpretations about the book in general, but particularly in regards to the narrative ambiguity that Cepeda Samudio presents in this chapter. Interpretations of this novel disagree about which of the three sisters is struck by the father, as well as which sister(s) are the object of physical and sexual abuse. In *Juicios de residencia: la novela colombiana 1934-1985*, Álvaro Pineda Botero accounts for these discrepancies, offering alternative explanations of each sister's role and concluding: "Es evidente, entonces, que Cepeda Samudio renuncia a una cronología exacta y a una anécdota precisa y prefiere una visión atemporal de los hechos [. . .] Su intención, según creo, fue la de hacer de la historia un mero instrumento de la búsqueda de entidades esenciales" (162). The importance is not, in other words, who abused which daughter or why; the focus must be on the mere fact that the violence occurred. It is also important to look deeper into this episode and ask why Cepeda Samudio preferred such an enigmatic way to

point to the violence in the *casa grande* and what this violence means outside of the house in which it is occurring.

Similar to Faulkner's *The Sound and the Fury*, the decay of La Gabriela assures the family members that this loss of power will also symbolize the absence of violence within the household nucleus. We can interpret the authority that the house represents both for the family and for the town as a historical display of the eventual loss of power by the Conservative party: the government's handling of the Masacre de las Bananeras allowed figures like Gaitán to lead a national outcry against the Conservatives and bring down the more than quarter century of dominance they had over the nation. Concerning the relation between public and private power that the father of *La casa grande* symbolizes, Aldana states:

Como un locus de poder, visible central único y ostensible, la casa grande contiene la familia cuyas relaciones evidencian una dinámica de poder y coerción que ilustra los tipos de explotación que se dan a nivel público. La violación sexual, el incesto y la jerarquía patriarcal sostenida a base de abuso físico, amenazas y miedo, constituyen las manifestaciones de violencia que determinan el zozobante ambiente de la casa (176-177).

In effect, Cepeda presents the counterpoint to women's victimization, the elimination of the logos of violence in the chapter titled "El padre." The widows of the striking workers who were gunned down by general Carlos Cortés Vargas unite to kill the Father, who, as the owner of the most important plantation of the banana zone, is an accomplice to the acts of the soldiers.⁴⁶

⁴⁶ Cepeda employs the same technique as García Márquez by not fictionalizing some instances of the Matanza de las Bananeras; this is in order to condemn the actual events.

Throughout the chapter “El Padre,” the link between abuse of sexual power and state power serves as a testament to the various levels of the father’s power, which reaches its culmination in his death at the hands of those he has abused. The prostitutes of the town’s brothel that the Father frequents arrange to have him killed by a group of men after his latest visit. Before being killed, the woman he is with links the backlash of the town to the tyranny of the state as an explanation as to why the townspeople want to kill him:

La Muchacha: Que lo iban a matar

[. . .]

El Padre: Quiénes?

La Muchacha: Todos: el pueblo

[. . .]

El Padre: Tienen miedo: me tienen miedo: no se atreverán a hacerlo

La Muchacha: Le tienen miedo, pero ahora lo odian más

El Padre: Siempre me han odiado.

La Muchacha: Siempre odian a los que tienen plata.

El Padre: No es por la plata: siempre odian a los mejores que ellos. Yo soy mejor.

La Muchacha: No es por la plata, a usted no lo odian por la plata: es por lo de la huelga.

El Padre: La huelga?

La Muchacha: Mataron muchos en la estación: los soldados dispararon desde los vagones: no se bajaron: el tren paró y los soldados dispararon sobre los que estaban en la estación y el tren arrancó después: los soldados no se bajaron pero mataron un montón.

El Padre: Bien hecho (104-106).

Again here we see the hybrid use of narrative techniques. The presentation of this dialogue as if it were a play creates the effect of the reader’s bearing witness to the moments leading up to the termination of the basis of violence in the town. La Muchacha links the soldiers, the town, the striking workers, and ultimately herself (as this scene occurs moments before the father’s purchased sexual encounter with her) with the hatred everyone feels towards him. Further emphasizing his abuse, before the

Father dies, the chapter closes by revealing that his daughter is carrying his child for the third time in a little over two years, a situation that he perpetuates in order to keep the town's power within his family: "Y el quebrantamiento de su cintura será un precio pequeño para la liberación de ellos. Se lo ha dicho a ella: Nacerá aquí y en esta casa se criará como uno que pertenece a esta casa hasta que de ustedes nazca alguien que pueda tomar el lugar del padre" (62). Here, the "ellos" refers to the remainder of the family, who the father assumes will maintain his legacy by assuming the control of power over the town; his repeated impregnation of the daughter preserves the authority within the same family unit.

In *La casa grande* we see a fusion of the domestic sphere and the public sphere within this violence related to women. Although there are other episodes in this text which further point to women's victimization as linked to this particular violence against laborers—the father and daughter's child will guarantee the violence will live on in the generation to come; the father has also grown to hate his son, who, after returning from studying in Brussels, joins the workers' cause. I utilize Cepeda Samudio's text to point to the importance of women within the literary representations of this cycle of violence that I examine here. Their presence in *La casa grande* contests the power and tyranny of the state and the patriarchy, as represented dually by the Father.

I segue now into Buitrago's novel where a feminist preoccupation with the situation of the bananeros is juxtaposed, again, with patriarchal violence. But in Buitrago's novel, we see a greater role of women in the text: they perpetuate as well as resist that violence. They also recount the history of the banana workers on the coast in an early example of women's experimental writing that remains in the shadow of her

contemporaries—Cepeda Samudio and García Márquez —and their legacies as the great male literary giants of Colombia.

Portraying gendered violence in the Caribbean: *El hostigante verano de los dioses*

Fanny Buitrago was born in Barranquilla in 1946. *El hostigante verano de los dioses* was her first novel, published when she was just eighteen years old. By the time Buitrago was twenty, she had written various short stories featured throughout Colombia's newspapers, a play titled "El hombre de la paja" (which won her the National Theatre Prize during the Fourth Festival of Art in Cali), and a ballet titled "La garza sucia," based on one of her short stories, premiered in the San Martín Theatre of Buenos Aires, Argentina (Jaramillo, 242). By the time that the 1960s came to an end, her novel *Cola de zorro* (1968) was a finalist for the annual prize from the publishing house Seix Barral. Throughout the 1970s and 1980s, Buitrago wrote many nationally recognized short stories, internationally acclaimed novels—such as her most famous work *Los pañamanes* (1979)—and various children's books.

Like *La casa grande*, *El hostigante verano de los dioses* utilizes the strategy of a variety of narrative voices that come together to give different points of view. Buitrago presents the social and cultural atmosphere on the Caribbean coast as it is connected to class and race relations between the banana plantations workers, the plantation owners, as well as the banana exporters. She relates the workers' situation to the discrimination reinforced by a group of faux intellectuals who although pretending to challenge the values of the nation, in actuality help to maintain the status quo. With the point of view of four female protagonists who also serve as narrators, the class violence of this

Caribbean region as it plays out amongst the banana workers' situation is shown as inseparable from gendered and racialized violence. Each narrator gives her account of violence, exposing how both state corruption and domestic traditions lead to continued violence against women, on all levels of society.

The few critics who have analyzed this work have noted that the fictional "auténticos liberales," as the group deem themselves, was actually a direct mockery of Colombia's short-lived *Nadaísta* movement.⁴⁷ Although Buitrago was from Barranquilla, and participated occasionally in the Grupo de Barranquilla, as mentioned previously, the generation of writers in Colombia from which she emerged makes it unsurprising that she was also an active member of the Nadaístas, a group of intellectuals formed in 1957 by Antioquian-born writer Gonzalo Arango in the city of Cali.⁴⁸ In the Nadaísta's *Primer Manifiesto* published that same year, Arango says the mission of the movement is to:

No dejar una fe intacta, ni un ídolo en su sitio. Todo lo que está consagrado como adorable por el orden imperante será examinado y revisado. Se conservará solamente aquello que esté orientado hacia la revolución, y que fundamentalmente por su consistencia indestructible, los cimientos de la sociedad nueva (Romero, 38).

Buitrago's activity in the group was nevertheless limited, as early on she saw the inconsistencies and ironies that the members themselves had in their convictions and

⁴⁷ See María Mercedes Jaramillo "Fanny Buitrago: la desacralización de lo establecido: *El hostigante verano de los dios, El hombre de paja y Los amores de Afrodita*" (1991); Elizabeth Montes-Garcés *El cuestionamiento de la autoridad de los mecanismos de representación en la novelística de Fanny Buitrago* (1997); and Lucía Ortiz "La mujer en la sociedad colombiana: Alba Lucía Ángel, Fanny Buitrago y Marvel Moreno" (1997).

⁴⁸ Although she shared various cultural preoccupations with the Grupo de Barranquilla, her position as a woman of a different generation undoubtedly was the cause of her limited interaction with them.

beliefs (or supposed lack thereof). She asked to be removed from the group in 1968.⁴⁹ Nevertheless her time spent amongst the Nadaístas did indeed inspire some of her literary production. In spite of an implied nihilist leaning, for Buitrago, the Nadaístas reinforced the class, cultural, and racial status quo that she was determined to challenge with her literary production. In *Juicios de residencia: la novela colombiana 1934-1985* (2001), Álvaro Pineda Botero discusses how the “dioses” referred to in the title *El hostigante verano de los dioses*: “[. . .] alude a los protagonistas: jóvenes que han abandonado sus estudios para dedicarse al arte, a las drogas, al sexo, al licor, alardean de cinismo y libertinaje y se llaman a sí mismos «genios» o «dioses»” (166). Buitrago eloquently deconstructs the nadaísmo movement to show how, in the end, it worked to reassert the typical social order.

El hostigante verano de los dioses contests past representations of women as related to Colombia’s cycles of violence, such as that seen in *El Cristo de espaldas*. As Buitrago creates in this novel four distinct, yet intertwined, narrative voices, we can see an early concern to rewrite history and to prove how women traditionally have been excluded from accounts of the nation’s past. For literary critic Francine Masiello, representations of women in literature began to be contested with the avant-garde works of female Latin American writers of the 1920s. In Masiello’s 1985 article “Texto, ley, transgresión: Especulación sobre la novela (feminista) de vanguardia” she juxtaposes canonical works of fiction from the first half of the twentieth century written by both men and women to support the following argument:

⁴⁹ For more on the Nadaísta movement see *El nadaísmo colombiano a la búsqueda de una vanguardia perdida* (1988) by Armando Romero.

[. . .] el discurso feminista incide en el realismo tradicional para cuestionar el proceso de la representación y la autoridad escritural del hablante. Logra fragmentar la estabilidad de la novela, alterando los recursos miméticos comunes y el quehacer del narrador. Asimismo, la novela feminista cuestiona el poderío de aquel escritor que se afirma por medio de la violencia verbal y la defensa ideológica del Estado” (Masiello, 807).

Feminist writing, in its versions of political and social realities, offers an alternative to patriarchal-centered, traditional accounts of history. Further, the feminist discourses that Masiello talks about emphasize the importance of narration itself, where language techniques that these authors employ propose an alternative way of communicating subject matter that deals with female sentimentality, women’s rights, and their secondary position in society. In her article, Masiello focuses on the 1920s, a decade of particular importance because of Freud’s studies on women, the beginnings of women’s participation in public life, and the appearance of a new vanguard of women’s writings about women that begin to appear throughout Latin America; notably in Argentina, Chile, and Venezuela. As Masiello says:

[. . .] la mujer, en la década de los veinte, se vuelve sujeto activo y productora de un discurso propio. En su contexto literario hispanoamericano, esta productividad trae consecuencias de especial importancia, pues la escritura femenina amplía las posibilidades estructurales de la novela y pone énfasis en la identidad de la mujer como respuesta a la narrativa masculina vigente (807).

The 1920s in Colombia, however, were quite different from the rest of Latin America for the historical reasons that I outlined above. Aside from periodicals that appeared during this decade such as *La novela seminal* and *Lectura breve* that featured poetry and short stories by female writers that were primarily sentimental and dramatic in style, there is an absence of outstanding novelists such as María Luisa Bombal from

Chile, Norah Lange from Argentina, or Teresa de la Parra from Venezuela who provided works that still resonate almost a century later. In “Recuperación de las voces de una década: feminismo y literatura femenina en los años veinte” Jana Marie DeJong supports the idea that Colombia was well behind the neighboring Latin American nations in its feminist literary progress. In particular, “feminine literature” consisted of a surplus of magazines or sections in the newspapers, primarily directed by male journalists, and tended to reinforce traditional values and roles. The titles of a few of these publications indicate this endeavor: *Hogar y Hojita de Guadalupe*, *La familia cristiana*, and “Página femenina” a weekly column that appeared in a Liberal newspaper. Although there were some indications of female writers in Colombia during that period, such as the works of Isabel de Montserrate (as discussed in chapter one), due to the violence with which the nation was grappling, coupled with the secondary position of women in society, feminist responses to the “narrativa masculina vigente” didn’t appear until much later. Since the foundation of traditional literature in Colombia was being challenged in the 1960s by literary pioneers like the Grupo de Barranquilla, the acceptance of voices from marginalized groups began to take place as well. Female writers such as Buitrago and Elisa Mujica (who published her novel *Catalina* the same year as *El hostigante verano*) and Afro-Colombians such as Manuel Zapata Olivella gained more acclaim during this decade as they continued to move away from what had been traditionally accepted as “Colombian literature” up to that moment.⁵⁰ Masiello’s article, for this reason, allows me to discuss *El hostigante verano*

⁵⁰ An important note to this study of traditionally marginalized voices, Manuel Zapata Olivella’s *Chambacú, corral de negros* was published in 1962, the same year as *La casa grande* and García Márquez’s *La mala hora*. In *Chambacú*, as in the other novels that I discuss in this project, violence is a

de los dioses as an early example of feminist writing about the era and events surrounding the Masacre de las Bananeras. And although Masiello's study deals with avant-garde works of the 20s and 30s by Bombal, Lange, and De la Parra, the strategies that these authors employ and that Masiello dissects, offer, as she herself says: "[. . .] un paradigma de resistencia feminista que rige hasta el momento actual" (808) and are thus appropriate to discuss feminist literature in Colombia, that appeared decades later than in many other Latin American nations. Masiello's model is useful for interpreting how feminist narratives such as *El hostigante verano de los dioses* provide support to the plight of the bananeros, just as *La casa grande* did one year prior and as *Cien años de soledad* would also do four years after Buitrago's novel.

El hostigante verano is indeed a forerunner to the styles and themes that would make Gabriel García Márquez famous just a few years later; however Buitrago did not receive much critical attention because of how novels written by women were perceived in the 1960s—as pertaining to what has since been considered as “literatura light.” It is not surprising that Buitrago's novel went unnoticed not only in Colombia, but also throughout the Spanish speaking world, when three of the four major *boom* novels—Carlos Fuentes' *La muerte de Artemio Cruz* (México, 1962), Mario Vargas Llosa's *La ciudad de los perros* (Perú, 1963), and Julio Cortázar's *Rayuela* (Argentina, 1963)—were published at the same time as *El hostigante verano de los dioses*. In particular, *Rayuela*, perhaps the most celebrated of these novels, represents an anti-thesis to the

main protagonist: not only does Zapata Olivella expose the social inequality and repression that was part of the reality of the slum Chambacú in Cartagena de Indias, one of the three major cities on Colombia's Caribbean coast, but he also reveals the exploitation of the Afro-Colombian soldiers who were drafted into the frontlines on the side of the United States in the Korean war. *Chambacú, corral de negros* won Cuba's esteemed “Casa de las Américas” prize.

female protagonists Buitrago creates. La Maga, the novel's main female character reinforces the idea of the "lectora hembra," translated literally as the *female reader*. This term is used by Cortázar within *Rayuela* as representative of the non-intellectual reader whose literary preferences are inclined more towards such realist authors as Benito Pérez-Galdós—Spain's late-nineteenth/early twentieth-century writer, whom La Maga is described as reading "interminably" (Cortázar, chapter 21). This reinforces how the move away from realism was one of the indications that marked the *boom* novel's ushering in a new era of literary production. Jean Franco's chapter "From Romance to Refractory Aesthetic" in her collection of essays *Critical Passions* (1999) discusses how through the 1960s, women's writings were considered part of the overwhelming amount of "literatura light" that had inundated works written in Spanish. The *boom* novels, therefore, were groundbreaking in that they helped to transition literature into the modern, cosmopolitan novel. A typical rhetorical resource in these *boom* novels was to present their female protagonists, such as *Rayuela*'s La Maga, as "backwards" or less intellectual:

The readers of *Rayuela*, *Tres tristes tigres*, *Conversación en la catedral*, *Terra nostra*, and *Yo, el supremo* were therefore in possession of what Pierre Bourdieu calls cultural capital, a reserve of knowledge of literature, history, and philosophy. In short, they were preferably cultivated university graduates. Women in these same novels were frequently represented as ignorant, unsophisticated, naïve, prejudiced, inflexible, or archaic, and so on (98).

It is perhaps unfortunate that *El hostigante verano*—in which the four main female protagonists/narrators are a journalist, a university student, a revolutionary, and a public relations director—was issued in the midst of the publication of three of the four most important *boom* novels, and therefore probably dismissed as representing the inferior

and passé literary tendencies for the so-called *lectoras hembras* from which the *boom* novels were distancing themselves. This is why examining the work of Buitrago is necessary here, as she establishes the space that allowed such writers as Flor Romero, Rocío Vélez de Piedrahita, and Albalucía Ángel to follow her lead within the next decade and a half and write about the violent situation of Colombia, thereby challenging the production of the sentimental and domestic novels written by women before the 1960s. Authors like Buitrago did indeed employ the same themes as their male contemporaries, as Franco further discusses regarding the dismissal of women's writings before the 1970s:

“[. . .] what strikes one about the literature written by women before the seventies, with one or two notable exceptions such as Clarice Lispector, is how rarely their writing was considered innovative or avant-garde. Think for example of Silvina Ocampo or Beatriz Guido as compared to Borges, or Armonía Sommers as compared to Onetti. It is only in contemporary readings that these women have begun to be recognized as something more than secondary players” (98).

A preference to view women within these characteristics coupled with the fact that Buitrago was a young Caribbean woman of eighteen at the time of *El hostigante verano*'s publication, no doubt led to her novel being largely ignored in spite of its being in tune with the new narrative tendencies for which the *boom* novelists were given credit. García Márquez's induction into this literary giants group of novelists six years after *Rayuela* and *La ciudad y los perros* helped to also distinguish him as the author who brought to light a theme—the Masacre de las Bananeras—that, as I've discussed, had not been previously given attention on an international scale. Years after its publication, *La casa grande* did also begin to receive attention, and rightfully so; but again, this was most likely due to Cepeda Samudio's cameo in *Cien años de soledad*

and the interest that García Márquez's success sparked in learning more about the Grupo de Barranquilla. In general, an interest in Buitrago's work began to appear only after the 1990s. This might be credited to Antonio Benítez-Rojo, who included a chapter in his widely celebrated *La isla que se repite: el Caribe y la perspectiva postmoderna* (1989) dedicated to her novel *Los pañamanes* (1979).⁵¹ From 1990 onward, many books on Colombian and Latin American literary criticism, and in particular feminist literary criticism began to include chapters and articles devoted to examining Buitrago's bibliography, from *El hostigante verano* onward. However, there has been no work that puts her earliest novel into discussion with her Colombian contemporaries nor discusses how the violence she presents is the same one that García Márquez, and to a lesser degree Cepeda Samudio, is primarily credited for bringing to light.

In spite of the fact that in *El hostigante verano de los dioses* Buitrago does not explicitly refer to the events of December 6, 1928, her identification with the Coast allowed her to focus instead on how class and racial divisions in Colombia, particularly in the Caribbean region, enabled the fruit company to take advantage of economic and social disparities. I believe that the caution with which she writes is related to her position as a Caribbean woman writer; this is similar to the carefulness with which Jorge Artel was writing two decades prior. Nevertheless, and comparable to Artel's poetry, her themes and narrative styles are groundbreaking for the time, as *El hostigante verano de los dioses* is an early example of a new literary tendency in which realist

⁵¹ Benítez-Rojo originally discusses *Los pañamanes* in his 1982 article "Los pañamanes: Mito y realidad en el Caribe" published in the journal *Primal/Cabral*.

narratives are challenged. As I outlined in this chapter's introduction, in the narration of *El hostigante verano de los dioses*, Buitrago never explicitly states a historical time of the events, nor reveals the exact location in which the bananeros' struggle is taking place, referring constantly to the city as simply "B." Buitrago recounts racial and class conflicts throughout Colombia through five separate female narrative voices while calling attention to how opportunities for women's social improvement are often plagued with corruption and an adherence to patriarchal constructs. The narration presents this theme in connection to the labor struggle of the bananeros, all the while exemplifying the transition from the social realist and regionalist narration to one that becomes fragmented in its narration, chronology, as well as the geographical representation of the fruit company workers' struggle. Literary evaluations of this novel propose that the city in which the novel is set—represented ambiguously with the letter "B"—is in actuality a representation of the city of Barranquilla, where Buitrago was born and to which she was intimately connected. As Pineda Botero points out, placing Barranquilla (in the Caribbean department of Atlántico) as the capital of the banana-producing zone further fictionalizes the events that take place in the course of the story, since this characteristic is more appropriate to Santa Marta, the capital of the department of Magdalena, where Ciénaga, Aracataca, Sevilla and Río Frío—the towns that had the largest concentration of banana plantations—are located. Nevertheless, *El hostigante verano de los dioses* documents the financial ruin of the banana economy of the Magdalena river valley (which does in fact, also comprise el Atlántico) with the fruit company's abandonment of the area in light of the workers' struggle and their relocation to the Gulf of Urabá. Further, Buitrago's use of Barranquilla is consistent

with the city having had the distinction of being the capital of intellectual life on the Colombian coast. This merit was due to many factors including the growth of printing houses by the first quarter of the twentieth century and of course the formation of the Grupo de Barranquilla in the late 1940s. Although Buitrago does not reference a specific year, these details do help me situate the novel's chronology in the late 1920s. Unlike *La casa grande* where Cepeda incorporates a decree of the declaration of the striking workers as bandits, including the date of December 1928, Buitrago's novel maintains chronological ambiguity as García Márquez also does in *Cien años de soledad*.

In *El hostigante verano de los dioses*, an anonymously authored book has recently been published that is causing a national sensation. Marina is a journalist from Bogotá who travels to the city of "B" to look for clues as to who wrote the novel chronicling the lives of the "auténticos liberales," a self-described group of bohemian youth who consider themselves amongst the city's cultural and intellectual elite; the play on the Nadaísta movement is apparent. Marina having traveled from Colombia's capital to its geographical and cultural peripheries—the Caribbean—in order to identify the author of this best-seller, forces the reader to evaluate the cultural hegemony of the Andean center. Whereas past literary creations in Colombia, as well as the lives of the majority of the writers themselves, demonstrate the repeated activity of relocation to Bogotá in order to carry out educational, professional, and artistic development, *El hostigante verano* challenges the traditional cultural movement of periphery to center. Marina's search for the identity of that writer in Barranquilla, asserts not only the

recognition of a new literary movement, but also the recognition of the Caribbean's cultural importance as fundamental to the nation's identity.

Each of the twenty chapters is numbered and given the name of one of the novel's five narrative voices; all of the odd-numbered chapters of the book pertain to "Una Forastera" which we know to be Marina; chapters 2, 8, and 14 pertain to Inari, a young woman who is accepted by the auténticos liberales in spite of the fact that she works in the offices of Dalia Arce—the widowed owner of all of "B's" plantations and industry; chapters 4, 10, and 16 pertain to Isabel, a woman whose life centers around Daniel Mendoza, a revolutionary figure who appears in the novel as antithesis to the auténticos liberales; chapters 6, 12, and 18 pertain to Hade, a mulata woman who is the victim of abuse by more than one of the auténticos, and chapter 20 pertains to "La Autora," with a brief epigraph that reads:

"Lo siento. Olvidé lo demás.

Fanny Buitrago"

Marina interacts with the "auténticos liberales" upon her frequent visits to the "café de tercera categoría" (21) in order to interview them and gain further clues regarding the book's author. Inari, Isabel, and Hade are among the few females in the group; the narration emphasizes how they are essentially allowed the "privilege" of being members of a group of elite male youth.

There are two main narrative levels of the novel: one of these pertains to Fanny Buitrago, who inserts herself as one of the five narrative voices with the last chapter of the novel. With her announcement in chapter twenty, we can categorize her voice as the diegetic level; or the fundamental narrator of the central story that we have just

concluded.⁵² This of course implies that *she* may be perhaps the “auténtico” *dios* (or *diosa*) of this narration—the God of Creation—revealing that the story existed according to her memory, and thus her forgetting (de)constructs the story which we are presented. This also emphasizes the use of memory and oral tradition that keeps a collective, popular history alive. Marina is the second main narrator, at the heterodiegetic level who, as the reporter from the newspaper, chronicles the actions of the members of the group. Within her narration exist the voices of Hade, Isabel, and Inari—the metadiegetic narrators of the story. Marina connects their individual narrations, weaving in her voice and interpretation via the odd-numbered chapters that pertain to her. And within this connection, the intellectual and cultural atmosphere in Barranquilla at the moment of the narration is described. All of these narrative levels exemplify what Elizabeth Montes Garcés, in *El cuestionamiento de los mecanismos de representación en la novelística de Fanny Buitrago*, describes concisely:

[. . .] *El hostigante verano* expone tanto el proceso que el autor lleva a cabo para escribir una novela (recopilación de la información, investigación de las fuentes, selección del material) como la forma en que operan los elementos de la ficción (relación autor-narrador-lector). En segundo lugar, el recurso de enfrentar las contradictorias versiones de los numerosos narradores hace que se desvirtúe la autoridad de quien maneja el discurso. En consecuencia, resulta evidente que no es lo relatado lo que puede considerarse real, sino más bien el proceso mismo de contar (29).

Indeed the process of narration is played with constantly in this novel, as all of the narrative levels go back and forth chronologically, repeating the stories constantly depending on who is narrating the event. Such a strategy thereby insists that the reader

⁵² For my discussion of narrative levels, I use *Narrative Fiction: Contemporary Poetics* (1999, originally published 1983) by Shlomith Rimmo-Kenan. He bases his explanations on narrative levels according to Gerard Genette’s *Figures II* (1969) and *Figures III* (1972) published in English in 1980 as *Narrative Discourse Revisited*.

also weave the net that Marina is intertwining. There are more than a dozen protagonists that form part of that web, most pertaining to the “auténticos liberales.” As there are so many individuals described, it is important to point out the most relevant to the subject matter of violence tied to the fruit company workers, and how that is also tied to women.

The *auténticos* refer to Marina as “La Forastera,” the *wanderer*. Of course this re-emphasizes their elitism; they see her as someone from the outside and she wanders in her interactions with each one due to her desire to uncover who wrote the prized book. Marina’s being from Bogotá and her obsession with finding the author of the novel may be a specific point of contention for Buitrago, both the author and the narrative voice that appears in the end. In chapter 20 Buitrago brings the novel/narration to an abrupt conclusion as she declares “Me olvidé” after the reader recognizes that Marina, who had worked as the narrative authority up to that moment, is never able to declare with certainty who is the author of the prized book. Buitrago’s intervention at the end allows her to laugh at the idea of those from the center of Colombia being the identifiers of culture, and particularly that culture pertaining to the geographical and cultural peripheries. Although Marina’s inquiries are unsuccessful, the end of the novel marks a new discovery: she is pregnant with Leo’s child, the rich and privileged son of the city’s most important banana exporter. Dalia Arce, who is in love with Leo, insists unsuccessfully that he marry Marina after she finds out about their child. Dalia is important to *El hostigante verano* as not only the wealthiest woman in the city, but without a doubt, the most powerful individual. She feels that maintaining the credibility of the *auténticos liberales* is pivotal to this power. This way,

she is able to maintain economic and cultural control over “B.” Dalia’s husband was Dorancé “Due” Lago; she was forced to marry him when she was 12 and he was in his late 30s. Due, who owned the 13 banana plantations (the “casas grandes” as described in the novel) and the Compañía Frutera, took advantage of Dalia’s poverty and tempted her with the possibility of helping her mother. Dalia gave birth to their twins at 13, and by 17 she was a widow. Although her wealth and power are known in the city, she has actually not set foot in the vicinity of “B” proper since her husband’s death eleven years prior. She maintains knowledge of all that is going on in the town because of Isaías Banda, the illegitimate son of Due and the black nanny/servant, Herminia. Arturo C., an “anciano manco” (41) serves as “B’s” historian and assists Marina in piecing together the details surrounding Dalia’s life as well as other clues that may help in her hunt for the novel’s author. Arturo C. also appears in the narrations of Isabel, Inari, and Hade. It is with Arturo’s voice as well that the notion of the oral tradition is emphasized. He provides Marina an understanding of how Dalia’s power-hungry mannerisms were developed:

Due era un hombre egoísta que acariciaba a sus caballos y pegaba a las mujeres. Tenía conciencia de la superioridad que confiere el dinero y creía que los demás habían nacido, exclusivamente, para atender a sus caprichos; era de aquellos hombres que cargan un revólver debajo del sobaco y están dispuestos a pagar sumas exorbitantes por poseer una muchachita virgen, pero que van a la iglesia sistemáticamente y se cortarían un brazo por pertenecer a la buena sociedad (44).

The similarity with this situation and its intertwining of social and domestic violence as seen in *La casa grande* is uncanny. The death of the male figure will determine the control that the woman then has over the town and she will continue the reign of patriarchal, class, and racial violence. In a town where

Due Arce flexed his power via sexual and labor-based violence, and then his widow followed suit, it is no wonder that the “auténticos liberales” deem their intellectual and artistic significance as inseparable from their defense of their racial and economic privilege, a status that they use to separate themselves from the rest of the city’s inhabitants.

Because of Dalia’s money, she controls all sections of society: the workers who depend on her, as well as the “intellectuals,” because they also rely on her to keep them economically stable and thus part of the privileged class. Her rival in the book is Abia, the obsession of all of the male protagonists in the novel. All four of the narrative voices describe Abia as a young, useless bourgeois girl who is incapable of doing anything. Eventually, the individual who is able to “win” her is Fernando, who marries Abia (against the will of Dalia) to reinforce his being the most important and powerful individual in “B,” as well as to obtain a plentiful dowry from Abia’s parents. Such jealousy continues even after Abia’s death from a mysterious disease, although by that time Fernando has become penniless thanks to the fortune that his young wife has spent.

Just as sexual and gender-based dominance is connected to each male figure in *El hostigante verano*, Dalia participates in gendered violence—both at the state as well as the domestic level—thereby continuing the traditions of her late husband Due. She maintains control over the workers labor, as well as the young intellectuals’ sexual activities, often using them for her own pleasure in return for monetary stability. Although there is an element of humor as the narrator pokes fun at the “intelectualoides” (59) and their ironic dependence on their parents and Dalia, the novel does emphasize the seriousness of the relation between the workers and those in power

in the city. Instead of describing how the violence towards the workers ended in a massacre, she relates the overall feeling of instability in the town, brought on by class and racial hierarchies, proving the continuation of a more subtle, institutionalized and thus more dangerous violence. This is consistent with the previously discussed attempt to move away from the explicit and over-detailed accounts of violence; a strategy of which García Márquez was the fiercest proponent. The “intelectualoides” are tied into this violence because of their sense of superiority, which reinforces the distance between the workers and those in power. An example of this is the description of the restricted gala organized by Yves, the leader of the *auténticos* and a member of “B’s” aristocracy, a protagonist who can be interpreted to symbolize Gonzalo Arango. The narrator details: “De las fincas salen opacas voces descontentas. Isaías [who is the one mediator between the marginalized people of B. and the elite] lleva y trae las noticias, deleitándose en hacerlo: Indignación colectiva por el baile de Yves. Estupor por la dinamita que provocara la tragedia. Odio de los obreros del banano, que piden indemnización y doble aumento de salarios” (197). Yves’s invitations clearly restrict blacks, handicapped individuals, illiterates, and other marginalized groups, from attending. As the festivities take place, a flood breaks out and the Río Magdalena overflows into the surrounding areas of the city, the slums where the Compañía Frutera workers predominantly reside. Later it is understood that this tragedy was not natural, as someone had set dynamite on the dam.

Similar to how *La casa grande* juxtaposes the Father’s striking the daughter on the face with the approaching state intervention of the soldiers, Fernando Lago, Dalia’s preferred son, physically abuses Hade during Yves’ party. This is the same moment at

which the flood causes the banana workers to suffer both the loss of their homes and the crop that allows for their labor. After this episode of abuse by Fernando, Hade leaves and encounters the city in distress: “Dos barcos bananeros, extraños en el caño, entraban lentamente en el Puerto. Y en las cercanías del muelle, colosos camiones enviados por el gobierno, acarreaban piedra; los obreros de espaldas desnudas, reforzaban las paredes del dique... ” (230).

In addition to Marina, two other protagonists are the only individuals who defy Dalia Arce. Isaías Banda, as previously mentioned, is the illegitimate son of Due and Hermina, and therefore the half brother of Fernando and Esteban Lagos. He is the drug dealer for all of the auténticos; this allows him to interact with them in spite of the fact that he is black and “illegitimate,” according to their terms. My reading of Isaías is not that Buitrago creates this character to reinforce a stereotype, but rather to emphasize the position of subaltern in a city run by generations of a white aristocracy. Although he is of Dorance Lago’s blood as well, he is nevertheless marginalized from the rest, albeit to provide them with their drugs. Dalia is repulsed by Isaías and sees in him the physical embodiment of all the characteristics that she grew to hate in her husband, and that still render her bitter a decade and a half after his death. Isaías having blue eyes, a trait that connects him to Esteban and Fernando, reinforces their kinship and thus her hatred. Such a theme is directly inspired by colonial literature: the notion of the mulato who is the son of the master of the plantation (in this case, the banana plantation) is given special privileges that are opposite to his position in society. As the mulato, drug-dealer, illegitimate son of Due Lagos, he is more despised than revered within “B’s”

high-society. His purpose for the *auténticos* and for Dalia is strictly outlined, allowing him the only space in which to move between B's upper and lower classes.

Finally, with the figure of Daniel Mendoza, Buitrago proposes the only protagonist with sincere revolutionary leanings. He leads the “juventud revolucionaria,” the antithesis of the “auténticos liberales.” Daniel declares: “Nuestro país está desangrado interiormente. Son pocos los que tienen el dinero y muchos los que están hambreados. ¡En los campos los campesinos son asesinados por los ladrones de tierra! En la ciudad el obrero labora por un jornal de miseria... ¡Tienes que entender!” (293-294). In spite of these convictions, his revolutionary intentions are also exposed as paradoxical as his obsession for Abia begins to supersede his political ideologies. Buitrago's exposure of the state's apathy for bringing justice to the workers' plight is clear, nevertheless, in the above quote. However, the author proposes that intentions for justice in Colombia are often plagued with selfish interests. The “auténticos liberales” may not propose solutions or alternatives to the problems in Barranquilla and look only at ways to exploit others for their own benefit, but the inconsistencies of Daniel Mendoza also coincide with the group that he despises. The *auténticos* declare that “negros, mestizos y mulatos, [...] los pobres, [...] los analfabetos, [...] los que tienen problemas físicos, [...] los que carecen de apellido” (Jaramillo, 246) are degenerates, and then propose that those who don't belong to those groups become anarchists, nihilists, and sexually free like them. This actually reinforces the hegemonic ideas of the established state, which they so firmly believe themselves to be against. The tragic revolutionary figure is one that will be repeated in

future decades, as we will see in Albalucía Ángel's *Estaba la pájara pinta sentada en el verde limón*, published twelve years after *El hostigante verano de los dioses*.

After more than forty years of violence that originated on the coast, it is quite a feat that Buitrago, a woman who published *El hostigante verano de los dioses* when she was just eighteen, suggests a way to re-examine history, and further, through the filter of a woman's point of view. She maintains a feminist preoccupation with the violence in the banana zone during the time of the strikes against the United Fruit Company in the 1920s, thus proposing a thematic and gendered shift from the *Literatura de la Violencia* that had inundated Colombian letters for more than a decade and helped to reinforce the nation's cultural perspective of the Andean region as the hegemonic cultural center. Buitrago employs new literary tendencies that had been ushered in by the Grupo de Barranquilla—particularly a rupture with the use of traditional, linear, regionalist realism—in an attempt to move towards literary styles seen in other parts of the Americas during the first half of the twentieth century. Nevertheless, her position as a young Caribbean woman publishing her work when the so-called *boom* associated with the male literary giants of Latin America occurred was one of the reasons why *El hostigante verano de los dioses* was (and is still) widely ignored. Although she does not attempt to depict the number of people who died in the Masacre de las Bananeras, she does indeed expose class, racial, and gender hierarchies that allowed for the massacre to take place in the turmoil of the 1920s labor strikes. This often overlooked novel also employs literary techniques related by and large with the Latin American (male) literary *boom* and the theme of the violence on the Caribbean Coast, associated with García Márquez's discussion of the United Fruit Company in *Cien años de soledad*, published

four years *after* Buitrago's work. I showed in this chapter that beginning in the second half of the twentieth century, costeño novelists were able to break with traditional Colombian literary practices that by the 1960s had become obsolete, thereby connecting their writing to the oral traditions that had existed in this region for centuries. Fanny Buitrago's use of this literary technique also exposes the history of women as tied to Colombia's violence; a connection that was not a common theme in texts written by women. However, because of the innovative literary techniques and themes that Buitrago employs, she can be seen as the first of many other female writers like Albalucía Ángel and Laura Restrepo who would follow suit in their (re)interpretations of Colombia's history and more explicit female denunciation of the nation's violence.

Chapter Three:

Colombian female novelists re-write La Violencia

The early 1960s brought about a shift in Colombian feminist literature that coincided with the conversion from decades of civil war to widespread challenges of the traditional political and patriarchal order of the nation. Student movements and rebel uprisings were at the head of these challenges. At the same time, female novelists were at the forefront of literary portrayals of these historical changes. Works like Fanny Buitrago's pioneering examination of violence on the coast vis-à-vis gendered acts of aggression and manipulations of power were part of a literary feminist transition in Colombia. Following Buitrago's lead, the remainder of the 1960s and the 1970s witnessed the emergence of a new generation of Colombian female writers. This new wave of feminist literary endeavors broke not only with the mold of domestic and maternal themes, but also with regionalist and realist writing. As I showed in the previous chapter, these tendencies began to be challenged in Colombia by the Grupo de Barranquilla, and by the mid 1960s, female novelists in Colombia were finally keeping up with the output and quality of literary production by women in other parts of Latin America. With women's suffrage only recently won, female writers were conscious of the still blatant state of oppression that women suffered in Colombia. The Frente Nacional had taken over the political panorama of the nation and by the earlier part of the decade violence was the central theme of the majority of literary works published in

Colombia.⁵³ The era of La Violencia itself was a subject that a new generation of writers would revisit in order to try to comprehend more than two decades of bloodshed that ended in anywhere from 200,000 – 300,000 fatalities. In this chapter, I examine *Estaba la pájara pinta sentada en el verde limón* (1975) by Albalucía Ángel and *La multitud errante* (2000) by Laura Restrepo to explore how the identification of a specifically female experience during the age of La Violencia presented a new version of history through the medium of feminist literature.

Towards the end of the 1960s, with the panorama of the Spanish language novel changing, both within and outside of Colombia, the works of vanguardist Colombian women writers surfaced in greater numbers as their use of formal innovation and narrative experimentation represented a definite rupture with past literary traditions, as outlined in chapters one and two. And just as Buitrago examined the often-ignored violence that had occurred to the banana plantation workers on the nation's Caribbean coast decades before the novel's 1963 publication, the female writers who succeeded her began to revisit the atrocities of La Violencia.

As seen in Eduardo Caballero Calderón's *El Cristo de espaldas*, past narrations that consider the era of La Violencia had merely scratched the surface of how women's suffering differed greatly from that of men, a situation explicitly described in *La Violencia en Colombia* by Germán Guzmán Campos, Orlando Fals Borda, and Eduardo

⁵³ The Frente Nacional (1958-1974) or National Front was a pact enacted after the coup that ousted General Gustavo Rojas Pinilla, the nation's military dictator from 1953-1957. During the National Front the two major parties of Colombia enacted an agreement to alternate presidential terms for the next sixteen years with an identical number of parliament members from each party in Congress. The objective was to "reorganize the nation" after Rojas Pinilla's dictatorship, as well as to fully recover from the partisan hatred that defined the past few decades. The fact that most historical accounts of La Violencia deem the first five to seven years of the National Front as precisely the *climax* of partisan violence points to the paradoxical nature of a state controlled attempt at political and military order.

Umaña Luna.⁵⁴ Colombian female writers who were educated in the 60s and 70s, and were probably reading the likes of emerging feminist scholars such as Simone de Beauvoir, Hélène Cixous, or Julia Kristeva, wanted to draw attention to the suffering that women of the past generation endured. In this chapter I discuss how, following the example of Buitrago, the 1960s and 70s became a period when a vast array of female writers put gendered accounts of violence into perspective in their literary works, and in a sense, began to “re-write” history to be more inclusive of their coming of age during this complicated time. Their influence can be seen in the works of more recent Colombian novelists, where the different generations of violence that the nation has endured appear on some level of their literary production.

As opposed to the novela de La Violencia published during the conflict, newer representations of La Violencia appearing twenty to almost fifty years later function to connect this era to the reincarnations of violence that Colombia continues to suffer. Of further importance is the fact that these new portrayals shed light on the previously under-investigated savage victimization of women during La Violencia as well as the ways in which they survived such abuse. A better understanding of women’s experiences during La Violencia can lead to an increased awareness of how current circumstances continue to exploit Colombian women within new generations of violence; for example the use of women’s bodies not only for sexual exploitation but also for trafficking in the illegal drug economy.⁵⁵ The rebellion against class-defined norms for women within urban areas in *Estaba la pájara pinta sentada en el verde*

⁵⁴ See introduction.

⁵⁵ I turn to this subject of women’s participation in drug trafficking in chapter four.

limón, and the discussion of resistance to displacement by rural women in *La multitud errante*, enables me to discuss their marginalization within various sectors of Colombian society. The innovative literary stylistic strategies in these novels provide a female-centered and alternative account of La Violencia; their narrations help to expose the anxiety that Colombian women confront in coming to terms with their position in a society defined by violence.

My literary analysis of these texts raises the following questions: Is there a difference in the portrayal of women in narrations about La Violencia written during the war versus in later decades when writers were able to re-examine these tragic events? What is the difference between how rural versus urban women are portrayed in these novels? And most important, how do female narratives work to de-center a male-centered history of violence; a history that has led to the enduring association (as well as disgraceful acceptance) of Colombia with violence both inside and outside the nation's borders? The challenge to rewrite La Violencia according to a gendered point of view is undoubtedly a way to recognize a significant part of history whose ramifications spread wider than that of Colombia. *Estaba la pájara pinta sentada en el verde limón* and *La multitud errante* can be visualized as part of the recovery process of women's dignity and agency in the collective memory that the nation has of La Violencia. The task of the readers of these novels is to find legitimacy for those women who have experienced similar situations as those depicted within official history's often-contradictory layers.

The 60s and 70s in Colombia: A new generation of female novelists emerges

Albalucía Ángel's novel, the earlier of the two feminist works that I examine, makes its appearance in the decade after La Violencia officially comes to a close. Laura Restrepo's work, on the other hand, appears almost half a century after the culmination of La Violencia, allowing the author to link La Violencia to the current plight of Colombia's displaced population, which numbers in the millions and is one of the largest in the world. Both of the novelists, however, evolved within the literary atmosphere of the *post-boom* of the late 1960s and into the 1980s.⁵⁶ Their literary styles and thematic tendencies connect them to other novelists from this era, for example Manuel Puig, Severo Sarduy and a wave of female writers that appeared across the continent such as Elena Poniatowska, Diamela Eltit, and Luisa Valenzuela. As opposed to these writers who found the political and social struggles of the 1970s as their themes—such as the dictatorships and dirty wars that were plaguing the entire continent—one of the inclinations of Colombian writers was to revisit the era of La Violencia and comprehend two decades of bloodshed that had claimed the lives of hundreds of thousands of victims. Coming to terms with this historical tragedy, for writers like Ángel and Restrepo, was a way to understand the roots of the new incarnations of violence that by the middle of the 1970s were overwhelming the nation: fighting between newly formed right and left-wing armed groups, the increasing power of the no-longer hidden drug trafficking economy, and escalating urban violence, in particular as it related to the youth of marginalized areas of Colombia's larger cities.

⁵⁶ Although not working with fiction in the 70s and early 80s, Restrepo worked as a journalist during these two decades, therefore fashioning her literary style much earlier than when her first work of fiction appeared in the late 1980s.

Furthermore, these novelists continued to account for the multi-dimensional aspects of violence, where the space of the “public”—that of aggression carried out as a result of political action—and the “private”—the space of the home and family relations, traditionally assigned to women—were exposed as undeniably related. Revealing the association of these spaces denounces the division of gender roles and thereby gender-based violence, which has facilitated the continuation of women’s historically subordinated position in Colombia. As I have shown, Buitrago’s novel was part of this wave of feminist writings on violence, and in particular the theme of the repetitive nature of violence in Colombia. Briefly discussing the works of other women’s writing on violence before I analyze Ángel and Restrepo’s individual literary assessments of La Violencia points to how violence in Colombia, in any of its forms and from any generation, became the thematic standard for women in Colombia starting in the 1960s. A few examples demonstrate this tendency.

The same year that Buitrago’s *El hostigante verano* appeared, Ofelia Uribe de Acosta (1900-1988) published *Una voz insurgente* (1963), one of the first examples of a socially conscious work that shined a light on specifically feminist preoccupations with violence. Uribe de Acosta had been an advocate for women’s civil and political rights. She influenced the formation of many women’s groups that began to appear in the nation’s universities during a time when more women sought higher education, a privilege previously reserved for men. In *Una voz insurgente*, Uribe de Acosta details the history of the women’s suffrage movement, in which she played a central role. She also provides reasons for women’s on-going apathy in the nation’s politics, whether by

failing to exercise their newfound right to vote, or by their lack of involvement in civic life.

Elisa Mujica (1918-2002), whose contributions to Colombian letters included having been elected the first woman of the Academia Colombiana de la Lengua in 1982, was already known in the 1960s literary scene thanks to *Los dos tiempos* (1949). In this novel, the main protagonist goes from Bucaramanga to Bogotá to Quito-Ecuador and becomes involved in Marxist struggles for indigenous and labor rights. With the atrocities that occurred during the last years of La Violencia, and on the heels of the Frente Nacional, it was no surprise that her novel *Catalina* (1963) then emerged during the same year as Uribe de Acosta and Buitrago's writings. In *Catalina*, the narrator follows the historical time after the 1000 Days War and the loss of Panamá, and similar to what we saw with Buitrago's *El hostigante verano*, *Catalina* requires an active reader to reconstruct the fragmented lines of narration. This type of literary strategy will be essential in literature written by women in the decades that follow, and as Mary G. Berg says "es precisamente este relato fragmentado, como de piezas de rompecabezas, lo que mantiene el máximo suspenso posible" (218). In effect, this strategy of presenting Colombia within fragmented pieces of a puzzle is appreciated in the majority of feminist novels from this era that attempt to symbolically make sense of recurrent social violence.

Flor Romero's (b. 1933) *3 kilates, 8 puntos* (1966) discusses a rarely explored theme—that of emerald mining fever in Colombia and the violence that goes hand-in-hand with this male dominated world. As Jonathan Tittler points out "[E]s un mundo de salvaje codicia, donde la ley no es reconocida y la astucia y la fuerza bruta lo son todo.

Sobrevivir, —no se sabe con cuánto éxito— en tal ambiente, sin caer víctima de su rampante corrupción, es el desafío que enfrenta la protagonista” (308). By the end of the decade, Romero turns to the hostilities within the male-dominated world of Colombia’s growing guerrilla subculture with her novel *Mi capitán Fabián Sicachá* (1968). Although having grown out of socially conscious movements that favored land rights for the poor, Romero cannot ignore the undeniable patriarchal power within insurgency movements, which by the late 1960s were an irrefutable force in Colombia. Fabián is the classic symbol of the guerrilla; a figure that began to appear earlier in the decade. Much like Daniel in *El hostigante verano de los dioses* and later, Lorenzo in *Estaba la pájara pinta sentada en el verde limón*, Fabián heads to the mountains to make war against the state and the unjust political system, while the woman he loves waits for him to return to society. The theme of the fatal destiny of women who wait for their lovers involved in guerrilla uprisings is repeated in Romero’s next novel as well. In *Triquitraques del trópico* (1972) however, Romero presents the violence within this town of the Magdalena region in a more directly critical context, where violence itself has become the force that threatens the cultural survival of the town that the revolutionary cause intends to defend. And reminiscent of *El hostigante verano* as well as *Cien años de soledad*, violence is inextricably tied to natural disasters such as floods and fires.

We can situate the works of Uribe de Acosta, Mujica, and Romero amongst many other feminist writers emerging during the 60s and early 70s. Again, in addition to them being overshadowed by the works of such literary giants as Gabriel García Márquez, it is perhaps their not having been able to be categorized into a specific

generation that has contributed to their being widely ignored within literary history and criticism. Nevertheless, after the 1960s, female writers in Colombia finally caught up with not only their male literary counterparts in the nation, but also with women's writing across Latin America. There are a few shared literary tendencies that can be recognized within the works of the writers, like Ángel and Restrepo, who emerged after the 1970s. In particular they developed even further some of the narrative techniques Buitrago employed in the diegetic and extra-diegetic levels of *El hostigante verano de los dioses*. No longer did fiction "choose" a sole narrative voice to best represent the plot and protagonists, but rather first, second, and third person voices were intermixed within one text, while narrative levels were blended within sentences with no prior detection or warning. Further, interior monologues were consistently presented, allowing for the greater use of psycho-narrative literary tendencies fashionable during the 1970s throughout South America. These techniques underline mental trauma and disorder resulting from political turmoil, therefore emphasizing the personal ramifications of national violence. In a quest to fuse narration and history such external documents as letters, newspaper clippings and announcements—both fictive and non—all become part of a new type of literary patchwork found in the style of many authors across the Latin American continent. Non-linear narrative became a technique of most writers, where sentences, paragraphs and sections don't remain faithful to chronological time and historical lapses are experienced without forewarning. Language itself is transformed to present not only changes amongst voices, but to point to class disparities that criticize unequal access to education amongst all of the nation's social sectors. I turn now to Albalucía Ángel's *Estaba la pájara pinta sentada en el verde limón* and

Laura Restrepo's *La multitud errante* to demonstrate how these novels depicted La Violencia through this wide array of formal literary techniques.

Estaba la pájara pinta sentada en el verde limón: identity formation within the context of national violence

Another perspective from which the work of Albalucía Ángel (b. Pereira-Colombia 1939) and her contemporaries can be considered is that it was her generation of writers that finally created a definitive break with Colombian literary adherence to regionalism. Regionalist tendencies had been clearly defined, and further widely celebrated, in Colombia since Jorge Isaacs's *María* became considered a national novel in the second half of the nineteenth century. As we have seen, twentieth-century novelists from Eduardo Caballero Calderón and beyond continued the tradition of reaffirming the status of the interior Andean region of the nation as identifiable with the nation at large. The Grupo de Barranquilla, of course, broke with this tendency of celebrating the nation's interior, however establishing a new geographic focus, that of the nation's Caribbean coast. Finally, after the 1960s, upon the heels of an international focus on Latin American writing, Colombian novelists moved away from this ardent devotion to regionalism, allowing for a more international reading public of their works. Albalucía Ángel's work appears simultaneously with this new trend, as Raymond L.

William says:

Writing in the Highland, of course, does not end with *El buen salvaje* in 1966. After that, with the advent of the young writers Albalucía Ángel and R.H. Moreno-Durán, among others, novelists from the Interior Highland Region are most appropriately described not as Highland regionalists but as Colombian and Latin American writers. Consequently, the most adequate context for discussing these

cosmopolitan writers of a new generation is within the broad scope of contemporary modern and postmodern fiction in Colombia and Latin America (85).

Not only does Ángel become part of a new generation of Colombian writers' move away from regionalism, she is part of a new preoccupation, still existent in the present, to focus on urban themes that expose the paradoxes of the bourgeois elite in the nation's metropolitan centers, and how these paradoxes maintain the patriarchal power that originally appeared during colonial times.

Ángel's work is characterized by a lack of chronological linearity. She uses experimental techniques such as multiple voices that require an active reader who serves as a type of *bricoleur*, assembling the narrative fragmentation of women's identity within a society defined by violence created by men. Betty Osorio de Negret argues that, Ángel's work is consumed by

[. . .] la situación de la mujer en sociedades de corte tradicional como la colombiana, y su participación en una historia frecuentemente dominada por prioridades masculinas. Ángel desenmascara y critica duramente los mecanismos de alienación femenina, y desde su escritura propone la búsqueda urgente de una relación más justa con el otro (373).

In effect, the central theme in *Estaba la pájara pinta sentada en el verde limón* (1975) is that of the female individual experience and search for identity within an undeniably masculine society and history, as is the case with the emergence of the Bogotazo, La Violencia, and the Frente Nacional, which all take center stage in this novel. Yet, it is precisely the assassinations of the two historically important male figures framing the novel—Jorge Eliécer Gaitán in 1948, and Ernesto “Che” Guevara in 1967—which emphasize the limits to women's political participation.

On the day of the Bogotazo, Ana is 6 years old, loses her first tooth, and is preparing for her first communion. On the day Ana's brother shows her the headline about Che's death, she is 25 years old and will soon find out that her best friend Valeria has been killed and Lorenzo (Valeria's brother and Ana's lover) has left to take the path of clandestine armed struggle against the state. The great majority of the novel focuses on Ana's coming-of-age after the Bogotazo, at the height of Colombia's violence. However, as opposed to being a direct victim, such as María Encarna in *El Cristo de espaldas*, Ana observes La Violencia from a distance, since her upper-class rearing serves to isolate her from these events and protect her from being affected by the bloodshed that she views from a privileged family environment. It is only upon developing relationships with siblings Valeria and Lorenzo that she becomes sympathetic with the student struggles of the 1960s. They are the only protagonists in the novel who are shown to act upon their political ideologies; not surprisingly both of their stories end tragically. Valeria is arrested and killed; this event causes Lorenzo to join the armed rebellion in the mountains. The reader is left with the image of Ana, who is hesitant to choose an action that is not based upon her own personal interests or fears. Regarding Ana's inability for change, Óscar Osorio says:

Si a esto sumamos el camino tomado por Ana, tendríamos que decir que el texto nos está diciendo que en su dimensión política a la juventud colombiana [. . .] le quedaron dos caminos: la cama, [. . .] la renuncia (el camino de Ana); o el monte, la lucha, la reivindicación social por vía de las armas (el camino de Lorenzo) (81).

This can be explained in the narration's constant return to the safe confines of Ana's home and specifically her bed; these settings are juxtaposed to the clandestine resistance of Valeria and Lorenzo. Unlike Ana, they do not have the privilege to choose apathy as

an option. Valeria and Lorenzo's fatal outcomes emphasize the social injustice against which they are fighting. This lies in stark contrast to the comfort of Ana's surroundings. Therefore descriptions of each sibling's torture become the final image presented to the reader at the end of the novel.

Before this point, however, Ana's life is presented amidst a complicated narration whose story line moves back and forth between her childhood and mid-twenties, using many voices to relate the unfolding of her life and her awakening within Colombian history, particularly during La Violencia. The title of the novel itself refers back to the first verses of a well-known nursery rhyme sung throughout the Hispanic world, contrasting Ana's memories of childhood with their permanent connection to an age of senseless tragedy. And an epigraph by Dylan Thomas—"The memories of childhood have no order, and no end"—alludes to the fragmented pieces of Ana's youth that the reader will have to reassemble. There is no chronological order to the novel, but rather, themes are clustered together that connect Ana's childhood with her early adult years, as well as the historical circumstances of the nation. In this manner we learn about the violent late forties through sixties in Colombia not via a sequential manner, but according to Ana's scattered memories. One of the best examples of this is Ana's constant recollection of the death of her classmate Julieta at age six. Although Julieta is the victim of a cable car accident, descriptions of her life, death, and funeral are interwoven between sections focusing on the lives lost the night of the Bogotazo riots, as well as the inevitable separation Ana will experience from Valeria and Lorenzo. The organization of the novel highlights the mental trauma that Ana suffered as a young girl upon the death of Julieta, which took place simultaneously with the

beginnings of La Violencia. As Ana becomes an adult and learns more about the predicaments of the Bogotazo and La Violencia, she begins to merge what she learns in newspaper clippings, history books, and testimonies—all of which become part of the pastiche of the novel—to her own experiences with death.

Although there are various narrative voices, there are only two main narrative threads: that of the extradiegetic narrative level that joins all the storylines to revolve around Ana; and that of Ana herself as the diegetic narrator who, by means of her conversations with Sabina throughout the text, introduces each sub-plot that is presented within her dreams and daydreams. In the following quote, the confusion upon Gaitán being shot and the beginnings of the riots in Bogotá on April 9, 1948 are contrasted to Ana lying in bed in 1967:

1:20 p.m. Un taxi “Roxi” negro pita desesperadamente y vuela hacia la clínica Bogotá, con el ilustre herido. En el carro, el médico Pedro Eliseo Cruz dice a Vallejo: “No hay nada que hacer, ¡nos lo mataron!”

Cierra otra vez los ojos. Se relaja, trata de concentrarse en las sábanas tibias, en su cuerpo que se acomoda a la horma que ya tiene el colchón, como un nido, se rebulle con voluptuosidad, despacito, qué bien, qué caliente, qué rico [. . .] (20-21).

Here, the two narrative levels are juxtaposed: the extradiegetic narration presents a historically based episode nineteen years earlier than the narrative present through which the book is arranged. This narrative present and the extradiegetic narrator then immediately focus on Ana in her bedroom, when the diegetic narrator—namely, Ana—takes over upon exclaiming *qué bien, qué caliente, qué rico* without any punctuation or quotes that would traditionally differentiate these words as a third person narration. This scene highlights her

failed attempt to come to terms with her privileged position, represented by her domestic surroundings, and the comforts that both Valeria and Lorenzo sacrificed in their attempt to bring real political and social change to Colombia.

The presentation of Ana's memories—both her own as well as those that she appropriates—parody the violence and lack of sense of this historical era. One of the novel's best examples of experimental and poetic use of language and vocabulary, alludes to the nonsensical aspect of this time frame:

El país se fue llenando de otros pájaros.⁵⁷ *Abarrotando* de asesinos. *Cuajándose* de muertos. *Congestionándose* de sangre. *Poblándose* de miedos. *Rebosando* injusticias. *Hinchándose* de oprobios contra el derecho humano. *Cargándose, impregnándose, plagándose. Colmándose* de gritos de amenazas, de olores pestilentes, de ríos en los que la corriente parecía tinta roja de tanto desangrarse liberales y en los que las montañas fueron bastiones *bombardeados, violados, destruidos*, y las ciudades se convirtieron en lugares oscuros de ruidos apagados y pasos presurosos (Ángel, 218. My emphasis.)

Language and history work hand in hand in this passage and in many others that fill *Estaba la pájara...*, relaying the circumstances of what has been deemed the most tumultuous period in twentieth century Colombia. The repetitive use of the gerund and the past participle both articulate the cyclical nature of violence throughout the past century as well as how violence had begun to take its place as a formal, institutional entity. The narrator's poetic language use is fused with historical moments that Ana recovers and presents as though part of her own memories. Similarly, María Mercedes Jaramillo offers in her literary critique of this section in *Estaba la pájara pinta...* a view on the role of collective history in constructing an individual identity, one that is related

⁵⁷ As noted in the introduction, the "pájaros" were an early form of mafia assassin or paramilitary who carried out heinous actions against such targeted victims as liberal leaders or revolutionary organizers.

to the actual words Ana chooses to make sense of such a horrific time: “La historia particular se va inscribiendo en la historia colectiva; vivencias y sucesos históricos van tejiéndose en la protagonista como en la historia de la nación [. . .] La autora resume el proceso sufrido en frases cortas y con verbos en gerundio que proyectan la violenta y rápida sucesión de los hechos” (209-210). Undoubtedly, these grammatical elements reinterpret the history of a collective according to the individual identity with which she is coming to terms: a young woman who is part of the generation of youth rebellion against the state in response to decades of senseless bloodshed. Although she has not witnessed any of the moments directly related to La Violencia, she appropriates the legacy of that era by presenting her coming of age as inextricably intertwined with the nation’s history of conflict.

The above-noted quote is also tied to Ana’s use of unofficial and oral traditions, a literary strategy briefly discussed in chapter two, as indicative of the way that she approaches the task of re-writing history. By stating “El país se fue llenando de otros pájaros. Abarrotando de asesinos. Cuajándose de muertos. Congestionándose de sangre. Poblándose de miedos. Rebosando injusticias. Hinchándose de oprobios contra el derecho humano” she highlights the state-sanctioned dirty wars and their creation of the *pájaros*. This situation, which is uncannily parallel to the increase in paramilitary groups in Colombia during the past two decades, also alludes to the constant concealment by the state of certain historical facts. The appearance of the *pájaros* is a situation that lives in the memories of the communities that they terrorized for the duration of the war. And Ana’s highlighting the creation of the *pájaros* is important to her re-writing of history via a gendered perspective, because, as we have seen in

Guzmán Campos, Fals Borda, and Umaña Luna's *La Violencia en Colombia* (as I discussed in the introduction) it was this group of thugs that was responsible for thousands of sexual crimes documented against women and young girls; criminal acts for which the great majority of the victims never received justice. Within the pastiche of documentation, Ángel also reproduces parts of *La Violencia en Colombia*. One of the quotes I used in this project's introduction is repeated verbatim by Ángel:

La policía política inicia su intervención con vejámenes, golpes e insultos; después roba, incendia y asesina; a la postre viola, estupra y remata en actos nefandos [. . .] A poco andar violenta chiquillas de ocho y menos años hasta matarlas [. . .] Más adelante se registra el caso monstruoso de violaciones colectivas cuando una sola mujer es arrojada a la tropa, con abierta incitación al delito por algunos oficiales psíquicamente lesionados (233 Fals, Borda, Guzmán Campos/216 Ángel).

Historical texts such as this one are used frequently throughout the novel, and are set apart by quotes that are scattered throughout Ana's narration, as though providing historical proof for her own personal anecdotes and evaluations of the war.

Nevertheless, none of the editions of *Estaba la pájara pinta sentada en el verde limón* provide references or citations for these sources.⁵⁸ In a sense, this forces the reader to ponder the horrendously magnified element of the war within the fictional context that is Ángel's novel. This includes also the paradoxical use of the word "pájaro" in this historical situation against the title's youthful and innocent connotation of "pájara" in reference to the popular nursery rhyme. In this context, Ángel perhaps proposes a contrast in the male/female binary of violence/non-violence within the novel's significance.

⁵⁸ In Jaramillo's discussion of this novel, she notes that Albalucía Ángel used the actual testimonies of some of her family's hacienda workers, Rosa y Martha Melo, who discussed tortures that some of their friends involved in guerrilla groups endured (211).

The innocence of the nursery rhyme of the novel's title also stands in contrast to Ana's relationship with literature itself; the extradiegetic narrator is portrayed as confronting different sources in order to decode how society's marginalized survived the war and continue to suffer in its aftermath. These stories, testimonies, conversations, documentations, and newspaper clippings from sources such as *El Tiempo*, amongst a variety of other elements, are presented in the novel as meshing into Ana's chronicle of her own life story. The actual historical accounts presented also serve as explanation for the rise in student and clandestine movements of the 1960s and the origins of rebel groups in Colombia still active to the present, which are then also given a personal spin with the description of Valeria and Lorenzo's life.

Lorenzo's choice of armed struggle, and therefore his ultimate capture and torture, is rooted in the failure of student movements in Colombia. The bipartisan controlled state set in motion during the Frente Nacional did not allow a space for university students and other intellectuals to call attention nationally and internationally to Colombia's situation, as was the case in Mexico and Chile at the end of the 1960s, for example. Therefore, many believed that joining armed insurgencies was the only alternative. Conversely, Ana's choice to remain immobile in bed instead of sacrificing her comforts to join the struggle with Lorenzo, shows how her apathy goes hand-in-hand with her search for identity: she desires to have been more like Valeria, yet at the same time, is unable to even show motivation for change upon knowing that her best friend and lover's sister has been killed. Similarly, Óscar Osorio's discussion of this novel emphasizes the figure of the *guerrillero*:

Lorenzo encarna la figura del guerrillero que, a la luz de la conciencia de Ana, es la más alta encarnación del ideal. Un ideal hacia el que Ana se mueve, pero al que finalmente no llega, por su miedo ancestral, por su incapacidad de abandonar el mundo burgués y, al final, por esa imposibilidad de creer en espacios de salvación que instaura en ella la muerte de Valeria y la clandestinidad de Lorenzo, por ese, digamos, pesimismo ideológico que la condena a la inacción y la renuncia (82).

In effect, the *guerrillero* figure stands in contrast to both Valeria and Ana, who portray two extremes in women's choices for 1960s social radicalism: death or apathy.

Furthermore, Ana's inherent pessimism and option of indifference is in contrast to her political ideology, which the *Bildungsroman* has clearly developed for the reader. This contrast is exemplified best when letters detailing Lorenzo's torture are revealed shortly after the matter-of-fact way in which Ana's brother reads the headline about Che Guevara's death. Again, Ángel showcases literature as foundational to Ana's identity and radical inclinations. The blending of Lorenzo's and Che's fatal outcomes serves to stress the risks involved with revolutionary participation, and therefore Ana's rejection of political action in order to secure her own safety.

Ana's treatment of other important protagonists also situates the denial of any real radical change, even as it relates to class hierarchies within the domestic space. Ana's relationship with Sabina, the family servant who has also served as Ana's nanny since her birth—and as it may seem, still serves as her personal servant well into her twenties—is marked by Ana's privileged sense of immaturity and lack of responsibility. Throughout the novel, Sabina constantly reminds Ana that her mother will be arriving soon and does not want to find her still in bed until late in the afternoon. The Ana/Sabina dialogue, inserted at strategic moments, is the only dialogue of the entire novel. The narration presents their dialogues from the past, during Ana's childhood, as

well as the narrative present, on the day Ana is in bed slipping back and forth into dreams about the Bogotazo, ensuing Violencia, and her personal memories of that time:

—¿Te acuerdas que el día que mataron a Gaitán se me cayó el primer diente?
 —¡Virgensanta! De las cosas que se acuerda a estas horas de la vida. Qué me voy a acordar deso (24).

It is because of that constant dialogue of Ana (adult)/Sabina that the history she recovers can be tied to her present predicament. Sabina being the only other person with a voice in the narrative present stands symbolically for the voice of those women in Colombia who have been historically situated outside of the hegemonic power center. They are placed in contrast to women like Ana, who do indeed have an opportunity to improve social conditions for those like Sabina, marginalized due to race and class, but instead prefer to embrace their own privilege. The historical events that surround the Ana/Sabina dialogues—the Bogotazo, the student movements, the Frente Nacional, Lorenzo’s letters from jail which include descriptions of being tortured—presents to the reader Ana’s dilemma of political action against her indifference.

The appearance of narrative voices from different class and social levels in *Estaba la pájara...* is in accordance with Jean Franco’s analysis of literary pluralism upon the emergence of a substantial corpus of writing by women in the aftermath of new social movements throughout Latin America. In “Going Public; Reinhabiting the Private” Franco discusses the class privilege often associated with literary production after the 1970s and the irony of how social marginalization became marketable.⁵⁹ *Estaba la pájara pinta...* accounts for these social and class advantages by way of the

⁵⁹ Jean Franco, *Critical Passions: Selected Essays*, 1999.

narration's articulation of what Franco describes as "[T]he separation of the intellect from the popular classes, the gulf between different class positions on sexuality [. . .] transposed into questions of narrative voice, genre, and style" (52). Ángel exposes the privileged class as having the tools necessary to become the nation's intelligentsia and therefore leaders of real change. Yet Ana would rather choose apathy, as she would receive no actual benefit from relinquishing her entitled position. Such a dilemma goes back to the existence of different narrative levels in this novel, some exposing Ana's actual thoughts and actions, others her dreams or desires for what she wishes she had more courage to fulfill. This narrative strategy, in addition to defining Ana's mental trauma, is associated with the convergence of her identity with the nation's history, and also articulates, for Ángel that "[T]he class privilege of the intelligentsia has always posed a problem for Latin Americans, but in women's writing it becomes particularly acute since women writers are privileged and marginalized at one and the same time" (Franco, 52). The literary pastiche Ana presents—testimonies, newspaper clippings, Lorenzo's letters from jail that detail worldwide radical political movements—highlights the resources she can acquire because of her class privilege and education. Unlike the rural women whose testimonies she reproduces, or even Sabina who would rather not recall La Violencia, Ana is able to re-articulate this history, in spite of never having experienced it firsthand. For this reason, Ana's disdainful treatment of Sabina points to the bourgeois critique that is inherent in Ángel's portrayal of class relations within the domestic sphere.

In regards to this critique, Francine Masiello's discussion of how avant-garde novels challenged the patriarchal-centered family nucleus that reinforced class and

gender relations is particularly useful again. In the 1920s, the works of authors such as De la Parra, Lange, and Bombal were groundbreaking in their questioning of the Latin American family structure as pivotal to female identity. Masiello writes:

“[. . .] la nueva perspectiva ofrecida por las mujeres [. . .] se observa en la estructura de sus libros, en la trasgresión formal de su obra literaria y en su trastorno de los marcos de referencia tradicionales. Para llegar a este desafío formal la narrativa femenina empieza por cuestionar las bases del logos dominante, indagando la validez de los discursos heredados y la lógica del mundo masculino” (808).

A questioning of the male logos as the dominating marker of family and history is what defines Ángel's novel, and it is precisely by way of her alternative narrative technique that neither adheres to chronological order or narrative levels, that proposes an alternate history to most official accounts of *La Violencia*. Masiello's analysis elaborates three fundamental characteristics in the development of female narration that began with avant-garde novels. First, the *novelas de vanguardia* question the main female protagonist's genealogy and the paternal figure as the center of the family's social identity. In *Estaba la pájara pinta...* Ana's anguish is not due specifically to battling with her father, whose presence is often omitted from her memories, but rather with the female figures of power in her life that insist upon the hegemonic patriarchal structure. The narration returns constantly to the memories of her education in a Catholic grade school run by nuns who instill in her a connected fear of God and state. Ana battles the memories surrounding the death of Julieta and the rigid form of mourning that is imposed on her:

Si no rezas más alto te castigo, insiste, pero lo único que le sale es repetir que no se muera, que no vaya a morirse, pensando que estará allí [. . .] y

sin una pierna como la madre Rudolfina les contó esta mañana. Se la tuvieron que amputar, dijo con cara de que si no se portaban bien tarde o temprano les iba a suceder lo mismo o algo así, y entonces fue cuando se puso a llorar como una huérfana (53).

Her terror about death is ushered in with Julieta's tragedy, constantly present with the national violence that marks the generation in which she grows into adulthood, and is reawakened with the torture and murder of Valeria. In an effort to displace the male-centered concept of history, it is neither the deaths of Gaitán nor Ché Guevara that define Ana's personal story, but rather the deaths of Julieta and later Valeria.

Apart from the nuns, the other females who raise her as a woman of Colombia's high society include her mother, her grandmother, and, paradoxically, Sabina. Their efforts prove to be successful as can be seen via Ana's treatment of Sabina in their constant dialogue. By the time Ana reaches her early adult years, in the narrative present, she has internalized the dominant values of the elite. This is obvious throughout all of the Ana/Sabina dialogues. In the following quote, Ana, due to her refusal to wake up, has let the coffee that Sabina brought to her bedside earlier in the morning get cold; this provokes irritation from Ana and a demand that Sabina remedy the situation: "Ana prueba a sordos pequeños el café [. . .] ¿por qué no lo calientas? [. . .] que si lo recalientas... lo que ocasiona una mirada de desprecio infinito, de esclava desdeñosa, de sierva que al fin de cuentas obedece porque se alquila cada mes por un fajito de billetes [. . .]" (99). Referring back to Masiello's argument that the main female protagonist's genealogy is used to reinforce her social identity, the (extradiegetic) narrator makes clear why Ana believes she has power over Sabina, thus

demonstrating how she has appropriated class and racial hierarchies that reinforce societal authority within a domestic sphere.

A second important point for Masiello's argument is that avant-garde female novel challenges the logos of kin, indicating instead new relations between non-related female protagonists that displace hetero-normative social relations from the center as well as assert female corporeal awareness. Ana's sexuality is what opens up the novel and situates the time reference for us as the reader is presented with the narration of her last night with Lorenzo. The treatment of Ana's sexuality, and possibly her homosexuality, is treated with ambiguity as well as a sense of confusion for her as well as the reader. Ana is initially bashful and withdrawn upon reconnecting with Valeria when they run into each other in their late teenage years as she remembers how they used to take baths together as neighborhood friends during their childhood. Similar experiences with rural girls near her family's hacienda show how Ana's self-discovery is inevitably tied to her erotic awareness, marked by psychological and physical pleasure as well pain. For example, two distinct campesino workers from her parents' ranch sexually abuse Ana on two separate occasions. But in her late adolescent/early-adult life, it is her desire for sexual pleasure to overcome the memories of Julieta that brings her closer to both Lorenzo as well as Valeria. An implied homoerotic subtext can perhaps account for her never being able to fully embrace living alongside Lorenzo, and it is possible that her initial desire for intimacy with him symbolically replaces her longing for intimacy with Valeria. This would account for her denial of the revolutionary lifestyle Lorenzo has chosen, as opposed to her preference to maintaining her comfortable lifestyle. The ambiguity of Ana's sexuality is noted by most literary

criticism that discusses this novel. Although *Estaba la pájara pinta...* has been placed alongside works by authors as Cristina Peri Rossi or Diamela Eltit as an example of homosexual feminist literary works, there is no explicit discussion of this sub-theme in the narration. Rather, I maintain that the implied importance of lesbian relationships can be contextualized within Ana's awareness as a woman coping with her identity in a historical moment marked by male-dominated violence. For this reason, Ángel's allusion to Ana's possible lesbian identification is important as it reverses the patriarchal pattern of societal aggression with which she must come to terms.

This identification is thus related to the third element of the avant-garde novel according to Masiello, wherein the female novel challenges the male logos and its accepted signification in everyday contexts (808). There is nothing radical in Ana's actions throughout the text; and there is actually more of a profound sense of disappointment caused by her inaction. But the challenging of the male-logos comes about in her recounting of the inadequacy of the domestic sphere, as well as her recounting and interpretation of historical events from her points of view as both a young girl and as a young adult. The sequential confusion of these memories emphasizes the inadequate sense of belonging to a home as well as to a nation, and is brought to the forefront throughout the description of Ana's coming of age. Ángel, via her feminist narrative aesthetic, thematic, and use of a variety of voices and sources within her work, accomplishes what Franco describes as "unsettling the stance that supports gender power/knowledge as masculine. This "unsettling" is accomplished in a variety of ways, through parody and pastiche, by mixing genres, and by constituting subversive mythologies" (57). Franco lists Ángel within a group of Latin American

women writers—such as Rosario Ferré, Isabel Allende, Cristina Peri Rossi, Griselda Gambaro, and Ana Lydia Vega—whose late twentieth-century works “[. . .] correspond[s] to this project of displacing the male-centered national allegory and exposes the dubious stereotyping that was always inherent in the epics of nationhood that constitute the Latin American canon” (57). Ángel’s patchwork of voices calls for an active reader to recognize *her* story as embedded within the nation’s history. The greater function that this collage serves is an alternative interpretation of this history, especially as it relates to women from both the margins and those traditionally imagined within the nation’s hegemonic cultural identity.

The collective memory of La Violencia in the twenty first century: *La multitud errante*

Another way that Colombian female writers have articulated a challenge to society and history is by an attempt to redefine domestic space. Laura Restrepo takes on this task in her third novel, *La multitud errante*.⁶⁰ In *La multitud errante* what is traditionally defined as family is challenged upon the fragmentation of this institution within the nation’s history of displaced communities. One of the ways in which writers in Colombia continue to connect the memory of La Violencia to the contemporary era is by juxtaposing it with the current violent phenomena plaguing the nation. The

⁶⁰ Laura Restrepo is one of the most globally renowned figures in Colombian literature today. Restrepo was born in Bogotá in 1950 and studied Philosophy, Literature, and Political Science at the University of los Andes, for both her undergraduate and graduate degrees. In 1983 she was designated by President Belisario Betancur as a member of the commission on peace negotiations between the government and the guerrilla group M-19. This subject matter was the inspiration for her 1986 book *Historia de un entusiasmo* that criticized the Colombian government for the inability to negotiate in a treaty with the M-19; subsequently in the latter part of the eighties she found herself seeking exile in Spain and Mexico because of her political position. In 2004 Restrepo was named the director of the Institute of Culture and Tourism, from which she soon resigned upon winning the VII Alfaguara Prize that year for her novel *Delirio*.

centrality of women within both of these historical moments—the years of the Frente Nacional (as seen in Ángel’s work) and the situation of the nation’s displaced population, a condition that has grown to epic proportions since the late 1990s—challenges the canonical literature of La Violencia. In my discussion of *La multitud errante*, I reiterate Francine Masiello’s characteristics of feminist Latin American literature that defies a male-centered national history. However in this section’s discussion, the centrality of women is accentuated because of the main male protagonist’s dependence on (as well as obsession with) women. *La multitud errante* shows women as not only victims, but also as defenders of the domestic sphere and larger community during the age of La Violencia.

In Laura Restrepo’s 1976 article “Niveles de realidad en la literatura de La Violencia colombiana,” she explains that the memory of La Violencia in Colombia is undeniably present on some level of all literature emerging from this nation since that time:

El impacto que la “Violencia” tuvo sobre la vida colombiana se sintió con tremenda intensidad, y aún se sigue sintiendo, a todos los niveles, político, económico, moral, cultural. La literatura se vio marcada tan bruscamente por este suceso histórico que, puede decirse la “Violencia” ha sido el punto de referencia obligado de casi tres decenios de narrativa: no hay autor que no pase, directa o indirectamente, por el tema; éste está siempre presente, subyacente o explícito, en cada obra (9-10).

It is for these reasons that the impact of La Violencia can still be relevant in a novel such as *La multitud errante*, published four decades after La Violencia’s official end.

Faithful to Restrepo’s relationship with Colombian politics, the theme of the novel is that of Colombia’s displaced population as caused by the current conflict

between armed groups who have forcefully dominated entire sections of the nation. However, these current circumstances are constantly juxtaposed against the age of *La Violencia*; the narration of each era is thus merged into one. Whereas we saw that Albalucía Ángel's novel establishes the inseparability of violence from Ana's coming of age, *La multitud errante* goes a major step further and establishes the inseparability of women and history within Colombia's twentieth-century development, confirming female centrality within the national identity. Unlike the focus on the urban elite in Ángel's book, *La multitud errante* takes place completely within the rural areas surrounding Bogotá. And while both works go back chronologically to the assassination of Gaitán, Ángel's work ends brusquely in 1967. Restrepo, however, maintains a parallel, almost mirror-description of the mid-century violence, with the internal terrorism that Colombia has endured in the past three decades. In Restrepo's work, the violent agents that terrorize Colombia currently—the war between and amongst various guerrilla groups, paramilitaries, and drug-traffickers—picks up where the war between Liberal and Conservative campesinos leaves off, and thereby maintains the nation in a continuing state of war. *La multitud errante*, in this sense shows how war has never ended for the dispossessed of Colombia who remain in a constant state of wandering.⁶¹ Restrepo's novel takes place in contemporary times and maintains as central characters the millions who are part of Colombia's internally displaced population.⁶² I analyze this novel as the bridge between the 300,000 victims of La

⁶¹ The English version of *La multitud errante*, published in 2004, is appropriately titled *A Tale of the Dispossessed*.

⁶² Apart from the focus on the displaced population in Colombia, the narrator describes dancing merengue at the town discotheque and the appearance of a group of school girls who are loyal fans of Shakira; these cultural references help us recognize this narration as contemporary.

Violencia and the current terror with which as many as 4.4 million Colombians currently live.⁶³

This novel can be categorized by what Gonzalo Sánchez in “*La Violencia* in Colombia: New Research, New Questions” (1985) describes as the “rediscovery” of *La Violencia*. Sánchez divides post *Bogotazo* literature in two distinct periods: first, traditional literature of *La Violencia*, which began before the *Bogotazo* in 1945 and lasted until 1965; and second, the rediscovery of *La Violencia*, which began in the 1970s, and continues today. According to Sánchez the increasing international focus on Colombia’s guerrilla and paramilitary groups is the reason for the continuous attraction of this type of literature, which remembers the *Bogotazo* and the age of *La Violencia* by putting it into new parameters in the present: “[. . .] one can see a shift from analysis of *La Violencia* as the product of particular political circumstances in the period 1945-65, toward long term views in which the conflict is regarded as a structural element of the political and social development of the country” (799). Restrepo’s work is undoubtedly

⁶³ The actual internally displaced population (IDPs) represents entire communities of peasants that have been dislocated forcefully from their original dwellings to refugee camps in rural locations of the nation, as well as marginalized urban spaces. According to the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC), Colombia is second only to the African nation of Sudan as the territory with the highest internally displaced population in the world. In Colombia’s population of roughly 48 million, 6 to 10% are displaced; with a total number of more than 4 million IDPs in 2009 (<http://www.internal-displacement.org/idmc/website/countries.nsf/%28httpEnvelopes%29/A7E1B7BD7528B329C12575E500525165?OpenDocument#expand>) Sudan’s internally displaced population is as great as six million, according to 2007 figures published also by the IDMC. Colombia’s internally displaced population alone also outnumbers the other Latin American nations on the list—Guatemala, México, and Perú—by a wide margin in the millions. The IDMC 2009 report says regarding the IDPs calculated for 2008: "By the end of 2008 there were 4.5 million IDPs in the region; this is the highest figure since IDMC started to monitor internal displacement in the Americas, and is due to the rise in displacement in Colombia" (<http://www.internal-displacement.org/8025708F004CE90B/%28httpRegionPages%29/54F848FB94403472802570A6005595DA?OpenDocument>). In other words of the 4.5 millions IDPs in Latin America (consisting of primarily Colombia, Guatemala, México, and Perú), more than 4 million are Colombian.

characteristic of this second category of literature of La Violencia that Sánchez describes.

The epigraph that begins *La multitud errante* comes from American writer John Steinbeck's 1939 classic novel *The Grapes of Wrath*: "A las gentes que andan huyendo del terror (...) les suceden cosas extrañas; algunas crueles y otras tan hermosas que les vuelven a encender la fe." This homage that Restrepo pays to Steinbeck's novel—also about a wandering population, specifically migrant communities in the depression-era United States—establishes for the reader a connection to other historical circumstances of dispossession that have occurred and continue to occur in other areas of the world. *La multitud errante* revolves around a camp for displaced individuals on the outskirts of Barrancabermeja-Tora, in the center-Andean region of Colombia. French nuns who work for a non-governmental organization manage the shelter. *La multitud errante*'s main protagonist is known only by his nickname "Siete por Tres," which signifies his unique characteristic of having twenty-one *dedos*: ten fingers and eleven toes. His constant flight from violence is symbolically parallel to his inescapable memory of La Violencia, as narrated by the nurse at the refugee camp—a French woman in her late thirties, who, like Siete por Tres, bears only a nickname. She is called "Ojos de Agua" because of her blue eyes and how they often appear to be moved by the sadness that surrounds the camp, thus emphasizing her foreign status with respect to Colombia's situation. The irony of her nationality is that she is the only character that does not have to flee and conversely, has the possibility of leaving at will. Nevertheless, the novel describes her gradual transformation into not only an aid in the camp, but also a member of the community. She accumulates the memories of innumerable refugees

who arrive at the camp after decades of fleeing violence. From this she forms a collective, retrospective memory that she uses to narrate the events of 1948 to the present, giving the reader the impression that Ojos de Agua has indeed lived the historical context that she describes:

Es este un lugar ajeno y lejano de todo lo mío, regido por códigos privativos que a cada instante me exigen un enorme esfuerzo de interpretación. Sin embargo, por razones que no acabo de esclarecer, es aquí donde está en juego lo más interno y pertinente de mi ser. Es aquí donde resuena, confusa pero apremiante, la voz que me convoca. Y es que yo, a mi manera peculiar y aunque ellos no se den cuenta, también hago parte de la multitud errante, que me arrastra por entre encuentros y desencuentros al poderoso ritmo de su vaivén. (69)

The oral tradition of sharing and describing events with others who have had similar experiences allows Ojos de Agua to understand how each generation has dealt with violence, and thus, create solidarity with them. During the course of *Siete por Tres*'s stay in the camp, Ojos de Agua gradually falls in love with him as she listens to his stories of his constant flight throughout Colombia's interior for the last five decades. Within his recollection of violence, displacement, escapes, and repetitions of violence, the memory of Matilde Lina is kept at the forefront. She is *Siete por Tres*'s adopted mother who, after their ill-fated separation, becomes the object of his obsession.

As I discussed in the previous sections and in relation to Francine Masiello's article, the *novelas de vanguardia* that appeared throughout the first quarter of the twentieth century questioned the main female protagonist's genealogy by challenging the notion of the paternal figure as the center of the family's social identity. This idea of the father as center had traditionally been the metaphor for a patriarchal-based national identity and therefore, a dominant marker of history. *La multitud errante*

breaks with this notion by having Matilde Lina represent for Siete por Tres not only his family, but also Colombia. In regards first to the relation of family, Matilde Lina is both his father and mother figure. As he moves into adulthood, he is obsessed with the idea of finding her to shift their relationship from mother/son to woman/man. Siete por Tres never alludes to what that relationship will be; he is only consumed by the idea of being able to have that opportunity for he feels as though he has no identity without her. Siete por Tres does not identify Matilde Lina clearly as either his mother or his intended lover, thus reemphasizing his own feelings of despair within a life where he has grown to know nothing other than wandering. This confusion will later bleed into Ojos de Agua's feelings towards him, as she also finds herself grappling with emotion, not knowing if she could ever adequately replace the illusion of the mother/lover/nation figure that Siete por Tres has configured in Matilde Lina.

In a desire to satisfy his fantasy of a reunion with Matilde Lina, Siete por Tres finds himself continuing to wander with various communities, ultimately being the designated carrier of the Virgin Mary statue. This emphasizes an ironic placement of female religious iconography in the center of Colombia's cultural identity and its bind to the Catholic Church. Whereas women on other levels of culture have been undeniably marginalized, imagery tied to Catholicism highlights the centrality of women, albeit in a paradoxical way. Other cultural productions, which I turn to in my final chapter and conclusion, bring to light such a cultural and religious ideal: for example the novels *La Virgen de los sicarios* (Fernando Vallejo, 1993) and *Rosario Tijeras* (Jorge Franco, 1999), as well as the internationally acclaimed movie *María llena eres de gracia* (2004). Unlike the Christ figure in Caballero Calderón's *El Cristo*

de espaldas, who, because of violence turns his back on his followers, the figure of the Virgin Mary is appropriated precisely due to the wandering community's belief in her protection during times of aggression and hostility. The statue of the Virgin Mary—who is known as Santamaría Bailarina (32) Madre Celestial, la Llena de Gracia, la Inmaculada (33)—also plays the role of temporary substitute for Matilde Lina. This desire for substitution is, nevertheless, unsuccessful because, in a moment of rage upon remembering the ambush that separated Matilde Lina from Siete por Tres, he blames the Virgin [statue] for failing to protect her. Siete por Tres ultimately decides to continue to carry the statue again, but without any embellishment that had previously been given to the Reina Bendita: “De aquí en más, le anuncié con franqueza, vas a tener que seguir la travesía a lo pobre; a lomo de indio, sin otro manto que este costal de yute ni otro lujo que esta sogá. Como quien dice: se te acabó el reinado, mi Reina; ahora empiezan tus andanzas de persona del montón” (61). As Siete por Tres tells these anecdotes to Ojos de Agua, she interprets them as his unconscious longing for a replacement for Matilde Lina. Yet being that Siete por Tres is unaware of what the woman who was formerly his adopted mother now represents for his life—a lover/partner/continued protector—Ojos de Agua knows no real substitute exists.

Ojos de Agua interprets the figure of Matilde Lina as representative of Colombia: the search for her is parallel to the search of others for a place to call their own and relinquish their un-definable status as part of the nation's dispossessed population (Rueda, 404). And as Ojos de Agua continues to fall in love with Siete por Tres within both the present-day narration as well as during the recounting of his flight throughout La Violencia, she simultaneously feels threatened. Since Ojos de Agua is

foreign, she knows that she would never be able to fill that void. This book may be alluding to the fact that despite Ojos de Agua's good intentions, Colombia's "losing of itself" is also credited to the constant foreign presence that has been one of the root causes of the nation's predicament. Ironically the U.N. as well as other foreign NGOs represents the few possibilities for some sort of assistance. Foreigners like Mother Françoise and Ojos de Agua, as portrayed in the novel, often run these displacement camps. The gradual solidarity that develops between Siete por Tres and Ojos de Agua also causes her to feel threatened not only by the phantasmagoric image that is constantly conjured up of Matilde Lina but also by the deeply rooted nature of Colombia's violence, creating in her a feeling of despair as Ojos de Agua realizes that the nation's situation was already entrenched generations before her arrival. The narrative eloquently erases the beginning and ending in each new chapter of Colombian violence, showing that each generation is a reincarnation of its predecessor. As Ojos de Agua's memory merges with that of the displaced community, she concludes in reference to Siete por Tres's futile search for Matilde Lina: "¿Cómo puedo yo decirle que nunca la va a encontrar, si ha gastado la vida buscándola?" (11).

As I discussed in relation to *Estaba la pájara pinta sentada en el verde limón* the avant-garde female novel challenges the logics of kin, indicating instead new relations between non-related female protagonists that displace hetero-normative social relations from the center, as well as assert female corporeal awareness. In this novel, the majority of the camp's inhabitants are part of matriarchal-based families. Further, the memory of Matilde Lina also invokes the memory of campesina figures like María Encarna in *El Cristo de espaldas*, serving as a bridge between past and present violence.

As the narration is a constant series of “flashbacks” told in no particular order, the depiction of Siete por Tres’s appearance at the camp is presented in chapter thirteen alongside the anecdotes that the foreign woman provides on the arrival and stay of others and that remind us of the stories that María Encarna tells the priest in Caballero Calderón’s novel:

Aquí llegan los que escapan del infierno (99) [. . .] Nadie llega aquí para siempre; esto es sólo una estación de paso y no ofrece futuro. Durante cinco o seis meses les damos a los desplazados techo, refugio y comida, mientras se sobreponen a la tragedia y vuelven a ser personas.
—¿Será posible volver a ser persona? —me pregunta Siete por Tres sin mirarme, porque conoce la respuesta mejor que yo.
—No siempre. Sin embargo el albergue no puede alargar el plazo, así que deben seguir camino para enfrentar de nuevo la vida y empezar de cero (100).

These descriptions help to create the sense that the inhabitants of the camp feel solidarity upon their arrival, as others like them relate to fleeing from violence as a way of life. The nurse understands that optimism for the future is scarce if at all existent, especially when those survivors, although weary and distraught by war, carry within a desire for vengeance, as Mother Françoise tells her: “Detrás de ese aire de derrota está vivísimo el rencor [. . .] Huyen de la guerra pero la llevan adentro, porque no han podido perdonar” (101).

The third element of the feminist avant-garde novel according to Masiello is that it challenges the male logos and its accepted signification in everyday contexts. In this novel, Colombia’s current violence is constantly juxtaposed with the violence in which it is rooted. This disrupts any chances for issuing in a peaceful social order since the official ending of La Violencia. This violence, we must remember, is male-created and dominated. Yet, it is women, as seen in this novel, that not only have comprised a

greater portion of its victims, but that also work to provide assistance and some sort of peaceful existence. Siete por Tres here represents one of the only male protagonists in *La multitud errante*. When he is found on the first of January 1950, Colombia is already two years into the Violencia and this point serves to bring the historical marker to the forefront of Siete por Tres and Matilde Lina's story:

—Viene brava la vaina —se oía comentar entonces—. Por la cordillera viene bajando una chusma violenta clamando degüello general. Eran los ecos de la Guerra Chica, que cundía desde el asesinato de Jorge Eliécer Gaitán y que amenazaba con cerrar el cerco sobre la pacífica Santamaría [. . .] Un bulto quieto, pequeño, envuelto como un tamal entre una cobija de dulceabrigo a cuadros [. . .] —Miren, le sobra un dedo en el pie [. . .] Tal vez por eso algunos recelaron desde el principio, por el sexto dedo de su pie derecho, que aparecía así, de repente y caído de la nada, como señal peligrosa de que se andaba resquebrajando el orden natural de las cosas [. . .] —¡El Año Viejo se fue dejando un niño de veintiún dedos en el atrio de la iglesia!— [. . .] y Matilde Lina, por novelera y curiosa, se abrió paso a codazos por entre el círculo de humanidad que se apretaba en torno al fenómeno [. . .] Ya desde entonces la gran presencia en la vida del niño fue ella, Matilde Lina [. . .] (27).

The appearance of a baby with an extra toe, as told through a description that invokes the omen of an infant born with an animal's tail in the oral narrative, "tall-tale" style of *Cien años de soledad*, is used to describe how Siete por Tres's existence parallels the breakdown of nature as caused by violence—"como señal peligrosa de que se andaba resquebrajando el orden natural de las cosas." Then, from the moment that Matilde Lina "adopts" Siete por Tres, they lead a nomadic life: "[. . .] atravesaron juntos los mares rojos del éxodo hasta que la calamidad separó sus vidas [. . .] (43). And although Siete por Tres is part of both the past and present displaced communities that this novel invokes, his recollection of a life fleeing from town to town with Matilde Lina represents what he feels is the reason for his existence. This emphasizes, again, the

endless correlation between individual identity and national violence that novels portraying Colombia's history of conflict underscore.

As the novel concludes, Ojos de Agua dares to tell *Siete por Tres*: “—No es a Matilde Lina a quien buscas —me atreví por fin, y mis palabras rodaron, redondas, por entre las mesas ya vacías del comedor—. Matilde Lina es sólo el nombre que le has dado a todo lo que buscas” (135). The unreachability of Matilde Lina is, again, parallel to the wandering of this group of people. Just like homeless populations throughout the world, the dispossessed represent various communities within the nation, yet are looked at as belonging to everywhere and nowhere all at once; they remain distant from relating to a national identity established by the dominant groups. For Restrepo, it seems as though national identity in Colombia is more truthfully represented by women, since Matilde Lina, although still “lost,” shares with the women who arrive at the shelter the characteristic of being defined by violence. The question that most preoccupies Ojos de Agua is: how can this community define who they are, when others—such as *Siete por Tres*—are unable to find them? At the same time, without the search for her, he would have to admit that he is also *desterrado*—removed from relevance within Colombia—yet, still within Colombia herself.

As I have shown in my analyses of *Estaba la pájara pinta sentada en el verde limón* and *La multitud errante*, Ángel and Restrepo's novels explore generations of violence in retrospect and connect it to a present state of aggression. These novels carry on the tradition that authors such as Fanny Buitrago began in the era early 1960s of utilizing what had been considered “avant-garde” literary techniques to essentially re-write history via a gendered perspective and according to experimental literary

techniques. Both Ángel and Restrepo's account for women's distinct modes of survival during these aggressive eras, and they do so by breaking with "accessible" writing to produce formally innovative and unconventional works that create a history that serves as an alternative to what has been traditionally presented in official discourse. Their portrayals can be connected with literary interpretations inspired by each new manifestation of violence in Colombia—such as drug trafficking, which I examine next—that work to expose societal factors for women's ongoing victimization within historical aggression.

Chapter Four

Representing the City Space in Late Twentieth-Century Colombia: Urban Violence, Drugs, and Literature

I conclude my discussion on gender and violence in Colombian novels by discussing how drug trafficking has become the late twentieth century/early twenty-first century reincarnation of violence. This new generation of conflict is played out primarily in two of the nation's major cities—Medellín and Bogotá—including their urban peripheries. I examine Fernando Vallejo's *La Virgen de los sicarios* (1993), Jorge Franco's *Rosario Tijeras* (1999), and, to a greater extent, Laura Restrepo's *Delirio* (2004) to demonstrate how gender, at the end of the twentieth century, moved into a center position within texts that represent the nation's urban centers and the proliferation of crime and drug trafficking within these spaces. Specifically the juxtaposition of violence with sex and sexual objectification is highlighted within this latest era of violence. In *La Virgen de los sicarios*, Vallejo portrays a male-dominated and misogynistic Medellín in which young boys are exploited for sex as well as murder, and females are considered easily disposable objects of repulsion. In Franco's novel, a young man from Medellín's high society presents the life of seventeen-year-old Rosario, hired by the city's cartel lords to serve as both assassin and prostitute. Although this narration does indeed explore the historical reasons for how a girl like Rosario becomes both victim and victimizer within the world of the drug cartels, the gaze of the narrator serves, ironically, to reinforce her sexual commodification. In Restrepo's *Delirio*, female sexual exploitation is presented amongst a multiplicity of voices. The narrative levels work together to unmask the reasons for the sudden mental

breakdown of Agustina, the novel's main female protagonist. Her awareness of sexual violence by the hands of drug cartel leaders, and how their power complies with the actual practices of the state apparatus as well as Colombia's elite—to which she belongs—causes her to suffer a mental breakdown and thus become isolated in the *delirium* to which the novel's title refers. This mental and physical isolation reminds us of the marginalized space with which women contend in a nation often solely identified, both within and outside of its borders, by its brutal history.

I emphasize an analysis of *Delirio* in this chapter. This is not because Restrepo, as a female writer, has some sort of advantage over Vallejo or Franco, but because Restrepo's text allows me to examine the evolution of women's novels in Colombia. These novels reveal new insights into gendered violence not previously discussed or brought to the forefront of the nation's history of conflict. In the case of *Delirio*, Restrepo reveals how the dominant and traditional powers of the nation have created historical situations that result in psychological harm in addition to physical or sexual danger. These are factors that are not approached critically in either *La Virgen de los sicarios* or *Rosario Tijeras*. Further, the narrators that Vallejo and Franco provide serve to confine gendered subjects—both young women and men—within the traditional and patriarchal hierarchy of sexual and social codes.

Restrepo continues the tradition begun by Buitrago in the 1960s and carried on by Ángel in the 1970s. She evaluates the gendered violence of a generation after an era has passed, thereby forcing the reader to tie this aggression to acts that continue today. In *Delirio*, she re-visits the infamous “Drug-War” years, when Colombia was at the center of the world's attention for narco-trafficking. This era further led to Colombia's

association with Pablo Escobar, one of the most notorious drug “mafiosos” in decades. Restrepo takes the reader back to the 1980s when Colombian cities were terrorized not only by bloodshed between cartel leaders, but also because of U.S. drug enforcement agencies that saw in Colombia a scapegoat for the U.S. domestic drug-abuse epidemic. Further, the methods that Restrepo uses to approach violence accentuate the evolution of literary experimental techniques by feminist novelists who portray each new generation of hostility in Colombia. I reiterate my original assertion regarding violence in Colombia, which is that each new generation of conflict in the twentieth century is inherently tied to the previous, beginning with the tragic circumstances surrounding the transnational interventions on the Caribbean UFC plantations in the 1920s. Since then, war and conflict have become defining characteristics of Colombia, especially in light of continuous and ever more U.S. intervention. The rise of drug-trafficking as a real, economic force with international associations, harks back to the state-sponsored violence that was experienced on the Caribbean coast during the labor disputes with the United Fruit Company in the first half of the twentieth century, and how these disputes unfolded into the era of La Violencia in the second half. As I will discuss in more detail below, drug trafficking becomes an inevitable result of the urban climate during the exodus from rural areas in the aftermath of La Violencia. Its continuance today is exacerbated due to neoliberal economic policies put in place in the early 1990s. Once the “War on Drugs” was supposedly concluded, the government reformed the Colombian constitution to substitute neoliberal economic power for the demise of the major drug cartels of the nation.⁶⁴

⁶⁴ In 1990, Liberal technocrat César Gaviria was elected president of Colombia. One of his main

These historical and political factors also influence Restrepo's literary production, since she, like other contemporary Latin American authors, contends with the notion of urban space. Restrepo's *Delirio* can be regarded as crime fiction, in particular as a version of the *neopoliciaco* detective novel, in that her novel highlights the pursuit of justice against state corruption. In addition, another stylistic resource Restrepo uses is "the fantastic" where the psychic powers of the main protagonist cannot be interpreted by way of reason or traditional approaches to realist literature. I contend that she uses the fantastic in order to grapple with the senseless nature of 1980s violence in Colombia, precisely as drug trafficking proved a force in which all classes became inevitably involved. Ironically, support for the U.S. "War on Drugs" in Colombia came primarily from the ruling class, which profited from the drug economy. Finally, as discussed in the previous chapter, Restrepo's work proves her personal and political commitment to progressive politics in Colombia and throughout Latin America. This is evident in the trajectory of her own literary bibliography, where both her fiction and non-fiction work maintain a critical position against Colombia's status quo which has had persistently negative consequences for women.

campaign platforms involved modifying the constitution, unchanged since 1886. Although economic growth held steady during the 1980s, of course due significantly to drug trafficking, Gaviria insisted that state intervention as well as an alliance with Washington would stimulate the economy. He therefore launched a program of neoliberal reforms that was part of the constitutional reform program of 1991. As Forrest Hylton describes, Gaviria's neoliberal tactics were successfully carried out with the help of Álvaro Uribe Vélez, a Liberal Party senator at the time. Gaviria and Uribe "slashed the public-sector workforce and set about privatizing health care and social security, establishing the autonomy of the Central Bank, liberalizing the currency and financial sector, reducing tariffs and import quotas, and increasing turnover taxes" (84). In regards to the direct connection between neoliberal policies in Colombia and drug trafficking, the statistics Hylton provides also confirm these practices: "The area under coca cultivation also tripled in the second half of the decade, swelling to roughly 170,000 hectares in 2001; poppy production went from zero in 1989 to 61 metric tons in 1998, while Colombia continued to supply 40 per cent of U.S. marijuana imports as well—the connexion [sic] between neoliberal agricultural policies and the spread of illicit crops could hardly have been more direct (84).

In order to contextualize these factors, it is important to note what Vallejo, Franco, and Restrepo's respective works have in common. Continuing the move away from rural regionalism that we saw in chapter three, all three authors represent the contemporary focus on urban areas like Medellín or Bogotá. During the 1980s, in addition to drug trafficking, these cities witnessed new manifestations of violence such as the exploitation of the nation's youth—both male and female—for murder and sex. Medellín and Bogotá are main protagonists of the novels I examine here, and each text emphasizes the power and class struggle within urban areas, highlighting gendered exploitation within the city space. Although *La Virgen de los sicarios* and *Rosario Tijeras* do not involve a mystery that needs to be solved, they can also be placed within the framework of the increasing popularity of Latin American crime-fiction genres. This genre has garnered international fame for such authors as Mexico's Paco Ignacio Taibo, Chile's Ramón Díaz Eterovic, or Cuba's Leonardo Padura Fuentes. Their novels work to expose Latin American societal ills, in particular since the 1980s and 1990s and especially in light of the neoliberal political turn of the hemisphere after the end of the Cold War. Like *Delirio*, *La Virgen de los sicarios* and *Rosario Tijeras* also shed light on the lack of optimism for a national project involving urban development that would positively affect the nation's poor—and in particular women—by improving their quality of life and individual social progress. All three novels, on the contrary, expose that involvement with crime has, unfortunately, become a viable escape that many of Colombia's marginalized have been forced to choose in light of ever decreasing access to education, employment, housing, and an overall humane standard of living.

The rise of the *sicario* in Pablo Escobar's Medellín

In the previous chapter, I examined Albalucía Ángel's *Estaba la pájara pinta sentada en el verde limón* and Laura Restrepo's *La multitud errante*, two novels that, between the mid 1970s and the late 1990s, portrayed the continuing legacy of La Violencia specifically as it affected women's ability to become actively involved with improving social conditions that resulted from the nation's brutal history. Fernando Vallejo's *La Virgen de los sicarios* and Jorge Franco's *Rosario Tijeras* tie Colombia's current epidemic of drug trafficking to how the weight of La Violencia continues to bear on choices for individual progress. Lack of viable alternatives in Medellín forces the teenagers represented in each novel to be exploited sexually while proliferating the violence of which they are also victims. This is tied to the generations of violence examined in this dissertation because the novels' respective protagonists are the subsequent generation of survivors of La Violencia, whose parents and grandparents fled the brutality of the rural areas of Colombia's interior to be displaced along the peripheries of cities such as Medellín, as explained in this dissertation's Introduction.

When cartel leaders such as Pablo Escobar—whose family also was a product of internal displacement to Medellín's peripheries in the years following La Violencia—offered an alternative way of “survival” for teenagers in otherwise hopeless situations, the phenomenon of the “sicario” arose.⁶⁵ Jean Franco points out that “*sicario* comes from Latin and means a paid assassin. It's very antiquity, its Latinity, evokes a residue

⁶⁵ See chapter two of Alonso Salazar, *La parábola de Pablo: Auge y caída de un gran capo del narcotráfico* (2001).

of premodern mentality, now reactivated by modern consumption” (223).⁶⁶ The emergence of the sicario is thus a direct result of these historical and social factors that emphasize marginalization of entire populations of people from real economic and educational progress. Sicarios were provided with semi-automatic weapons as well as quick modes of transportation such as mopeds, and were assigned to kill politicians, policemen, anti-drug enforcement agents, and others who posed a threat to the proliferation of cartel expansion. Before I move into my discussion of *La Virgen de los sicarios* and *Rosario Tijeras*, probably the most well known literary interpretations of the sicario phenomenon, two texts help to highlight how the interest in the way of life of the sicario came about and later served as inspiration for both Vallejo’s and Franco’s novels.

The earliest cultural production that examined *sicarismo* was the movie *Rodrigo D: No Futuro* (1989) by the Medellín-born director Víctor Gaviria. This feature film was shot documentary style and the protagonists hired were actual teenagers from Medellín’s *barrios populares*.⁶⁷ Filmed completely in Medellín’s Barrio Diamante in the northeast corner of the city, the movie focuses on Rodrigo, whose main desire in life is to be a drummer in a punk band. However, he loses hope of ever finding more than just the immediate gratification of material goods that his neighborhood friends acquire in their profession as sicarios. For this reason Rodrigo’s suicide and the murder of one of the sicarios by another neighborhood sicario merges into one, final death scene.

⁶⁶ “Bodies in Distress: Narratives of Globalization” (2002).

⁶⁷ Some of these young men, as the movie’s ending credits tell, were killed in urban violence before the premiere of the movie, showing the haunting way “Life imitates art.”

Héctor D. Fernández L'Hoeste tied the importance of Gaviria's cinematic debut to Medellín's reality:

By August 1989, 70 percent of violent death in that city occurred among those aged between 14 and 20, and such a trend began to have an impact in the national political arena. The figure of a teenager from the *comunas*, barely an adolescent, responsible for the assassination of high political figures and openly exhibiting a kamikaze élan in his criminal techniques, became a common place in Colombian eyes (51).

Hence the “D: No Futuro” of the title, emphasizes both Rodrigo's lack of connection to an identity within the confines of Medellín in the absence of a last name, and the initial “D” also plays on “de” or “of: No Future,” articulating the absence of positive prospects that may lie ahead for him within the Barrio Diamante. The movie did receive a great deal of disapproval, mostly from conservative critics who believed that emphasizing or exploiting the hostile characteristics of Medellín only gave fuel to the already accepted idea of the city as “murder capital of the world,” a stigma that was garnered precisely by the end of the 1980s when Escobar and his cartel still existed. Nevertheless, *Rodrigo D: No Futuro* did indeed earn some well-deserved positive attention, not only because of Gaviria's experimental cinematic triumph, earning him a nomination for the Golden Palm Award at the 1990 Cannes Film Festival in France, but also because it drew much needed consideration for adolescents from areas like Barrio Diamante.

The first non-fictional text about sicarios and urban youth gangs was published in 1990, following on the heels of *Rodrigo D*'s success. *No nacimos pa' semilla* by Alonso Salazar is a socio-cultural analysis of various inhabitants of the *comunas* where a large number of youth gangs existed at the time. Using the testimonies of gang members and their families, Salazar traces the evolution of sicarios and the social

context that created their appearance, emphasizing how urban warfare by and between adolescents became the next chapter in a nation plagued by violence for more than a century. The text's interviews of the mothers of many deceased gang members is a testament to how families from these areas have no choice but to become accustomed to violence as an everyday reality. Salazar followed *No nacimos pa' semilla* in 1992 with *Medellín: Las subculturas del narcotráfico*, co-written by Ana María Jaramillo. In this text, Salazar and Jaramillo explore further the historical and political reasons for the city's dangerous classification:

. . . el período más violento en la historia de la ciudad ha sido uno de los más ricos en la expresión de diversas subculturas, estilos de vida, lenguajes, y nuevas valoraciones sobre el trabajo, la vida, la muerte, la familia y la religión. La problemática de los jóvenes en Medellín ha puesto en evidencia el quiebre del modelo tradicional de familia y de escuela y el mayor peso de otros espacios de socialización: la calle, la gallada, la banda, los grupos culturales y deportivos (33).

This analysis of Medellín's history helps to understand the fascination with the sicario, both by those who have been drawn into that way of life, or by those like Gaviria, Vallejo, or Franco who try to duplicate it via an artistic medium. Salazar's books then became the gateway to learning about a sub-culture that no one had dreamed could exist from the high stakes crime of drug trafficking. It thus opened the doors for other artists and writers to approach the most recent way in which another violent manifestation in Colombia acquired victims from the nation's most marginalized sections.

Alexis, Wilmar, and Rosario: The gendered bodies of *La Virgen de los sicarios* and *Rosario Tijeras*

La virgen de los sicarios by Fernando Vallejo is about a writer, autobiographically called Fernando, who returns to his native Medellín after three decades of self-exile. Fernando, the first-person narrator of the novel, faces the anguish of not finding the same Medellín of his childhood; in its place is a city rotting in its excess of urban violence. At an exclusive male party marked by its attendees as both homosexual and intellectual—two characteristics that Fernando boasts in his self-description—the narrator meets the young sicario Alexis, presented to him as a “gift” by his friend and the party’s host. “Aquí te regalo esta belleza —me dijo José Antonio cuando me presentó a Alexis—, que ya lleva como diez muertos.” Alexis se rió y yo también y por supuesto no le creí, o mejor dicho sí. Después le dijo al muchacho: “Vaya lleve a éste a conocer el cuarto de las mariposas” (10). After their initial sexual encounter, for which Fernando pays Alexis generously, the boy becomes Fernando’s constant companion and new love interest.

For Alexis the commodification of his physical body and sexuality provides material goods that he desires, while Fernando is drawn deeper into his fascination with the boy and his world of violence. For Alexis, this relationship is acceptable, being that, since the demise of the Medellín cartel after the death of Escobar (the novel is published in 1994, one year after his death), his “profession” as sicario is not as lucrative as before. Thus, the juxtaposition of violence and sex in exchange for material goods is presented early on. Fernando does not hide his exploitation of Alexis’s life of violence and poverty in Santo Domingo Savio for his own sexual triumphs, or perhaps

better-said, a fascination that crosses over into pedophilia. He describes Santo Domingo Savio as the most arousing of all the marginal comunas, “la más excitante” (54), because it is where the most beautiful sicarios are born. This fetishizing of the adolescent boys’ bodies is concordant with the ease with which he begins his sexual relation with Wílmur after Alexis’s murder. Wílmur is another young assassin, who unbeknownst to Fernando until the end of the novel, was the one who killed Alexis to avenge his brother’s murder. Wílmur becoming Alexis’s replacement as Fernando’s lover emphasizes the easily disposable/replaceable aspect of both of these adolescents’ gendered bodies.

Aside from the physical pleasure he obtains from the inhabitants of these comunas, Fernando also feeds his ego in creating a distance with this and all the slum areas, and positioning himself as belonging to Medellín proper, as opposed to *Medallo*, the name that the sicarios use for the city. Fernando accepts this distinction, as Medellín is the city he left behind decades ago, and that he romanticizes in his memories of Sabaneta, the neighborhood where he spent his youth. In contrast, *Medallo* is the city that Fernando encounters upon his return to Colombia, portrayed in the novel as well as the movie version (2000, directed by Barbet Schroeder) as drowning in violence, drugs, and murder. As he sees *Medallo* taking over Medellín, Fernando does not shy away from racist, classist, and sexist explanations for the city’s deterioration. Although he does indeed fault the corruption of the state and the lack of protection provided by the police or politicians, the narration blames Medellín’s poor for their own situations in the comunas, highlighting the proliferation of sicarios throughout *Medallo*.

Initially, Fernando separates himself from all urban activity, insisting on his position as a *voyeur* in relation to the marginalized areas: “Las comunas son, como he dicho, tremendas. Pero no me crean mucho que sólo las conozco por referencias, por las malas lenguas: casas y casas y casas, feas, feas, feas, encaramadas obscenamente las unas sobre las otras [. . .]” (56). But later, he takes on the position of *flâneur*, who moves through the city streets, seeking pleasure in his ability to interpret, opine, and judge the city’s space and its inhabitants from *his* marginal yet at the same time, privileged position.⁶⁸ He considers himself suitable to educate Alexis, and later Wílmár, as well as the reader of the novel, to whom he refers constantly, on how each aspect of Medellín can be classified and codified. Therefore, the city’s people, its metro-train, the architecture, the variation from one neighborhood to the next, as well as the common vernacular are all given a value according to his judgment, most often in a pejorative light. In this way Fernando’s cynical and snobby narration spreads all over Medellín. Regarding Fernando’s attitude of superiority, Mary Louise Pratt also notes that: “Todo es narrado en un tono irónico, acerbo, cínicamente divertido que ha canonizado a Vallejo como voz de nuestro apocalíptico fin de milenio” (91).⁶⁹ In effect,

⁶⁸ I use the term *flâneur* according to Walter Benjamin’s discussion in “Paris, the Capital of the Nineteenth Century” (*Selected Writings; Vol.3, 1935 – 1938*). Benjamin refers to the activity of the French poet Baudelaire who in his writing, considered himself as not pertaining to the city space of Paris as he walked through her streets. The Paris of his youth no longer existed for Baudelaire; this is a parallel comparison for the opposition between Fernando/Medellín in *La virgen de los sicarios*. Rory O’Byrne’s “Representations of the City in the Narrative of Fernando Vallejo,” (2004) also discusses the notion of Fernando as *flâneur*. Even Davis’s *Planet of Slums* would place Vallejo’s elitist gaze in tune with other bourgeois intellectuals who observed the slums at a distance. Davis notes that by the end of the nineteenth century, such authors as Robert Wood or Rudyard Kipling became the self-defined authorities on marginalized areas of urban spaces: “[C]onnoisseurs and *flâneurs* debated where human degradation was most awful” (21).

⁶⁹ “Tres incendios y dos mujeres extraviadas: el imaginario novelístico frente al nuevo contrato social” (2002).

Fernando's announcing his membership in the lettered class from early on and throughout the novel helps him to confirm his assertions about Medellín as reality instead of opinion. Furthermore, his self-definition as grammatician allows him to examine not only linguistic communication, but also the social communication between the powerful, such as himself, the young boys he exploits, and women, whom he despises.

The devotion to the Virgen de los Sicarios is the only way that women are considered in a somewhat positive light. Although initially Fernando scoffs at this belief as well, he chooses to let go of his atheist and misogynistic tendencies as the Virgin soon also begins to fascinate him in congruence with his fetishization of the assassin boys. In all other situations, however, women are considered objects of repulsion and socially dispensable. In fact, for Fernando the elimination of women would be the rightful solution to the city's poverty, overpopulation, and violence. Emphasizing his separation from the people of Medellín, as well as a type of *neo* social-Darwinist view that he derives from this difference, Fernando suggests violence as a way of exterminating violence. His proposed solution that children like Alexis kill other children with the hopes of controlling the population can be interpreted as fascist: "Mis conciudadanos padecen de una vileza congénita, crónica. Ésta es una raza ventajosa, envidiosa, embustera, traicionera, ladrona: la peste humana en su más extrema ruindad. ¿La solución para acabar con la juventud delincuente? Exterminen la niñez" (27-28). And amongst Fernando's various self-described levels of superiority—intellectual, grammatician, expatriate of Colombia—his characteristic as both male and homosexual grants him his greatest sense of disdain for women:

[. . .] para mí las mujeres eran como si no tuvieran alma. Un coco vacío. Y que por eso con ellas era imposible el amor. Es que yo estudié con las curitas salesianos del colegio de Sufragio. Con ellos aprendí que la relación carnal con las mujeres es el pecado de la bestialidad, que es cuando se cruza un miembro de una especie con otro de otra, como por ejemplo un burro con una vaca. ¿Ves?” (18).

And later writer/narrator/grammatician Fernando, uses poetic alliteration to argue his case that society's greatest ill is the reproductive capacity of women:

El vandalismo por donde quiera y la horda humana: gente y más gente y más gente y como si fuéramos pocos, de tanto en tanto una vieja preñada, una de estas *putas perras paridoras que pululan por todas partes* con sus impúdicas barrigas en la impunidad más monstruosa. Era la turbamulta invadiéndolo todo, destruyéndolo todo, impuércandolo todo con su miseria crapulosa (my emphasis, 64-65).

Again, here women are to blame for “overpopulation,” not only in the literal sense of the city's increasing inhabitants, but because of Medellín's unavoidable and “unorganized” design, its chaos, and state of disease. The use of alliteration with the words beginning in “p” highlights what Fernando deems as the repetitive and dispensable nature of women's procreation. Both Mary Louise Pratt and Jean Franco have suggested that Vallejo juxtaposes the inescapability of a violent society where men kill in order to balance out what he views as the only function of women, which is to give birth. Furthermore, his admiration for the sicarios' killing of other children helps to compensate specifically for this reproduction, which he deems as society's greatest ill. In other words, reproduction/extermination, birth/murder, female/male are equal to the binary of evil/good. This helps emphasize Fernando's belief that violence be used for “good”: to kill women and therefore not only stop unnecessary human procreation but also to achieve, as Pratt states, “un mundo monosexual masculino, construido en un espacio social entregado a la violencia y la muerte” (92). Likewise, what Fernando

describes in disgust also allows him to turn a blind eye to the male population that he protects, who are obviously culpable as well for the supposed overpopulation that he deems as the root of Colombia's problem. In addition I contend that the notion of male-less reproduction, or the "mundo monosexual" that Pratt discusses, ties back into the idea of divine conception and the cult of the Virgin Mary, like that of the Virgen de los Sicarios. It is this paradoxical devotion to a female Virgin figure that sits at the heart of patriarchal cultures rooted in Catholicism, such as that of Colombia.

Furthermore, Pratt discusses how Vallejo's Medellín is a city taken over by male-on-male violence, which causes the narrator to obsess over how this obstructs the acceptable social order. Pratt interprets Carol Pateman's *The Sexual Contract* (1988) against Fernando's misogyny in *La Virgen*:

la violencia entre hombres se lee lógicamente como ruptura del contrato social, o como evidencia de la erosión del contrato social. La violencia entre hombre y mujer, por contraste, se lee como afirmación o actuación del contrato sexual, o como evidencia de su poder excesivo. A menos que uno haga un esfuerzo espacial para evitarlo, pensar la violencia es a menudo pensar desde la agencia masculina (93).

Vallejo's support of violence is precisely against women, because in eliminating them, a violent society of male victims and women will also become extinct. Nevertheless, he doesn't account for the fact that the boys he takes as his "lovers" are, in reality, serving a traditionally feminine function in the hierarchy of the sexual contract that they both enter. As Pratt points out, Fernando traditionally feminizes the adolescents by describing them as not only physically beautiful, but also as material consumers, whose capriciousness, intellectual inferiority and illiteracy make them prefer market goods to any possibility of social or communal progress (93). For example, taking the

heteronormative provider role Fernando tells Wilmar to write out the things that he hopes for in life; the boy doesn't hesitate in drawing up a wish list of consumer goods: “[. . .] unos tenis marca Reebok y unos jeans Paco Ravanne. Camisas Ocean Pacific y ropa interior Kelvin Klein. Una moto Honda, un jeep Mazda [. . .] y una nevera para la mamá [. . .] marca Whirlpool” (91). This quote emphasizes, as Pratt has shown, how the code of communication between Fernando and the boys is completely hierarchical based on the sexual contract as he simultaneously wishes to reproduce the gendered relations that he claims to despise. Adding to Pratt's discussion, it is also possible to argue that in spite of having declared a desire to kill himself early on in the novel, Fernando's attachment to these boys marks his preoccupation with social integration in *Medallo*—the new space with which he is fascinated—in order to compensate for no longer belonging to Medellín.

The hierarchy of the sexual contract and gendered violence is a theme also explored in Jorge Franco's *Rosario Tijeras*, another fictional account of the sicario subculture. Rosario is a young assassin girl, a *sicaria* of about seventeen, who lives out her brief and turbulent life moving between the slums and Medellín's high-society. The narrator is her friend Antonio, who recounts her life amidst a series of flashbacks. Antonio, who, unlike Rosario, hails from one of Antioquia's wealthy and privileged families, waits in anguish in a hospital intensive care unit while Rosario struggles in critical condition after being shot. The novel recounts how Antonio and his best friend Emilio, who is also Rosario's boyfriend, risk their lives in order to accompany the girl amidst a series of violent moments that, from the outside gaze with which they are described, can be deemed “adventures.” The novel is set in the mid-1980s, during the

height of Pablo Escobar's power and he is alluded to quite often throughout the novel. As many critics have shown in their analyses of both *La Virgen de los sicarios* and *Rosario Tijeras*, what is intended in the narration of Rosario's life is a female variation of *La Virgen de los sicarios* and the sicario phenomenon also seen in *Rodrigo D: No Futuro* and *No nacimos pa' semilla*.⁷⁰ Rosario is represented as a radical and sexually provocative woman. Yet in reality she is still a girl seeking revenge for all the suffering she has faced in her young life: rape, domestic abuse, poverty, exploitation, and social isolation. The "profession" of both sicaria and prostitute for the cartel leaders is, in a surface reading, presented as the way that Rosario takes her life into her own hands via an opportunity that is not only immediately available but also instantly lucrative.

The irony as well as danger in this exchange, however, is obvious to the critical reader. For example, the problematic nature of the text is apparent in the way that Rosario's voice is contained. Antonio narrates the tale of her life from a position reminiscent of Fernando in *La Virgen de los sicarios*—that of the privileged observer. Further, the commercial triumph of *Rosario Tijeras* has also proven successful in hiding the harrowing sign of the times wherein the commodification of women's bodies within the world of drug-trafficking is presented as an acceptable social option. The success of Jorge Franco's novel, published over a decade ago, has since generated a hit song by the Colombian pop-singer Juanes in 2004, a successful movie version in 2005 directed by Emilio Maillé, and, in early 2010, a tele-novela produced by the Colombian television studio Radio Cadena Nacional. A cultural critic can rightfully say that *Rosario Tijeras*

⁷⁰ See Miguel Cabañas, "El Sicario en su alegoría: la ficcionalización en la novela colombiana de finales del siglo XX" (2002) and Camila Segura Bonnett, "Kinismo y melodrama en *La Virgen de los sicarios* y *Rosario Tijeras*" (2004).

began an obsession, or dare I say, a celebration, of women's bodies as commodities not only within the world of drug-trafficking, but in a society like Colombia fixated on vanity and sex-appeal. In an observation also relevant to *Rosario Tijeras*, Jean Franco notes that in *La Virgen de los sicarios*, "[. . .] the gendering of *sicario* culture [that] tells us something about the unholy alliance between the traffic in lives and the deathly logic of a masculinity that links an archaic *lex talionis* to consumer culture" (Franco, 2002, 224). In effect, my critical examination of this novel, for this reason, places Rosario in the context of other gendered bodies victimized by violence, and I hope, exposes how the sexual fetishization of this young girl points to a more alarming situation in Colombia in regards to all women.

From the novel's beginning, we learn about Rosario's personal history and how Antonio ties this into the saga of Colombian violence:

La pelea de Rosario no es tan simple, tiene raíces muy profundas, de mucho tiempo atrás, de generaciones anteriores; a ella la vida le pesa lo que pesa este país, sus genes arrastran con una raza de hidalgos e hijueputas que a punto de machete le abrieron camino a la vida, todavía lo siguen haciendo; con el machete comieron, trabajaron, se afeitaron, mataron y arreglaron las diferencias con sus mujeres. Hoy el machete es un trabuco, una nueve milímetros, un changón. Cambió el arma pero no su uso [. . .] No sabemos lo largo que es nuestra historia pero sentimos su peso. Y Rosario lo ha soportado desde siempre, por eso el día en que nació no llegó cargando pan, sino que traía la desgracia bajo el brazo" (32-33).

Antonio's third person plural emphasizes that this story is "theirs" and not "his," or of his social class, therefore highlighting history's varying interpretations for different populations. Rosario's story is that of the Colombian peasant fleeing from violence and reaching the comuna, as I discussed previously. The machete becomes a way of life—for labor as well as defense—and in the post-modern world, is replaced by guns and

other automatic weapons; this parallel is also drawn by Fernando in *La Virgen de los sicarios*.

But the notion of immortality that the gun provides sicarios like Alexis and Wílmár is augmented by an additional weapon that Rosario has, and that is the use of her body in her parallel profession as prostitute. Although we can appropriately say that Alexis and Wílmár serve this function as well vis-à-vis Fernando, in Rosario, we see a more classic scenario of prostitution in that she is not a product for the exclusive use of one individual, as is the case with the boys from the Barrio Santo Domingo of *La Virgen de los sicarios*. On the contrary, Rosario exchanges her body with the likes of Antonio, Emilio, and an array of cartel leaders; the service she provides allows her the commodities not obtained solely by her act as sicaria. Because of this obvious role of prostitution, Rosario crosses over into various environments, from the opulent underworld of drug trafficking and cartel mafiosos, to the degradation and poverty in Medellín's slums. In the former space, Rosario is controlled by the cartel leaders, the "duros de los duros" (16) as she calls them; while in the latter, she rules the comuna.

Furthermore, what she gains in her prostitution to the mafiosos affords her more than just economic acquisitions. Rosario's link to the drug economy and its undeniable connection to sex and violence adds to Antonio and Emilio's fascination with her. For this reason, the bourgeois Emilio and Antonio, but also her fellow sicarios—Johnefe (her brother) and Ferney (her ex-boyfriend that she replaces with Emilio)—both respect and fear Rosario. According to Antonio: "Rosario estaba hecha de otra cosa, Dios no tuvo nada que ver con su creación" (11). This early description emphasizes her conversion into urban legend, a stance that serves not only the fictional Rosario Tijeras,

but also the *Rosario Tijeras* pop-culture franchise that the novel has since generated.

As Antonio describes:

En las comunas de Medellín, Rosario Tijeras se volvió un ídolo. Se podía ver en las paredes de los barrios: «Rosario Tijeras, mamacita», «Capame a besos, Rosario T.», «Rosario Tijeras, presidente, Pablo Escobar, vicepresidente». Las niñas querían ser como ella, y hasta supimos de varias que fueron bautizadas María del Rosario, Claudia Rosario, Leidy Rosario, y un día nuestra Rosario nos habló de una Amparo Tijeras. Su historia adquirió la misma proporción de realidad y ficción que la de sus jefes (71).

This mythification of Rosario, assassin girl and cartel girlfriend, allows for the acceptance of prostitution as it is brought to an almost comic book like, super-power, or super-human level. Rosario herself is described as enjoying the legend that divides her into two people, like a comic book character and her alter ego. Making sure she lives up to expectations, Rosario asks Antonio to tell her what it is that people say:

—Contame parcero, ¿qué más dicen de mí?
 —Que has matado a doscientos [. . .] que también te gustan las mujeres, que orinás parada, que te operaste las tetas y te pusiste culo, [. . .] que sos un hombre, [. . .] que sos la jefe de todos los sicarios de Medellín, [. . .] en fin, ¿te parece poquito? Qué tal que todo fuera verdad.
 —Todo no —me dijo—. Pero sí la mitad (72).

Descriptions such as these make no mistake about the mass popularity Rosario Tijeras has achieved, further emphasizing the message that the combination of sex and violence has allowed her to triumph over a system that would normally not favor her. This is also Aldona Bialowa Pobutsky's perspective in "Towards the Latin American Action Heroine: The Case of Jorge Franco Ramos' *Rosario Tijeras*" (2005) where she discusses the trendy market value in Franco's "hard-boiled heroine" and how this "literary character and no other [has been] able to cross over to other sectors of mass culture, slowly taking on a life of her own" (17). Bialowa sees Rosario as an

ideological amalgamation of femme fatale, “action babe,” and Colombian girl-next-door, [she] has hit the right note among the present-day public because she aptly mirrors the relation between global culture mythology and local circumstances. As a Latin American heroine, Rosario Tijeras is a transcultural hybrid projected on the collective and social level, responding to what Néstor García Canclini sees as the ‘growing interaction between the cultured, the popular, and the massive’ (17).⁷¹

In effect, action heroines as seen in *Lara Croft: Tomb Raider*, Tarantino’s *Kill Bill* movies, or the re-emergence of the *Charlie’s Angels* franchise attest to the increasing mass appeal of the sex/violence juxtaposition where highly sexualized, gun-toting women become objects of obsession across the globe. Adding to Bialowa’s assessment, I argue that Rosario has also become a problematic solution within the proliferation of urban violence. The mass appeal of Rosario and transformation into other cultural productions offers sexual attraction and violence as a just and accessible solution to women’s victimization. Certainly, if Rosario’s individual voice were to be placed at the center of the novel’s narration, as opposed to her story being interpreted by the gaze of Antonio, the sensation and profitability of the Rosario Tijeras franchise may not have been possible. The narrator’s perception of Rosario’s life, on the contrary, highlights the invisibility of women of her social class who have not sexually objectified themselves for individual improvement, a choice, again, that is not approached critically within popular culture’s renditions of the young assassin.

Rosario’s materialization in movie form is further in tune with the aforementioned Hollywood sensations, as the character herself is even “whitened” in the cinematic version as played by Flora Martínez, a Canadian-Colombian actress. In

⁷¹ García Canclini, Néstor. *Hybrid Cultures. Strategies for Entering and Leaving Modernity*. Trans. Christopher L. Chiappan and Silvia L. López. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1995.

the novel, we can interpret Rosario's ethnic background as that of a mulata or mestiza. Antonio's racially essentialized and objectified descriptions attest to this; he describes her as an example of women who are "desinhibidas, tan resueltas como ellos, incondicionales en la entrega, calientes, mestizas, de piernas duras de tanto subir las lomas de su barrios, *más de esta tierra que las nuestras*, más complacientes y menos jodonas" (my emphasis, 24) and later speaks of "su piel canela, su pelo negro, sus dientes blancos, sus labios gruesos y unos ojos que me tocó imaginar porque bailaba con ellos cerrados" (76). Antonio's insistence that she is "más de esta tierra que las nuestras" can be interpreted as marking Rosario's indigenous background, and/or her Afro-Colombian heritage, where "tierra" connects to the actual land that was worked by slaves for more than four centuries. Further "las nuestras" marks the insistence on his privileged racial position as white. In Colombia, where more than 75% of the population can be racially categorized as either black, indigenous, mestizo, or mulato, both the description of Rosario in the novel, and her "blanqueamiento" to secure the movie's financial success, point to the pejorative light in which a non-white racial identity is seen in Colombia, especially as Western standards of beauty continue to dominate, as demonstrated in the choice of actress to play Rosario.

Other factors also indicate Hollywood's influence in the Rosario Tijeras phenomenon. In the novel, Rosario's addiction to binge-eating results in multiple occurrences of weight gain which works to de-sexualize her at strategic moments.⁷² In the movie, this affliction is replaced by the more sexual and sadomasochistic allure of

⁷² I would like to thank Irene Robles-Huerta for this idea regarding Rosario's eating disorder that she proposed during a graduate seminar at the University of California, San Diego in the Winter of 2006.

Rosario's causing self-harm by cutting the skin on her arms after each assassination. This connection to knives and violence is also noted in Rosario's name, and connects her, paradoxically, to the cultural importance of religion, thus assuring her widespread appeal. Her first-name "Rosario" is an obvious reference to the most common feminine symbol of religion as related to death: the rosary. Throughout Latin America, the tradition of the "novenas"—nine nights of praying the rosary—follows the Catholic burial. This religious devotion is emphasized in the novel's epigraph, the "Oración al Santo Juez" which is the prayer Rosario says before each murder and is known as the "assassin's prayer": [. . .] no permitas que mi muerte sea violenta, no permitas que mi sangre se derrame, Tú que todo lo conoces, sabes de mis pecados, pero también sabes de mi fe, no me desampares [. . .].” These Catholic beliefs placed against situations of violence are similar to symbolic worship in *La multitud errante* and *La Virgen de los sicarios*. Further, violence/domesticity becomes the double signifier within Rosario's chosen last name: "Tijeras." Tijeras is a reference to the first weapon that Rosario ever uses. It was scissors that she employed in an act of vengeance against the boy who raped her at age eight. Castrating him in her own home, with her mother's preferred seamstress tool, violence within the domestic sphere is reemphasized yet inverted as Rosario switches from victim to victimizer.⁷³

As I noted above, the fascination with Rosario Tijeras has crossed over into a highly problematic celebration of women's bodies as commodities within the world of drug trafficking, now a popular subject of fictionalization. Riding on the heels of the

⁷³ Bialowas Pobutsky also offers an alternative and very interesting interpretation of the name Rosario Tijeras, saying it is a reference to another anti-hero of urban violence, the "Pedro Navaja" from Rubén Blades's 1978 classic Fania salsa album *Siembra* (32).

successful *Rosario Tijeras* movie-book franchise and fascination with exclusive drug-cartel prostitutes, Colombian screen-writer Gustavo Bolívar Moreno published *Sin tetas no hay paraíso* in 2005 about a slew of young girls in a Pereira slum who transform their bodies—most importantly by breast augmentation, as the book’s title suggests—to land the lucrative privilege of becoming a mafioso’s girlfriend. Within three years of this book’s publication, highly successful Colombian as well as Mexican tele-novela renditions of the novel were produced. Even Virginia Vallejo, a former Colombian beauty queen and TV Caracol broadcast journalist joined in the fascination with drug kingpins and their well taken care of girlfriends when she published *Amando a Pablo, odiando a Escobar* (2007). Vallejo’s memoirs showcased not only her personal story as the mistress of Pablo Escobar, but also the opulent lifestyle of mafiosos alongside the actual names of specific politicians who profited from Escobar’s cartel.

It seems, for now, the fascination with gendered violence will not end as long as it is celebrated as sexually alluring and profitable. Therefore, the real theme of *Rosario Tijeras*—whether novel, cinematic, musical, or television version—is not that of narco-violence from the 1980s, nor any supposed love story that pop-culture would like to promote. Rather, it is the quotidian violence against women that has become marketed and sensationalized; a violence that regenerates itself especially amidst urban marginalization in the age of globalization. What has been ignored amidst the sensation of the sicario is the opportunity to address the problematic nature of celebrating sexual violence in contemporary society. It would be useful for alternative articulations of survival to emerge and challenge these accepted representations of teenagers from the comunas, in particular as they work to reinforce gendered violence. Nevertheless, these

novels are useful in that they have the capacity to serve as powerful tools to comprehend social and economic exclusion within urban spaces like Medellín.

Urban crime and psychological violence: the case of *Delirio*

Like Buitrago's *El hostigante verano de los dioses* and Ángel's *Estaba la pájara pinta sentada en el verde limón*, Laura Restrepo's *Delirio* features a collage of voices. In *Delirio*, the function of these voices is to force the reader to question the various levels of the main protagonist's mental instability. Five narrative lines are intertwined to uncover the reasons why Agustina Londoño—an upper-class woman in her mid-twenties—was found in Bogotá's exclusive Hotel Wellington, completely immersed in a delirium that had, up until that moment, only exposed itself by way of episodic moments throughout her life. As I mentioned in this chapter's introduction, in *Delirio*, Restrepo employs elements of the "hard-boiled," detective fiction genre known in Latin America as the *novela negra*, *novela policial* or *neopolicíaco*.⁷⁴ Throughout the novel, the revelation of how and why Agustina was isolated in the hotel as she sank deeper and deeper into her psychological illness reveals that the crime against her cannot be traced to a single individual, but rather is due to the corruption and criminality of the social order, or lack thereof. In the postmodern "novela negra" that emerges in the aftermath of neoliberalism and is based on the "hard-boiled" detective genre where organized crime and state corruption are revealed, there normally exists some type of detective figure. In Restrepo's novel, no single protagonist can be credited with the full revelation of the crime. Nevertheless, the alignment of this novel with crime fiction is

⁷⁴ I base my discussion on the use of detective fiction from Persephone Braham's *Crimes Against the State, Crimes Against Persons: Detective Fiction in Cuba and Mexico*, 2004.

appropriate in that *Delirio*, via a patchwork of voices, reveals the fragmentation of Colombian society, and in particular the nation's urban spaces, that has emerged due to the continuation of national, historical violence and its link to globalization.

The first narrator is Aguilar, Agustina's husband and an ex-professor of literature who became a pet-food salesman when the University where he taught closed down. Aguilar, who for years has fought with the lack of acceptance by the Londoño family, pieces together the puzzle of the days leading up to her breakdown. Although by no means a vigilante-like detective (Braham, xiii), Aguilar's insistence on solving this mystery and hunting down clues can be associated with the function of the detective in the *neopoliciaco* genre. Two other narrative voices in *Delirio* belong to Agustina's maternal family: that of her grandfather Nicolás Portulinus, and of Sofi, his daughter and Agustina's aunt. Although Portulinus is never mentioned by anyone else in the family, his story is informative for the reader as it includes details of his childhood in Germany, his sister who suffered from a paralyzing mental illness that eventually led to her being committed in an institution, and his emigration and final settlement in Saisama-Colombia, where he also began to suffer from mental traumas and hallucinations. These details trace a very useful hereditary origin for the reader to understand the genealogical root of Agustina's psychological afflictions. Adding to this family history is Agustina's aunt Sofi who arrives at the couple's home and recounts to the anguished and desperate Aguilar how her niece's difficult childhood contributed to her eventual mental demise. Agustina herself forms part of the narration against a retrospective recounting of her painful youth, domestic experience, and her handling of her growing psychic powers, used in particular to shield her younger brother Bichi.

Their father, Carlos Vicente, is tormented by Bichi's budding homosexuality, and beats the young boy whenever any possibly effeminate qualities emerge. The tale of a family in the midst of a nation ever more inundated by violence is completed with the voice of Midas McAlister, a family friend and Agustina's ex-boyfriend. Although originally from one of Bogotá's "barrios populares," thanks to his obsession with becoming like the Londoños—and in particular his fixation with emulating every aspect of Agustina's older brother, Joaco—he is able to move up in social class with the money he makes as the intermediary between Pablo Escobar's drug trade and Bogotá's oligarchy. Hence his name "Midas" is a metaphor for his ability to launder money and turn it into gold; or, even more symbolic in the Colombian context, he is able to launder pesos and turn them into U.S. dollars. Apart from being able to reveal aspects of Agustina's life to the reader, of which even Aguilar is unaware, Midas's narration has the equally important function of unmasking the corruption and violence that subsidizes a great portion of Colombia's privileged class.⁷⁵

With the exception of the Portulinus narrative, the other four voices have a specific listener: Midas talks to Agustina, Agustina speaks to Bichi, Sofi speaks to Aguilar, and Aguilar speaks to the reader. All five narrations are organized by the overarching, third person, extradiegetic narrative level; this is the main narrative thread that is aware of the thought processes of each speaker, presenting each narration as

⁷⁵ This is a central topic in Alonso Salazar J.'s examination of the legacy of Pablo Escobar in *La parábola de Pablo: Auge y caída de un gran capo del narcotráfico* (2001). Via a socio-historical as well as biographical analysis, Salazar discusses the "dinero caliente" that not only subsidized the riches of many in Colombia, like Midas or Escobar himself, who were able to rise from poverty to economic power through drug trafficking, but also of those like many in the nation's oligarchy whose diminishing fortunes benefited from the illicit drug economy, and specific politicians who received millions for their campaigns, whose corruption has since been exposed.

though alternating between first and third person, and therefore linking each voice to the novel's plot. There is no chronological organization or linearity to the novel, as the storylines crisscross from the 1920s in Germany during Portulinus's youth to the narrative present of the mid 1980s during the increase of drug-trafficking related violence in Colombia. In this manner, an increasing web of narration is woven, at moments distancing the reader from the origin of Agustina's ultimate mental breakdown, while at other moments drawing us closer to the inter-connection of elements that comprise her complexity as an individual: the self, others, society, and national as well as her personal history. All of these elements remain in flux with each other, allowing the different points of view to "bleed[s] continually into that of the next "point of view" [. . .] until one has the feeling they are all one perspective" (Nathan Oates, 167). In effect, Restrepo presents Agustina's delirium as having not only multiple perspectives, but multiple culprits as well. In other words, Agustina's delirium is not only indicative of this young woman, but it also points to a violent society that has failed to compensate for the physical and psychological harm of its members.

The notion of fragmentation and multiple characterizations of the individual are also seen in Restrepo's particular use of grammar and punctuation. Sporadic and sometimes non-existent punctuation plays with words given importance via upper-case letters creating narrative disruptions to highlight the inseparability of the personal and domestic from state and societal violence. This is a literary technique previously noted in Albalucía Ángel's *Estaba la pájara pinta sentada en el verde limón*. In the following quote, there is a direct flow from the use of the third person, as noted by the description of Agustina's thoughts, to the use of the first person, as noted by the

pronoun “nosotros.” The word “Con” in upper case also shifts the narrative voice from third-person omniscient to Agustina’s first-person. At this moment, we have learned that one of Agustina’s fondest childhood memories involves her father and their nightly ritual of locking all of the doors and windows of her childhood home. For Agustina, this act not only makes her feel closer to her father but also honored, because, with him, she confirms the protection of the interior confines of the home:

Agustina *añora* esa casa grande y cálida, bien protegida e iluminada y *Con todos nosotros* resguardados adentro mientras que la calle oscura quedaba afuera, del otro lado, alejada de *nosotros* como si no existiera ni pudiera *hacernos* daño con su acechanza; esa calle de la que llegan malas noticias de gente que matan, de pobres sin casa, de una guerra que salió del Caquetá, del Valle y de la zona cafetera que ya va llegando con sus degollados, que a Sasaima ya llegó y por eso no hemos vuelto a Gai Repos [. . .] (my emphasis, 91).

Saisama and Gai Repos are the names and locations of the two Londoño-family haciendas located in different corners of Bogotá’s outlying areas; the narration notes how the nation’s increasing violence over the decades had prevented the family from returning to either one. The opposition between the illuminated house and the dark street presents an unspoken dialogue between a falsely perceived protection in the sanctity of the interior house from the threatening exterior; Agustina in this way believes the binary illusion that inside/outside equals safety/danger. The irony here is the fact that over time, the Londoños themselves have become active agents in the nation’s violence, as Carlos Vicente and Joaco’s involvement with Pablo Escobar via Midas’s connections maintains their exclusive lifestyle, including all the houses they can no longer frequent due to increasing violence during the onset of the drug wars. Therefore within the interior confinement of the main house where Agustina spends her

early life, there exists a fusion with the horrors of national and historical violence. The novel's gradual deconstruction of the domestic space and exposure of its falsity on various levels strips Agustina's belief in being protected by the family and leads to the manifestation of the psychological afflictions to which she is already prone for hereditary reasons.

As noted by the novel's title, *Delirio* places the issue of mental trauma at the center of the narrative. Restrepo draws a thin line between women's mental trauma in Colombia and the surrounding and increasing violence of the nation. For this reason, mental illness is often described as if it were contagious. Upon arriving to assist her niece after Agustina's breakdown, Sofi warns Aguilar: "Ahora eres tú el que delira, Aguilar, precisamente a eso me refiero cuando te digo que tu problema es que dejas que la locura te contagie [. . .] Ten cuidado, Aguilar, el delirio puede entrar por los ojos" (48). This is appropriate within the evolution of women's writing that I've discussed throughout this project. Assigning characteristics associated with an epidemic to "delirium" identifies mental illness as the product of successive generations of violence in Colombian society: violence in this way becomes the phenomenon that lacks sense and can only be explained in such an irreverent manner as mental instability. Within the backdrop of Colombia in the 80s, at the height of the violence that the nation suffered during the U.S.-declared "War on Drugs," Restrepo is thus able to insist that Agustina's mental state is not limited to her personal, psychological dementia. On the contrary, Restrepo suggests that, although involuntary, Agustina's delirium is the only way to deal with historical, political, and social factors over which she has no control, but by which she is clearly affected. Moreover, it is actually the rest of society—those

like Aguilar who attempt to make sense of violence and its effect on the individual—that will also catch this epidemic of mental instability to cope with an increasingly violent nation.

To move further with my argument, it is necessary to define delirium precisely.

The *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorder* best details the clinical features of the disease:

The hallmark of delirium is confusion, or, as it also has been called, clouding of the sensorium. Patients may appear somewhat dazed and unclear about their surroundings. They have difficulty perceiving correctly what goes on around them, and one may have difficulty capturing and holding their attention—they tend to drift off. Short-term memory is poor, and patients tend to lose grasp of what happened only minutes before; disorientation to time and place are common accompanying features.⁷⁶

Throughout the course of the novel, these symptoms of the delirious individual coincide with the characterizations that Aguilar constantly uses to describe his young wife, not just after finding her at the Hotel Wellington, but also in his memories of their few years as a couple. The novel's initial setting summarizes Agustina's behavior in the narrative present and in relation to the past, tuning the reader into the fusion of three important elements of the novel: her mental ailments, her psychic powers, and the unknown event that needs to be uncovered. The novel's synthesis of voices also creates a delirium or confusion of the narration itself, as immediately the structure of moving in and out of first person and third person is introduced:

Supé que había sucedido algo irreparable en el momento en que un hombre me abrió la puerta de esa habitación de hotel y vi a mi mujer sentada al fondo, mirando por la ventana de muy extraña manera. Fue a mi regreso de un viaje corto [. . .] Cuando me fui no le pasaba nada

⁷⁶ http://www.brown.edu/Courses/BI_278/Other/Clerkship/Didactics/Readings/Delirium.pdf

raro, o al menos nada fuera de lo habitual [. . .] siempre anda pronosticando calamidades, él ha tratado por todos los medios de hacerla entrar en razón pero ella no da su brazo a torcer e insiste en que desde pequeña tiene lo que llama un don de los ojos [. . .] Esta vez, como todas, mi Agustina pronosticó que algo saldría mal y yo, como siempre, pasé por alto su pronóstico [. . .] la encontré en un hotel, al norte de la ciudad, transformada en un ser aterrado y aterrador al que apenas reconozco [. . .] La mujer que amo se ha perdido dentro de su propia cabeza [. . .] es como si Agustina habitara en un plano paralelo al real, cercano pero inabordable, es como si hablara en una lengua extranjera que Aguilar vagamente reconoce pero que no logra comprender (11-12)

As shown in this portrayal—which presents Aguilar’s anguish from a first as well as a third person narrative—Agustina’s abnormal psychological behavior manifested itself via discreet ways throughout their relationship. Throughout the novel, these tendencies will be described by Restrepo in a way that allows the reader to decide if Agustina’s delirium is the result of a lifelong mental instability, her forced isolation due to the rejection and outright mockery of her psychic abilities by those she considers close, the inability to cope with the breakdown of the family unit due to the domestic as well as societal corruption and violence with which the Londoños engage, or a combination of all three.

In this sense, Michel Foucault’s discussion on “Passion and Delirium” in *Madness and Civilization: A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason* (1965) is useful to help us understand the mental and physical isolation that Agustina is forced to endure throughout her life, culminating in the psycho-traumatic episode that Aguilar works to decipher. Foucault is relevant to *Delirio* because the class to which Agustina belongs—the bourgeoisie—is affected by the paradigm of madness created in Western thought. His views on insanity are useful because the relation of madness and violence, in particular as it affects women in Colombia, is tied to class difference. For Foucault the

isolation of “mad” individuals helped to construct modern society because isolating them from contact with others eliminated the threat of their existence. He argues that throughout Western Europe, the mentally unstable were the obvious scapegoat for society’s ills once the menace of leprosy, and hence the isolation and confinement of lepers, diminished after the Middle Ages. Physicians from this point on insisted that city life led to madness by its multiple “excitations constantly accumulated” and that the most intense force of these factors “can lead to delirium” (91). Therefore individuals who portrayed any signs of dementia or delirium were segregated from the rest of society, supposedly to keep them from harm. In other words, isolation was used as a tool to specifically prevent delirium in those that exhibited mental instability. I will demonstrate later in this discussion how this was the precise action taken against Agustina: her perceived tendency as mentally unstable results in her forced isolation over which she has no say or control, leading inevitably to her delirium. Based on the aforementioned quote involving the falsely perceived sanctity of the domestic space and Agustina’s fond memories of the ritual that involved locking up the house with her father, we see that the notion of isolation was indoctrinated in her from an early age. And later, the act of Agustina’s having been hidden in the hotel by Midas to protect the operations of the drug cartel is precisely in tune with this type of societal segregation. While her childhood home as well as the hotel may be considered social spaces, her isolation is defined according to the ideology of delirium that Foucault defines in Western thought. Again, given Agustina’s hereditary predisposition for mental afflictions, the realization of the complete falsity in which her domestic space was built—the space in which she believed lay her only safety from harm—could only lead

to an eventual demise of her psychological health within her ultimate forced isolation. If we utilize Foucault's assessment of madness, we understand that the breach in what Agustina believes to be a necessary domestic space is also the dissolution of her unity as an individual, which includes the loss of her mental stability. As I will further analyze below, the mental ailment that has defined Agustina since her childhood, and of which Midas is aware, is due to a great number of factors that have spanned her lifetime. But Midas's forcing Agustina into isolation, coupled with the domestic, historical, and societal violence that surround her ultimately leads to her complete breakdown.

In addition to literary techniques inspired by *neopoliciaco* narratives for the characterization of society's ailments, Restrepo accounts for Agustina's psychological characteristics in accordance with what is known as *the fantastic* in literature. Julio Cortázar defined the fantastic as "the most fictional of all literatures, given that by its own definition it consists of turning one's back on a reality universally accepted as normal, that is, as not fantastic, in order to explore other corridors of that immense house in which man lives" (522).⁷⁷ Cortázar traces the fantastic in literature from the turn of the twentieth century to the 1970s—such as in the works of Jorge Luis Borges or Adolfo Bioy Casares—to outline the importance of this literary strategy in particular amongst writers, like him, who've emerged from the Río de la Plata area. Using elements of the fantastic is appropriate for Restrepo's work as she presents the absurdity and nonsensical nature of violence in 1980s Colombia. This is true particularly as the nation became the scapegoat for the world-wide explosion in drug consumption—

⁷⁷ "The Present State of Fiction in Latin America" in *Books Abroad*, volume 50, no. 3, 1976.

specifically in the form of cocaine, heroine, and crack-cocaine—which became an epidemic most significantly in the United States during the economic policies ushered in during the Reagan administration.⁷⁸ Restrepo’s use of the fantastic in *Delirio* is a way to come to grips with the confusion and increasing violence of 1980s Colombia, both in a symbolic as well as a literary way, as the reader is forced to try to separate the verisimilitude of some events from the fantastic or psycho-literary interpretations of other details. Juan Antonio Serna categorizes these techniques that I interpret as fantastic literary tendencies as Restrepo’s use of “realismo mágico.”⁷⁹ Serna states that Restrepo uses magical realism in order to critique it by way of Aguilar, the ex-professor of literature: “[. . .] da la impresión que Restrepo más que aplicarlo pareciera como si lo criticara, por ejemplo ‘[...] y me sentía incómodo con lo que dio en llamarse el realismo mágico, por entonces tan en boga, porque me consideraba al margen de la superchería y de la mentalidad milagrera de nuestro medio, y de las cuales Agustina aparecía como exponente de lujo’” (Serna 47). Although I agree with Serna that in this moment Restrepo does indeed critique magical realism, I don’t believe she is using any type of magical realist “technique” in her novel. As I stated in chapters two and three, my objections to “magical realism” is that this term has been created by institutions outside of Latin America as not only for marketing purposes, but as also a way to simplify the use of oral culture and tradition in literature. It seems then, that Restrepo critiques “realismo mágico” in this moment in order to insure that the fantastic elements that she

⁷⁸ For a history of drug use in the United States during the 1980s and its effect on U.S. policies imposed on Latin America, see “Polluting the Republic: The Drug War at Home” in Ted Galen Carpenter’s *Bad neighbor policy: Washington’s futile war on drugs in Latin America*: (2003).

⁷⁹ “La hibridación del humor lúdico y de la ironía como mecanismos de liberación y de crítica en *Delirio* de Laura Restrepo” (2007).

has presented through Agustina's mental trauma do not become over-simplified or essentialized by the dreaded *magical realism* categorization; which, unfortunately Serna has indeed carried out. In my assessment, elements of the fantastic that are indeed evident in *Delirio* include the description of rituals, hallucinations, premonitions, telepathy, and other psychological powers—involving both Agustina as well as her grandfather Portulinus—that cannot be interpreted by way of reason, or as Cortázar explains, events that are not universally accepted as normal.

Throughout the novel, Agustina's rituals play a key part in her awareness as an adolescent, since she performed séance-type ceremonies with Bichi in order to combat episodes of their father's rage. These rituals were executed each time that Carlos Vicente physically abused Bichi, or as a prelude to one of Agustina's frequent premonitions of a possible violent occurrence. An important element of these ceremonies is the children's connection of sexuality and sexual awareness to the pain they feel in the possible rupture of the domestic space, of which their father is the figurehead. In the following ritual, adolescent sexual awareness is both explored, as well as dealt with in shame:

[. . .] porque el Bichi y su hermana saben bien, *aunque a eso nunca le pongan palabras*, que su ceremonia es así, sin calzones; si no, ni sería sagrada ni los poderes estarían en libertad de venir a visitarlos, porque son ellos los que me eligen a mí y no al revés, y siempre están conectados con las cosquillas que siento ahí abajo (my emphasis, 48).

This idea of childhood sexual awakening tied inextricably to both domestic as well as state violence is a coming-of-age theme also explored in Ángel's *Estaba la pájara pinta sentada en el verde limón*. In *Delirio*, Agustina and Bichi's rituals are enacted because they are ever more aware that the interior of the house, just like the exterior, contains

forces that put their family in danger. Sex and sexuality takes a center role in their rituals because of its perceived contamination by the two children: they are aware not only that their father explodes in rage upon seeing Bichi display non-heteronormative qualities, but also that Carlos Vicente has sexual relations with his sister-in-law Sofi, a conclusion they rightfully make after discovering nude pictures of their aunt amongst the father's possessions. For Agustina, then, sexuality reemphasizes the breakup of the family structure, as Agustina's other intention for performing the convocation rituals with Bichi to "el gran Poder" (16) is to pray for the end of Carlos Vicente and Sofi's relationship, which, as the young girl's premonitions correctly predict, will eventually lead to the family's demise.

Carlos Vicente's final abuse of Bichi occurs when the boy is fifteen. In the following quote, a Sunday afternoon visit from the family's former maid and her newborn baby spark the father's ire upon his youngest son's display of non-heteronormative behavior:

el Bichi [. . .] se colocó detrás de Agustina mirando a la bebé por encima del hombro de su hermana, le hizo los mismo cariños en la cumbamba y repitió, con el mismo tono e idéntico acento, las palabras en media lengua que acababa de pronunciar ella, Ay, qué cosita más bonita, caramba. En ese instante Carlos Vicente padre [. . .] se levantó sorpresivamente del sillón con los ojos inyectados en furia y le dio al Bichi un patadón violentísimo por la espalda a la altura de los riñones, un golpe tan repentino y tan feroz que mandó al muchacho al suelo haciendo que se golpeará antes contra el televisor, a todos se nos disparó el corazón en el pecho como si se nos fuera a estallar [. . .] paralizados por el horror de lo que acababa de ocurrir, y en seguida vimos que Carlos Vicente padre se iba hacia Carlos Vicente hijo, que seguía boca abajo en el piso, y le daba otra par de patadas en las piernas mientras lo imitaba, Ay, qué cosita más bonita, caramba, Ay, qué cosita más bonita, ¡Hable como un hombre, carajo, no sea maricón! (249).

Agustina reveals to Aguilar years later that guilt has consumed her since that episode because not only did Bichi's imitation of her excitement for the baby lead to the violence against him, but she also believes that her psychic powers failed to predict the occurrence altogether: "[. . .] y mis poderes, que estaban equívocos, no lograban protegerte, no llegaban hasta ti" (249). Upon standing up after the beating, Bichi leaves the scene to reappear immediately and reveal the nude photos of Sofi to the family not only as revenge for his abuse and humiliation, but also to prove that the family structure of the Londoño household had been broken for years. The protagonists as well as the reader assume that at this moment Eugenia—the children's mother and Carlos Vicente's wife—would defend the household, Bichi, and herself. However this does not occur, and Eugenia reinforces the unquestioned patriarchy of the household by turning a blind eye to the obvious subject of the photos. She in fact pretends that the photos do not expose the betrayal of both her sister and her husband, and dismisses them as part of Joaco's typical teenage possessions. Following this act, Bichi, and moments later Sofi, walk out the door to never return to the Londoño house. To illuminate the importance of this moment within the text, I reiterate Masiello's analysis that feminist texts question the main female protagonist's genealogy and the paternal figure as the center of the family's social identity. Hence Restrepo, following the tradition of the avant-garde female texts from the early twentieth century, exposes the irony and blatant falsity within the domestic structure, in particular as it strives to maintain the illusion of sanctity in the face of its own hypocrisy. This episode coincides with Serna's assessment of the ironic dimensions of the novel. Serna discusses the novel's use of parody, against the notion of the "carnavalesque" as conceived by Mikhail Bakhtin in

1929.⁸⁰ Although Serna's examination of parody is in relation to Midas's gang of associates, the notion of parody is appropriate as well to the charade-like quality of the Londoño family environment, and as Masiello discusses, its social identity—including all of its betrayal, corruption, imposed heteronormativity, and denial of psychological and physical safety in the face of individual interests.

This entire episode of Bichi's abuse, escape, and the mother's acceptance of the falsely unified domestic space, leads to one of the two major mental traumas that Agustina suffers, before her ultimate breakdown. Adding to the psychological weight of these series of events is Carlos Vicente's death a few years later, which will manifest itself after Agustina's mysterious breakdown, as she believes he is on his way to visit her. The reader learns later that she never received closure from either the previous violent episode in the house or Carlos Vicente's estrangement from Bichi, who makes a new life for himself in Mexico. These factors result in Agustina's estrangement as well: she leaves the house at seventeen after becoming pregnant by Midas and being forced by her parents to have an abortion. Furthering her personal humiliation, the family never severs relations with Midas; on the contrary, they continue to welcome him into the Londoño household with open arms because of the profitable earnings that his business ties with Pablo Escobar provide them.

Although the reader may conclude that what Agustina believes to be her actual psychic abilities are nothing more than the delusions of a mentally unstable individual, the detailing of the final, psychological breakdown that she suffers most clearly indicates Restrepo's strategy of utilizing elements of the fantastic within her novel.

⁸⁰ Mikhail Bakhtin: *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, 1929.

Agustina had been known throughout Colombia as a woman who, because of her psychic powers, helped locate the son of a top politician who had gone missing after hiking in Alaska (141). This accomplishment deemed by some as heroic and by others as pure nonsense, put her temporarily into the national spotlight as a known telepath. Because of Agustina's famed ability, Midas calls upon her to try to uncover information about the disappearance of hired escort and mother of three, Dolores, alias Sara Lina. Dolores was hired by Midas to engage in bondage-type sexual acts with "La Araña" Salazar, one of the millionaire colleagues involved in Midas's money-laundering business that also included, amongst others, Agustina's brother Joaco and "El Gringo" Rony Silver, ironically a member of the United States D.E.A. (Drug Enforcement Administration).⁸¹ The group placed a high-stakes bet on whether or not la Araña—who had been paralyzed from the waist down for years after a drug-induced horse riding accident on one of the haciendas the associates frequent—would ever be able to become sexually aroused again. After failed attempts that involved his misogynistic requests for variations in hired, young girls to excite him, his final plea to confirm the resurrection of his masculinity—both literally and figuratively speaking—involves the hiring of someone who would combine the two elements that he finds most arousing: sex and violence. Hence, "Dolores," who advertised her services in sadomasochism in a local newspaper, is brought to Araña at Midas's *Aerobic's* [sic] *Center*, a façade used to mask the real business of distributing Pablo Escobar's merchandise all over Bogotá. At the *Aerobic's* Center, "Operación Lázaro"—the name Midas appropriately and comically

⁸¹ The presence of Rony Silver throughout the text further emphasizes the use of *neopoliciaco* literary tendencies that Restrepo employs because, as Braham discusses: "While classic detective stories present crime as the transgression of norms in an essentially just system, hard-boiled stories present the pursuit of justice itself as a transgression of norms in an essentially corrupt system" (1).

gives the entire endeavor for the return of la Araña's masculinity—fails again, however, not before Araña's henchmen beat Dolores to death against the exercise machines as a final sadistic attempt to arouse their boss. Once news of the disappearance of single-mother Sara Lina begins to buzz all over Bogotá, leading back to the Aerobic's Center, Midas—who also considered Agustina's psychic abilities to be bogus—decides to save himself by putting on what he believes would be another “show”: he brings his ex-girlfriend and famed psychic to the exercise club, assuming that she will confirm that no wrong-doing has taken place. However, Agustina's psychic images do, in fact, confirm the bloodshed that occurred. In the following quote, the extradiegetic narrator's detailing of the episode overlaps with Midas's anxiety over what proves to be Agustina's psychic powers, and thus the most obvious use of fantastic elements in the novel. This presents to the reader the moment that Agustina suffers the nervous breakdown around which the main story line of the book revolves:

[. . .] fiel a ti misma y a tu locura optaste como siempre por el extremismo, la irracionalidad y el melodrama, te soltaste a gesticular y a proferir barbaridades frente al medio centenar de fans del fitness que te contemplaban aterrados [. . .] empezaste a decir Aquí pasó algo, aquí pasó algo, y desde que soltaste esa primerísima frase a mí se me heló la sangre y supe que ya no habría cómo detenerte y que el desastre estaba cantado, Aquí pasó algo, insistías con una convicción conmovedora y husmeabas por todo el gimnasio como si fueras sabueso [. . .] Aquí pasó algo horrible, cuenta el Midas McAlister que no sabía por dónde meterse cuando delante de sus clientes la mentalista que él mismo había llevado para que apagara el incendio se puso en cambio a azuzarlo, empezó a ver sangre, Veo mucha sangre [. . .] Veo sangre, veo sangre, sangre inconfesable inunda los canales [. . .] A esa mujer la mataron aquí, aquí, revelaba Agustina, y la mataron a patadas [. . .] (292-294).

Following this episode, Midas quickly has one of his employees take her to the Hotel Wellington, where, two days later, Aguilar will find her in a completely altered mental

state. It is at this moment that the reader has reached the “solution of the mystery” and becomes aware of how Agustina reached her condition of delirium: the maintenance and acceptance of gendered violence crosses over various societal and class levels, which causes Agustina to suffer a mental breakdown with which she must grapple in complete isolation.

At this moment, the reader also makes the connection with the violence of the nation and in particular gendered violence, as women become increasingly disposable entities of consumption, akin to what I reviewed in *La Virgen de los sicarios* and *Rosario Tijeras*. Agustina’s final breakdown occurs because of the various levels of violence against women that her family has worked to sponsor, not only in their preference for Midas in the face of her forcibly terminated pregnancy, but also through the acceptance of violence against women like Dolores (similar to what we saw with Rosario), which corruption linked to the drug economy continues to promote. Furthermore, exposing the hypocrisy of those in power in Colombia emphasizes how real-life elite families like the Londoños of *Delirio* maintain their societal positions thanks to drug money and the bloodshed that this market entails. Yet, the description of some of Escobar’s vengeful acts against those in high society, such as the account of the non-fictional bombing of one of Bogotá’s five star restaurants (238) to carry out his threat “Voy a invertir mi fortuna para hacer llorar al país” (239), reinforces the class war at the root of the quest for power in Colombia.⁸² The exposure of this irony is

⁸² In James Mollison’s *The Memory of Pablo Escobar* (2007), a photographic and journalistic account of Escobar’s rise and fall in Colombia, the author gives a timeline of the terror that Escobar unleashed on the nation, specifically in the cities of Medellín and Bogotá: “The bomb attacks formed the central pillar of Escobar’s campaign against extradition between 1989 and 1991, terrorising [sic] the Colombian people

another function of the Midas character throughout the novel. The reader discovers at the end of the novel that Midas's narration has been told completely in a self-induced isolation. Midas is in hiding because of Escobar's vendetta against him, since he refused to allow two of Pablo's female cousins to join the Aerobic's Center because of their clear divergence from the class, ethno-racial, and aesthetic norms in comparison to the other clientele he served. Pablo's cousins are described by Midas as "un trío de gordas alharaquientas que se bajan de una nave deportiva de un sorprendente color verde limón, tres rubionas teñidas con saña como para borrar cualquier rastro de pigmentación [. . .] no sé si me hago entender, te estoy hablando de una trinidad deprimente [. . .] de tres nenorras de muy mal ver" (97). These women later tell Pablo how they were denied entrance to the gym, a fact that will lead to the cartel leader's revenge on Midas. Midas goes into hiding, ironically, at his mother's house in the barrio popular of his childhood. Since he had once sworn to friends she had died so that he could sever ties with his history and social class, he knew no one would find him there. Agustina, however, during the recovery from her breakdown, does indeed remember the location of Midas's childhood home and tracks him down in order to make sense herself of the chaos that her mental instability has caused. Nevertheless, Midas mocks her again, and with this act reinforces the root of the breakdown of the Londoño family to Agustina, and how this led to her own personal and psychological collapse:

Entonces de verdad crees, le pregunta el Midas McAlister a Agustina,
que tu noble familia todavía vive de las bondades de la herencia agraria?

into submission. 'He wanted to create panic and show his power,' says Popeye [Escobar's personal bodyguard] (157).

Pues bájate de esa novela romántica, muñeca decimonónica, porque las haciendas productivas de tu abuelo Londoño hoy no son más que paisaje, así que aterriza en este siglo XX y arrodíllate ante Su Majestad el rey don Pablo, soberano de las tres Américas y enriquecido hasta el absurdo gracias a la gloriosa War on Drugs de los gringos [. . .] (80).

Midas makes it clear to Agustina that the rich of the nation were able to get richer without the guilt of feeling that they were part of the drug trafficking economy and all of the violence this entailed. He also reinforces the paradox in the increase of wealth that precisely the War on Drugs has provided to Escobar—a person, who, because of his class and ethnic background, the traditional rich of the nation felt was not capable or deserving of overpowering them economically. In spite of this fact, Escobar had the ability to resurrect the drained fortunes of descendents, like the Londoños, of those nineteenth century “haciendas productivas,” and therefore he was able to indeed “hacer llorar al país,” as I noted above. We can conclude that Agustina’s breakdown comes as a result of her realization of all these factors that add to the farce of the Londoño household; something to which the other women in her family—her mother as well as Sofi—turned a blind eye. Midas’s laughing in the face of all of this highlights the demise of the nation’s oligarchy at the hands of what they would deem the “nouveau riche.” As he tells Agustina: “Esta oligarquía nuestra todavía anda convencida de que maneja a Escobar cuando sucede exactamente al revés [. . .] cometen el mismo error que cometí yo, mi princesa Agustina, y es un error suicida [. . .]” (83). This demise is also articulated within the domestic space of Cepeda Samudio’s *La casa grande*, as discussed in chapter two. The plantation owners, like Agustina’s forefathers in the nineteenth century, are replaced in the face of post-modernity and globalization; international banana plantations or internationally maintained drug trafficking renders

the same result in the twentieth century and beyond. As Juan Antonio Serna also argues, “el ejemplo permite ver el concepto que se tiene del elemento femenino, mismo que se le considera como soñador, romántico, decimonónico e ignorante de la situación actual de Colombia” (46). In effect, by calling Agustina his “muñeca decimonónica,” Midas accentuates the unchanging background position of women as secondary citizens throughout Colombia’s history.

Just as delirium itself cannot be explained in a coherent fashion, such is the rationality behind violence in Colombia. Laura Restrepo’s *Delirio* clearly demonstrates the trajectory of women’s objectification through the generations of violence that I have highlighted in this and the preceding three chapters. It is no surprise that *Delirio* led to Restrepo’s winning the 2004 Premio Alfaguara de Novela. The use of the fantastic to detail Agustina’s psychic powers in revealing Dolores’s murder helps to highlight a possible feminist overpowering of the forces of violence and gendered aggression. This juxtaposition of Agustina’s mental trauma against the fantastic completes the effect of the *reader’s* delirium, perhaps the only way to grapple with violence that instead of subsiding over the past century has actually materialized into other, more dangerous forms. By using techniques clearly inspired by Latin American detective fiction, in particular of the *neopoliciaco* variety, Restrepo has been widely recognized for her work that exposes contemporary corruption as it specifically demeans the pursuit of improved social conditions for women that would protect them from psychological and physical harm.

Conclusion

At the time of this writing, Colombia is in the midst of electing a president who will serve the 2010 – 2014 term. Not surprisingly, the candidate at the head of the polls is backed by the current president, Álvaro Uribe Vélez, who, since his election in 2002, has been lauded by his supporters for having worked towards “cleansing” the nation of rebel groups and drug trafficking. Uribe has also received praise for strengthening Colombia’s international ties thanks to his support of U.S. foreign policy, which includes his embracing of neoliberal economic reform. Presidential elections in Colombia may at times symbolize a new era for the nation’s citizens; yet the results more often than not have served to reinforce the status quo since the nineteenth century. I demonstrated throughout this analysis how such political structure has maintained women in a subordinate role. Nevertheless, if the past fifty years in women’s literary production is any indication of cultural trends, the next decade should indeed see the emergence of novels that will also work to challenge continued violence that is rooted in patriarchal, hierarchical abuses of power. This project has affirmed the existence of an influential tradition of Colombian feminist novelists who continue to work to challenge women’s subordinated position in the nation which results in displacement, psychological, physical, and sexual abuse within the domestic space, and lack of access to viable education, employment, and an overall humane standard of living.

The texts I’ve examined have worked towards rewriting history to account for women’s agency. It is my aim that this analysis of Colombian feminist novels of violence will stimulate more extensive and sustained explorations on these writers, as well as others not included here. My prime concern throughout my research is to make

visible the often-overlooked literary work by women who should otherwise be recognized as fundamental in the construction of Colombian identity. The victimization of women within the violence of Colombia fits within a global paradigm of women's history and struggle as marginalized subjects because it raises questions about the human condition of women exposed to a variety of oppressive circumstances, not only because of gender, but also because of class and race. In effect, I believe that this analysis contributes to digging deeper into the intersections of history, violence, gender, class, and race politics. As Joan W. Scott contends, these categories are inherently tied together (30).

What is evident throughout the works of Buitrago, Ángel, and Restrepo is their commitment to social and political change in Colombia, not only for women, but also for all people who have historically been denied a voice. These feminist authors—unlike Caballero Calderón, Cepeda Samudio, García Márquez, Vallejo, and Franco—establish solidarity between women as fundamental to deconstructing hierarchical power structures on which historical violence is established. Thus, Marina in *El hostigante verano de los dioses* forms an alliance with Inari, Isabel, and Hade in the Caribbean in order to provide a voice to three women surviving in situations of domestic abuse. The necessity of women's interdependence is a recurring motif in *Estaba la pájara pinta sentada en el verde limón*, when we consider how Ana grapples with the deaths of Julieta and Valeria by fashioning her identity according to her communication with Sabina, in spite of the class hierarchy on which their relationship is constructed. Along these lines of the role of communication within survival, Ojos de Agua, the foreign narrator of *La multitud errante*, finds it essential to tell Matilde Lina's

story, reconstructing her past amidst the collective accounts she hears in the displacement camp. Similarly, *Delirio*'s Agustina places herself in a dangerous situation to sacrifice her psychological and physical security in order to expose the brutal torture and murder of Dolores by the hands of drug cartel leaders. I believe that these horizontal and sororal relations can be used to examine other moments of marginalization, both historical and literary, that highlight women's solidarity as fundamental to their distinct modes of survival throughout Colombia's intertwined eras of violence.

This is different from the type of politics that inform the current election process and the way an individual like Ingrid Betancourt may be praised as an example of women's liberation in a country tied to distinct modes of political violence. This, in my opinion, characterized the international media blitz that surrounded the 2008 "rescue" of former presidential candidate Betancourt from FARC rebels. Betancourt's release symbolically reinforces values based on class and race within the dominant ideology of Colombia. These are indeed the power relations that the women I examined—both in terms of author and protagonist—worked to deconstruct.

Throughout this project, I contended that feminist novels redefine the way violence is presented because they offer critical contexts for understanding and interpreting how national hostility taking place within the public sphere is inextricably tied to abuse within the private, domestic space. For this reason, I find the celebration of women's exploitation within situations of violence—specifically as showcased in the variety of cultural productions that feature female prostitution within the drug economy—particularly troubling. Similarly, the *lack* of attention given to women's

participation in both revolutionary and counter-revolutionary groups as proof of the dismal opportunities for advancement afforded to women is also disconcerting. Not only should these situations be a cause for international concern, but also the relation of these two forms of exploitation can be examined against the complex social and political contexts of even more incarnations of violence than just the three generations I presented. Critical awareness is essential in order to move beyond the discourse of women's importance only in relation to men, as opposed to both individual and collective female identity, agency, and history. These notions are all central concerns of the feminist novels that I examined.

The production of literature that shifts the discourse of Colombian women, sadly, is only obtainable by a minority and privileged group of female intellectuals. This is the result of an institutionalized lack of access to education within Colombia. Consequently, the feminist novelists that I have featured in this dissertation all write from a privileged point of view, that nevertheless, they have utilized to speak on behalf of women who have no voice: Inari, Isabel, Hade, Valeria, Sabina, Matilde Lina, and Dolores. However, it has been the aim of my investigation to expose the possibility of how the subaltern may eventually develop his or her own voice. Although currently, literary representations like those that comprise my current project are still created by a minority, this awareness could be expanded when other cultural scholars and historians make women's identity, voice, and agency central to their work. Furthermore, an insistence upon women's heterogeneity and multiplicity is important so that the fixed or essential definition of women according to the media's celebrated, yet disturbing, standards do not continue to be reinforced.

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