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# The Space In-Between: Constructions of Girlhood and Coming of Age in the Fictions of Silvina Ocampo and Clarice Lispector

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

by

Katie L. Jan

Committee:

Professor Sara Pankenier Weld, Co-Chair

Professor Dominique Jullien, Co-Chair

Professor Leo Cabranes-Grant

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The dissertation of Katie L. Jan is approved.

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Leo Cabranes-Grant

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Dominique Jullien, Committee Co-Chair

_____

Sara Pankenier Weld, Committee Co-Chair

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**Vita of Katie L. Jan**
June 2021

**Education**

Ph.D. Comparative Literature, Doctoral Emphasis in Translation Studies, University of California, Santa Barbara, September 2021
M.A. Comparative Literature, University of California, Santa Barbara, March 2016
B.A. Spanish and English, with a minor in Comparative Literature and Culture (with high honors), University of San Francisco, June 2012

**Professional Employment**

Summer 2015, Summer 2017, Summer 2018, Fall 2018, Summer 2019, Fall 2019, Spring 2021, Summer 2021, Instructor, Comparative Literature Program, University of California, Santa Barbara
Fall 2016-Spring 2017, Instructor, Department of Spanish and Portuguese, University of California, Santa Barbara
Fall 2017-Spring 2018, Instructor, Writing Program, University of California, Santa Barbara
Fall 2014, Spring 2015, Winter 2015, Winter 2019, Spring 2019, Fall 2020, and Winter 2021, Teaching Assistant, Comparative Literature Program

**Selected Publications**

2019 *Forgotten Journey*. Translation with Suzanne Jill Levine of Silvina Ocampo's *Viaje olvidado*. Preface by Carmen Boullosa. San Francisco: City Lights Books.
2019 "Skylight." Translation with Suzanne Jill Levine of Silvina Ocampo's "Cielo de claraboyas." *The New Yorker* Flash Fiction series.
2018 "'To Find the Right Words': Bilingual Students' Reflections on Translation and Translatability." Chapter in *Feeling It: Language, Race, and Affect in Latinx Youth Learning*. Edited by Mary Bucholtz, Dolores Inés Casillas, and Jin Sook Lee. New York: Routledge.
2018 *Untranslatability Goes Global: The Translator's Dilemma.* Volume edited with Suzanne Jill Levine. New York: Routledge.
2015 "The Evitas." Translation of Diego Trelles Paz's "Las Evitas." *Review* 90 (48.1).

**Selected Awards and Grants**

2020 Graduate Division Dissertation Fellowship, University of California, Santa Barbara
2019 Comparative Literature Outstanding Teaching Associate Award, University of California, Santa Barbara
2015 Comparative Literature Outstanding Teaching Assistant Award, University of California, Santa Barbara
2013 Doctoral Scholars Central Fellowship, University of California, Santa Barbara

**Fields of Study**

Major fields: Twentieth-century Latin American literature, children's literature and childhood studies, translation studies
Areas of interest: Southern Cone studies; Brazil studies; girlhood studies; world literature, intertextuality, and crosstextuality; fantastic literature; narratological and anthropological approaches to coming of age; modernism and the avant-garde; gender and sexuality studies; sociocultural linguistics, language acquisition, and multilingualism studies

**Abstract**

The Space In-Between: Constructions of Girlhood and Coming of Age

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This dissertation conducts a comparative study of Silvina Ocampo's *Forgotten Journey* (1937, Argentina) and Clarice Lispector's *Family Ties* (1960, Brazil), increasingly relevant fictions that explore difficult topics: girlhood, sexuality, and initiation rituals. I identify their shared precursors, including Anglophone classics of modernist and children's literature, and argue that their depictions of girlhood resist dominant genre constraints—and dominant ideas about gender and sexuality. Through comparative analysis and translation studies, I interrogate why and how traditions of women's writing in Latin America were silenced in comparison to those of their male counterparts—in Ocampo's case, the canonical tradition of fantastic literature she initiated in the Americas with Jorge Luis Borges and Adolfo Bioy Casares. My intersectional approach shows how Ocampo and Lispector's fictions reveal the social construction of girlhood in the cities of Buenos Aires and Rio de Janeiro and their outskirts. In focusing on Ocampo and Lispector's debut works of short fiction, as well as their works for children, this project intervenes in the longstanding debate in childhood studies about the power dynamics of children's literature as written by adult authors. I examine the figure of the child as a dialogic partner that accompanies the authors throughout the creative processes of their first stories for adults and children. I amplify the discussion surrounding gender, sexuality, and intersectionality in Latin American literature by incorporating age as a social category worthy of

consideration. By employing a childhood studies framework to analyze the Ocampo-Lispector intertext, as well as examining their revealing journeys into the canon, I recontextualize them as active participants in a mid-century global avant-garde context that turned to children's creativity to spur artistic innovation.

This study traces Ocampo and Lispector's common authorial project of rewriting a global constellation of foundational girlhood stories that were often written by men, beginning with the Demeter-Persephone myth in Homer and Ovid's tellings, moving toward folk and fairy tales with special attention to Hans Christian Andersen, and culminating in works of nineteenth-century Anglophone children's literature, with a focus on Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*. I situate Ocampo and Lispector as engaged in a joint project to subvert traditional literary portrayals of girlhood, as well as the social expectations reflected and affirmed in these texts, and to illuminate the at times dark underbelly of girlhood, the acknowledgment of which is a prerequisite to social change. The first chapter introduces pairings of Ocampo-Lispector stories that, on both thematic and linguistic levels, are uncannily similar as examples of hybrid, all-ages literature, an approach that dismantles the audience-based binary of writing "for adults" and writing "for children." The second chapter examines Ocampo's innovations of the fantastic, children's, and Bildungsroman genres via the figure of the feminine double in *Forgotten Journey*, in order to spotlight the vulnerability of the young girl. The third chapter analyzes Lispector's use of the anthropological construct of the rite of passage in *Family Ties* to demonstrate the systemic nature of sexual violence against girls and women. This dissertation opens a critical and translational space in-between, one in which Ocampo and Lispector are dialogic partners who speak into being a sympathetic all-ages community

that attends to the urgent matters of girlhood and coming of age, vulnerability and trauma, and world literature and social change.

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For groups, as well as for individuals, life itself means to separate and to be reunited, to change form and condition, to die and to be reborn. It is to act and to cease, to wait and rest, and then to begin acting again, but in a different way. And there are always new thresholds to cross: the thresholds of summer and winter, of a season or a year, of a month or a night; the thresholds of birth, adolescence, maturity, and old age; the threshold of death and that of the afterlife—for those who believe in it.

– Arnold van Gennep, *Les rites de passage* (1909: 189-90)

## Introduction

## Girls Underground:
## Girlhood, Subversion, and World Literature

The gardens and houses looked as if a move were afoot.

One afternoon, darker and deeper into winter than the others…

In the middle of my walk from our house to the market, a man would appear.

– Silvina Ocampo, "Sarandí Street" (1937)[1]

The houses were sleeping behind closed doors. The gardens rigid with cold.

It was an even colder, darker morning than the others.

At the far end of her street, inside the mist, she saw two men.

– Clarice Lispector, "Preciousness" (1960)[2]

The above excerpts—ominous, atmospheric, and uncannily similar—belong to the short story collections *Forgotten Journey* (1937) by the Argentine Silvina Ocampo and

[1] Translation by Jan and Levine, 2015 (*Granta*). "Los jardines y las casas adquirían aspectos de mudanza." • "Una tarde más obscura y más entrada en invierno que las otras…" • "En la mitad del trayecto, de la casa donde vivíamos al almacén, un hombre se asomaba" (*Viaje olvidado* 117-8).

[2] Translation by Dodson, 2015 (*Complete Stories* 188). "As casas dormiam nas portas fechadas. Os jardins endurecidos de frio." • "Era uma manhã ainda mais fria e escura que as outras" • "No fim longínquo de sua rua, de dentro do vapor, viu dois homens" (*Todos os contos* 211).

*Family Ties* (1960) by the Brazilian Clarice Lispector. Ocampo and Lispector endow the unsettling scenes with the same sense of foreboding, as the unnamed protagonists of "Sarandí Street" and "Preciousness" find themselves on a threshold that is both mundane and threatening, and immediately recognizable to certain readers. In urban settings woven of folk and fairy tale tropes, the girls face, in Ocampo's phrasing, "the horror of crossing the street," and in Lispector's, "the unforeseeable of the street."[3] The girls' journeys through the transitional, unprotected space of the open road evokes both a legacy of literary journeys, as well as the metaphor at the root of the anthropological rite of passage which, in Arnold van Gennep's initial theorization, recalled "[wavering] between two worlds" or territories (1909: 15-6). Like Persephone's descent into the underworld, Little Red Riding Hood's journey through the woods, and Alice falling down the rabbit hole, the girls in Ocampo and Lispector's tales find themselves in surroundings that are dark and defamiliarized, as a looming and predatory masculine presence intrudes on their walks to the market and to school, respectively. The nearby houses are personified as sleepy or distracted, constructing an ecology of objects that, animated and affective, immerse the adult reader in the consciousness of the child protagonists, while also alerting readers that they are the lone witnesses of the events to come, and that what is about to happen will be hidden from public view.

Both "Sarandí Street" and "Preciousness" bear witness to girlhood sexual trauma, naming an issue that was and still is unseen in many ways, and that Ocampo and Lispector unveil as a tragically constitutive element of constructions, literary and otherwise, of

[3] "el horror de la calle para atravesar," "o imprevisível da rua" (*Viaje olvidado* 120; *Todos os contos* 211).

feminine coming of age. As seen above, both authors acknowledge the invisibility of these dark girlhood experiences within their narratives. For instance, in another *Forgotten Journey* story, "Siesta in the Cedar Tree," Ocampo writes lines that are nearly identical to Lispector's sentence, "The houses were sleeping behind closed doors," which signals a societal turning away from the trauma of girlhood. Throughout "Siesta in the Cedar Tree," Ocampo repeats the phrase "behind closed doors" and personifies a house as sleeping during siesta hour, when the story's girl protagonists are unsupervised by adults to various ends.[4] By placing their girl protagonists in recognizable, localized urban environments and spotlighting girl subjectivities,[5] these stories of sexual "initiation"—prompted by traumatic, unsanctioned, and invisible encounters—form a kind of anti-Bildungsroman, simultaneously engaging and disrupting a narrative seen throughout classical, Romantic, Victorian, and modernist writings and informed by anthropological theories of liminality. Ocampo and Lispector juxtapose the arc of these dark feminine initiations with masculine coming of age, as well as publicly celebrated initiation rituals like birthdays, first voyages away from home, engagements, weddings, pregnancies, and parenthood, which form a counterpoint to the events of "Sarandí Street" and "Preciouness." This dissertation embarks upon an investigation into Ocampo and Lispector's intervention into dominant constructions of girlhood and coming of age. My aim is to reveal a fuller picture of two mid-century avant-garde writers who explored the taboo world of girlhood initiation, by

[4] See Chapter Two's discussion of "Siesta in the Cedar Tree."

[5] Hélène Cixous reads Lispector as a height of *écriture féminine*, a "poetry that comes from the rapport of the body with the social world," and this characterization extends to Ocampo's fictions as well (Conley vii-viii).

placing their debut short story collections in dialogue with each other—and in dialogue with their authors' writings for children.

The resemblances in Ocampo and Lispector's fictions multiply when examining their writing for children, which intersects and overlaps in powerful ways with their writing for adults, as well as with the work of their shared precursors, whose texts have been read by audiences of all ages. Much as childhood and adulthood "give body to each other," to use Robin Bernstein's germinal concept of the co-construction of childhood and adulthood (2013: 203), Ocampo and Lispector's writings for children and writings for adults enrich one another, perhaps most pointedly when they are writing about topics that are decidedly not childish but that exhibit a feminist stance toward immaturity. At the heart of this dissertation is a comparison between Ocampo's *Forgotten Journey* (1937) and Lispector's *Family Ties* (1960) as debut collections of short fiction that pose difficulties for critics and translators in their use of hybrid forms, genres, and languages. A resonant and compelling in-betweenness—their merging of fantastic literature and children's literature, of adult language and children's language, of literature and anthropology or proto-anthropology, of fiction and autobiography or pseudoautobiography (Wachtel 1987), and of hemispheric traditions—characterizes their short fictions and invites further inquiry.

As we will see, there is evidence to suggest that Ocampo and Lispector were aware of and admired each other's work; even without such evidence, however, their literary kinship emanates from a nexus of shared themes, a scrutiny and valorization of feminine adolescence, a sustained creative practice of writing for all ages and genders, and a subversive rewriting of a canonical body of girlhood texts that form a common lineage for both authors. In an interview given after Lispector's death and toward the end of Ocampo's

life, which will be discussed in detail later in this Introduction, Ocampo names *Forgotten Journey* as a predecessor text to Lispector's work and, accordingly and anachronistically, Lispector as her own precursor, in the Borgesian sense. Ocampo's remarks suggest a possible direct influence, what Pérez Firmat in *Do The Americas Have a Common Literature* (1990) calls *genetic* influence. This possibility notwithstanding, I affirm that examining *Forgotten Journey* and *Family Ties* together does not require such a connection; this dissertation will excavate genre-based, thematic, and linguistic affinities and illuminate, returning to Pérez Firmat's terminology, a *generic* and *appositional* intertext. Ocampo's comments about Lispector in relation to *Forgotten Journey* nonetheless call attention to a literary sisterhood, to use Sylvia Molloy's term,[6] that had remained unacknowledged by critics and perhaps by both writers themselves throughout their careers and lifetimes. Molloy's scholarship on traditions of women's writing that are named after the fact shows authors seeking to rectify even their own early disregard for feminine literary influence, though its textual presence is no less potent or detectable, as I will demonstrate. In the same interview, Ocampo identified and aimed to articulate the mysterious effect of Lispector's famed strange syntax, and what she saw of Lispector's writing in her own work and *Forgotten Journey* in particular: evanescence.[7]

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[6] "Inventarme, sí, precursoras: las que hubiera querido que me marcaran y no escuché con atención: fabularme un linaja [*sic*], descubrirme hermanas [y] reconocerme en una tradición que, sin que yo lo supiera del todo, me ha estado respaldando," Molloy writes (487-7). "To invent, for myself, feminine precursors: the women writers I would have wanted to mark my work and whom I did not always heed: to imagine into being a lineage, find my sisters [and] recognize myself in a tradition that, even if I could not see the whole, was sustaining me."

[7] "Tenía esa cosa evanescente, que era su encanto" (*Encuentros* 38). See my translation and discussion of this quote in context on pages 14-16 of this dissertation.

To be evanescent is to be in transit, to exist in-between the recognizable and the unrecognizable, and, in its original mathematical use, to be in a state of becoming "imperceptibly minute, too small to perceive" (OED). Evanescence by definition engages questions of perspective, temporality, and the semiotics of size (Weld 2018: 120) that pertain to both childhood as well as anthropological and literary imaginations. For Ocampo, the twin moods and modes of Lispector's fiction are evanescence and enchantment, which scholar Jane Bennett defines as "that strange combination of delight and disturbance" (xi). In *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things* (2010), Bennett disrupts the traditional separation of the animate and inanimate worlds. She characterizes this collapse, revealingly, as a return to the child's consciousness:

> In the space created by this estrangement [between the animate and the inanimate,] a *vital materiality* can start to take shape. Or rather, it can take shape again, for a version of this idea already found expression in childhood experiences of a world populated by animate things rather than passive objects. I will try to reinvoke this sense. (Bennett vii-iii)

Her aim is a political one, "to bear witness to the vital materialities that flow through and around us," in a project that extends to Ocampo and Lispector's fictions, which reinvoke childhood consciousness to similar ends (x). Bennett's goal, to "generate a more subtle awareness of the complicated web of dissonant connections between bodies," and to discourage the human impulse toward conquest and consumption, is intimately related to Ocampo and Lispector's hope for a reimagining of a social model for feminine growth and development (4; ix). What's more, in *Vibrant Matter*, Bennett tellingly defines the enchanting process of an object seeming to come alive, as it does in the child's mind, as "evanescence" (10).

Evanescence is also the stuff of children's literature, a body of work shaped by childhood or adolescence as the transitional stages between infancy and adulthood, and by bodies, languages, and stories that soon pass out of sight or memory but that continue to shape our adult selves. *Forgotten Journey* and *Family Ties* are filled with fleeting images, resurfaced memories, and passing encounters that have left indelible marks on the protagonists—all of which contribute to an atmosphere that leaves the reader overwhelmed by the simultaneous ephemerality and persistence of girlhood. The way their style matches the content of the collections is particularly purposeful, even though it is what is so often characterized as difficult or misinterpreted as a mistake. Both Ocampo and Lispector's sentences reflect their child characters' consciousness; however, there is another element to it: they mimic children's perceptions of the world and, in turn, evoke the ways in which children learn and use language. Their sentences, which will be analyzed in detail in the chapters to come, animate the inanimate world as children do. Accordingly, they contain synaesthesia, contradictions, neologisms, words used outside their usual contexts, abrupt shifts in narrative voice from the third to first or second person, and experimental syntax that mixes Spanish or Portuguese and English, the spoken and the written, literature and orature.

If in childhood, "the world is populated by animate things rather than passive objects," it is only natural that in children's literature, "objects and settings are especially inextricable from plot and character" (Bennett vii-iii; Tolentino 97-8). In *Forgotten Journey* and *Family Ties*, which infuse and thereby alter the fantastic genre with the animism of childhood and children's literature, objects and settings often have agency and undergo transformations that seem to reverberate from characters' experiences. One

*Forgotten Journey* story opens with the night sky falling by placing deep blue tracing paper over the windows[8] as a teenage girl's mental state deteriorates. In *Family Ties*, fruit is gilded on tree branches for an instant[9] under candlelight as a teenage girl sexually matures. Gardens sleep or dream, swings rock in the wind, dolls move on their own, clothing transforms the body, and the light plays tricks and transforms objects and people. The defamiliarizing language that follows images like these is surprising and imperfect, not tightly-wound or overly-allusive, and mimics children trying out new words or new word orders in order to translate their inner lives for the first time. It is from this primitivist project and these experiments in animism (Jentsch 1906), as we will see in Chapter One of this dissertation, that Ocampo and Lispector's practice of the fantastic, a genre that has proved pigeonholing for Ocampo, springs.

This study will trace Ocampo and Lispector's common authorial project of rewriting a global constellation of canonized girlhood stories that were often written by men, beginning with the Demeter-Persephone myth in Homer and Ovid's tellings, moving toward folk and fairy tales with special attention to Hans Christian Andersen's heroines, and culminating in works of nineteenth-century Anglophone children's literature, with a focus on Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* and J. M. Barrie's *Peter Pan; or, The Boy Who Would Not Grow Up*, the latter of which is typically read as a boy's text but whose depictions of girlhood are significant and fraught. I situate Ocampo and

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[8] "La noche ponía un papel muy azul de calcar sobre las ventanas" ("La familia Linio Milagro," *Viaje olvidado* 169).

[9] "Frutos se douravam por um instante entre as folhas" ("Mistério em São Cristóvão," *Todos os contos* 239).

Lispector as engaged in a joint project to subvert these traditional literary portrayals of girlhood, a canon composed up of Greek and Roman myths, folk and fairy tales, and children's literature classics, as well as the sociohistorical expectations reflected and affirmed in these texts. In scrutinizing this canon, as well as Ocampo and Lispector's complex relationship to it, I aim to make contributions to the evolving discipline of girlhood studies, "the theoretical fields and bodies of literature that address girls, girlhood, and girls' issues," one of which describes this study's concern: tracing "historical and literary representations of girls" from ancient to contemporary periods (Kirk, Mitchell, and Reid-Walsh 2010: 14) in order to promote girls' agency.

In their explorations of initiation rites, liminality, and the life cycle, Ocampo and Lispector—and most especially Lispector—invoke the vertical organization of the feminine ancient Greek world in its emphasis on intergenerational cycles of death and birth. Lispector's engagement with the Demeter-Persephone myth and the Eleusinian Mysteries in particular brings out this element:

> Greek society thought women had closer connections than men had both to the hidden wellsprings of fertility and to death; the festivals of Demeter exploit this connection. Indeed, as Sherry Ortner has argued, human culture generally tends to associate women with nature and the supernatural. The growth of both human child and the seed occur out of sight; women are thus associated with the hidden sources of the fertility they produce. Women also played an important and intimate role in rites for the dead and in mediating between this world and the next. In addition, festivals of Demeter offered women a time to join other women in celebrating myths concerning social transitions from childhood to marriage and motherhood. (Foley 74)

This feminine legacy of mediation, of in-betweenness, and of moving between worlds informs *Forgotten Journey* and *Family Ties* and their relationship to the fantastic, which will be integral to Chapter One's discussion of gender and genre. We will find, however, that the public celebration of these "social transitions" also involves the mourning of

masculine disruptions of feminine kinship and sisterhood outside of the sanctioned ritual. As Ocampo and Lispector's girl protagonists navigate the dangerous world of coming of age, the stories invite a compassionate, allied reading, and readers are pushed to confront the disempowerment of feminine initiation within traditional literary and historical representations and models.

At the heart of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (1865) is, in Lispector scholar Claire Williams' summary, "a girl trying to make sense of a world she cannot understand" (21). Carroll's classic becomes Ocampo and Lispector's common urtext, above all in the ways in which their girl protagonists inhabit a threatening world. As a way of analyzing the elements of *Forgotten Journey* and *Family Ties* that are difficult to contextualize within traditional milieus, this dissertation offers evidence of the participation of Ocampo and Lispector in both a global avant-garde context and a world literature of girlhood. I examine the figure of the child, which appears in diverse forms—the girlhood personae of the authors, actual children in their lives, as well as the child in a theoretical and literary sense—but always as a dialogic partner or interlocutor that accompanies Ocampo and Lispector throughout the creative process of their first stories for adults and for children. This dissertation acknowledges the figure of the child as a co-creator, narrator, character, reader, and pivotal player who actively participates in the construction of Ocampo and Lispector's texts, which, as recent directions in childhood studies and children's literature research illuminate, move beyond a thematic treatment of childhood. As we will see, *Forgotten Journey* and *Family Ties* abound with references to Carroll's urtext, from nods to Alice's many metamorphoses to curious and curiouser moments of linguistic innovation. Ocampo and Lispector's heroines are in many ways as revolutionary as Carroll's, whose

foundational text gave license to spotlight the story of a not always likable but tenacious and complex young girl protagonist.

The legacy of *Alice in Wonderland* is apparent not only in the heroines that populate Ocampo and Lispector's stories, but also in a pair of allegorical tales with rabbit protagonists: Ocampo's "The Golden Hare" and Lispector's first published children's story, "The Mystery of the Thinking Rabbit," which will be juxtaposed and discussed in Chapter One. Both stories explore questions of captivity and femininity in an everyday world that is mysterious in its mundanity. At the same time Lispector wrote "The Mystery of the Thinking Rabbit," she was working on her first book of stories, *Lacós de família* or *Family Ties* (*Clarice: Uma vida que se conta* 289). Peixoto (1994: 105) tracks the progression of Lispector's collection throughout the fifties. Many of the stories that make up *Family Ties* had already been published in 1952, in a volume called *Alguns contos*, or *Some Stories.* These stories appeared in the following order, using translator Katrina Dodson's titles in English: "Mystery in São Cristóvão" as the opener, followed by "Family Ties," "Beginnings of a Fortune," "Love," "A Chicken," and "The Dinner."[10] By early 1955, Peixoto notes, Lispector had completed drafts of, again using Dodson's titles, "Daydream and Drunkenness of a Young Lady," "The Imitation of the Rose," "Happy Birthday," and the Carrollesque "Crime of the Mathematics Teacher,"[11] as well as four other stories which would appear in her next collection. Though Lispector's true debut is

[10] "Mistério em São Cristóvão," "Os laços de família," "Começos de uma fortuna," "Amor," "Uma galinha," "O jantar."

[11] "Devaneio e embriaguez duma rapariga," "A imitação da rosa," "Feliz aniversário," "O crime do professor de matemática."

the novel *Perto do coração selvage* or *Near to the Wild Heart* (1943), *Family Ties* is her first full-length collection of short stories. Unsurprisingly, her interest in the mysteries of growing up permeates her earliest stories, much like Ocampo's *Forgotten Journey.* In both collections the depiction of coming-of-age encounters feels almost unnervingly authentic—difficult to categorize in terms of genre, not quite realist, not quite grotesque, and not quite fantastic—and the language that follows is surprising, strange, and singular.

While *Family Ties* went into a second printing the year it was published (1960, cf. *Clarice: Uma vida que se conta* 322), when *Forgotten Journey* was published in 1937, its narrative strangeness was met with confusion, not curiosity, and seen as its author's unwitting mistake, itself an infantilizing response. Ocampo's older sister Victoria, the most recognizable Argentine woman next to Eva Perón, published a review of the book criticizing its odd combination of English syntax and spoken River Plate Spanish, which resulted in what she saw as incomplete images. Critics like Enriquez (2018), in her study *La hermana menor* or *The Little Sister*, have read this review as an extension of birth order and the persistence of childhood roles into adulthood, in the form of an older sister putting her younger sister in her place. Moreover, the presence of pseudoautobiography and Silvina's portrayal of events from the sisters' childhood but from a point of view unrecognizable to Victoria colors the review (Enriquez 44).

Ocampo was trilingual and learned to write in English and French before Spanish, and the effects of her multilingualism on her debut narrative voice—her occupation of a space in-between languages and literary traditions—can now be seen as an asset rather than a hindrance, informing her ear for and attitude toward languages (such as spoken language and children's languages) that others might prejudicially deem ungrammatical. It is not a

stretch to say that *Forgotten Journey*, though English is rarely included explicitly except in proper names and some dialogue, is written in a kind of hybrid language. Ocampo's idiosyncratic sentences have their own internal logic, in which subtle but pervasive tendencies in the syntax reflect an undercurrent of English. This is not fully-realized Spanglish, of course, but is nevertheless experimental, modernist, and located in-between Spanish and English. Reflecting on her career in 1982, eleven years before she died, Ocampo rejected the characterization of *Forgotten Journey* as linguistically strained by identifying a shared sensibility she perceived between *Forgotten Journey*'s style and Clarice Lispector's work, which, as celebrated feminist critic Jean Franco notes, received a warmer welcome in Latin American letters and is well-known for its linguistic innovation.

Franco (1999) highlights the role of recent criticism in establishing comparative contexts that depict women writers as innovators. In doing so, she uses both Ocampo and Lispector as representatives of two distinct patterns in literary discourse. "What strikes one about the literature written by women before the [nineteen] seventies, with one or two notable exceptions such as Clarice Lispector, is how rarely their writing was considered innovative or avant-garde," she writes. While Clarice Lispector is an exceptional case for Franco, the rare woman writer who was praised for her originality, Ocampo is a quintessential example of an all-too-common marginalizing pattern of historical neglect and misunderstanding. "Think for example of Silvina Ocampo… as compared to Borges," she continues. "It is only in contemporary readings that these women have begun to be recognized as something more than secondary players" (98). *Forgotten Journey* was the only fiction Ocampo wrote before her marriage to Bioy Casares and before she co-edited

the landmark *Antología de literatura fantástica*; the stories are her least Borgesian, and the collection has gotten the least attention from critics and, until recently, translators. Lispector, even though she was received as an avant-garde voice, was similarly subject to comparisons to male writers like Julio Cortázar (another writer to whom Ocampo is often compared), and her reception was complicated by a second power dynamic: Brazil as a secondary player to Spanish-speaking Latin America—especially during her introduction to North American academia.[12] What's more, translations into English of both Ocampo and Lispector (of individual stories in literary journals at first) began to appear in the seventies and have played—and continue to play—a crucial role in determining their critical treatment in the United States and Canada.

In this study I recast Ocampo and Lispector as two literary innovators whose avant-garde concentration on childhood—a driving interest largely unshared by Borges, Bioy Casares, and Cortázar—advanced and repurposed the fantastic genre. Rather than reifying previous frameworks that present Ocampo and Lispector as either solitary or ancillary to and best understood in relation to their male contemporaries, I mount a different kind of comparative study—one that allows each writer to stand on her own but follows Ocampo's assertions about the affinity of their authorial projects. I follow these authorial instructions and make use of authorial commentaries because I find them merited and substantiated by the material; Lispector herself questioned her own readings when she titled a text in

[12] In "The Early Dissemination of Clarice Lispector's Literary Works," Teresa Montero (2002) notes that of the first six dissertations published on Lispector in the US in the seventies, four were comparative studies (*Closer to the Wild Heart: Essays on Clarice Lispector* 172). Montero notes that the first dissertation, written by Teresinha Alves Pereira in 1971, was called *Julio Cortázar, Clarice Lispector e a nova narrativa latino-americana,* or *Julio Cortázar, Clarice Lispector and the New Latin American Narrative.*

response to queries about her work "Useless Explanations." (Of course, the explanations are anything but useless.) In the context of discussing how difficult the language in *Viaje olvidado* is to translate (a translator had approached her about a potential German version), Ocampo compares the work to Lispector:

> I think [*Forgotten Journey*] has things in common with the Brazilian writer who just died [in 1977], Clarice Lispector. I looked at *Forgotten Journey*, which has a very twisted way of putting together sentences, and it reminded me of Clarice Lispector. (*Encuentros* 38)[13]

She continues, alluding to a mutual admiration and her own reputation as a reclusive writer: "[Lispector] came to the [Buenos Aires] Book Fair and wanted to meet me, I couldn't go that day and was genuinely sorry. A few friends went to Brazil and I dedicated some of my books to her, so they could bring them to her house" (38).[14] What's more, that very twisted way of putting together sentences—how Ocampo articulates their shared syntactical approach—is intimately connected to their writerly projects of capturing girlhood and, in turn, their unique practice of the fantastic, which is inextricable from and in fact "embedded in," to use Lispector translator Katrina Dodson's term, their use of language (*Complete Stories* 633).

Ocampo's understudied remarks show the importance of listening to women writers characterize their own work, as scholars like Molloy (1985) and Franco (1999) encourage, and of establishing webs of influence in the Latin American context that place women

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[13] "Yo creo que [*Viaje olvidado*] tiene cosas parecidas a la escritora brasileña que murió hace poco, Clarice Lispector. Vi *Viaje olvidado,* que tiene una manera muy retorcida de hacer las frases, y me recordó a Clarice Lispector."

[14] "Ella vino a la Feria del Libro y quiso conocerme, yo no pude ir aquel día y lo sentí de verdad. Fueron unos amigos a Brasil y le dediqué unos libros para que se los llevaran a su casa."

writers in dialogue with other women writers, rather than defaulting to comparisons with male writers. Ocampo continues, describing Lispector as "the kind of woman whose feelings coincided with one's own, a bit capricious, very charming. I liked how she wrote. There was something evanescent about it, which was her charm" (*Encuentros* 38).[15] Ocampo uses the feminine in her statement for "one's own" (*una* instead of the male-as-general *uno*), seemingly referring to herself and addressing the resonances of her own writing with Lispector's, but also indicating a broader appeal in Lispector's fiction to feminine readers. In a 1977 television interview that aired posthumously, journalist Júlio Lerner asked Lispector which of her works resonated most strongly with young readers. In response, Lispector does not mention her so-called children's fiction but instead shares an anecdote about a seventeen-year-old girl being a stronger reader of her 1964 novel, *A paixão segundo G.H.*, which she always kept at her bedside for rereading, than a male Portuguese professor who had read it four times without understanding it.[16] Lispector's valorization of the intellectual contributions and agential readings of the unschooled teenage girl against academic, adult masculinity is an especially avant-garde and political rhetorical maneuver.

In the same interview, Lispector discusses her atypical reception—as a celebrated woman writer whose originality was also frequently described as occult—by asking: "Como é que eu posso ser popular sendo hermética?" "How can I be popular if I'm

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[15] "Era una mujer que tenía sentimientos que coincidían con los de *una*, un poco caprichosa, mucha gracia. A mí me gustaba cómo escribía. Tenía esa cosa evanescente, que era su encanto" (emphasis added).

[16] Gotlib transcribed and analyzed this excerpt of the interview in her article for *Closer to the Wild Heart: Essays on Clarice Lispector* (186).

hermetic?" ("Readers of Clarice, Who Are You?" 187). Here, Lispector comments on the frustration that comes with the often muddled reception of avant-garde women writers—and the impulse to compare and categorize in ways that don't always serve the work. Throughout the interview she "[plays] the role of reader of her own texts," in Gotlib's perceptive characterization, and cites her favorite story in her oeuvre, "O ovo e a galinha" ("The Egg and the Chicken," whose title evokes femininity and infancy and adulthood as an unclosable loop), as the one that is still a "mystery" to her, like the crux of her most well-known children's story (187). ("The Egg and the Chicken" is from *The Foreign Legion,* the collection to which "Monkeys," which will be analyzed in Chapter One, belongs.) Broadly speaking, as we will see in the case of Ocampo and Borges in Chapter One, this focus on the child as an agentive and writerly reader—as professed by the writers themselves—was not typical of the male writers of fantastic stories to whom Ocampo and Lispector are often compared. Interestingly enough, though, the notion of the reader-as-writer, popularized by Borges, can be analyzed within Ocampo and Lispector's examination of girlhood, innovation of the double discourse of fairy tales, and unique modes of engagement with child readers.

This dissertation offers a comparative study of Silvina Ocampo's *Forgotten Journey* (1937, Argentina) and Clarice Lispector's *Family Ties* (1960, Brazil), increasingly relevant fictions that explore difficult topics: girlhood, sexuality, and initiation rituals. I identify their shared precursors, including Anglophone classics of modernist and children's literature, and argue that their depictions of girlhood resist dominant genre constraints—and dominant ideas about gender and sexuality. Through comparative analysis and translation studies, I interrogate why and how traditions of women's writing in Latin

America were silenced in comparison to those of their male counterparts—in Ocampo's case, the canonical tradition of fantastic literature she initiated in the Americas with Jorge Luis Borges and Adolfo Bioy Casares. My intersectional approach, which actively incorporates questions of age, gender, race, class, disability, geography, and vulnerability to trauma, shows how Ocampo and Lispector's fictions reveal the social construction of girlhood in the cities of Buenos Aires and Rio de Janeiro and their outskirts. In focusing on Ocampo and Lispector's debut works of short fiction, as well as their works for children, this project intervenes in the longstanding debate in childhood studies about the power dynamics of children's literature and literature about children as written by adult authors. I draw on Richard Coe's *Autobiography and the Experience of Childhood* (1984) to examine the figure of the child as a dialogic partner that accompanies the authors throughout the creative processes of their first stories for adults and children. I amplify the discussion surrounding gender, sexuality, and intersectionality in Latin American literature by incorporating age as a social category worthy of consideration. By employing a childhood studies framework to analyze the Ocampo-Lispector intertext, as well as examining their revealing journeys into the canon, I recontextualize them as active participants in a mid-century global avant-garde context that turned to children's creativity to spur artistic innovation.

My comparative analyses spring from placing not only Ocampo and Lispector's stories alongside one another, but also each author's writings for children alongside their more well-known writings for adults. In her analysis of one of Ocampo's most famous stories, "The Photographs" from *The Fury* (1959), Hope-Pérez (2015) writes in a footnote that Lispector's "Feliz aniversário" from *Family Ties* "offers an interesting intertext," but

she does not develop the point further (83). Remarkably, numerous uncanny resonances emerge when comparing Ocampo and Lispector's stories across audience boundaries, when their ouevres are considered holistically and unpartitioned. As mentioned before, animals and animal tales figure prominently in each author's output, and we will see the parallels of Ocampo's "The Golden Hare" and Lispector's "The Mystery of the Thinking Rabbit" in Chapter One, as well as the fact that both Ocampo and Lispector mined the same source material to produce tales for both children and adults. Ocampo wrote two versions of "The Golden Hare," one that appears in a collection for children entitled *The Magic Orange*, which will be analyzed in Chapter One, and one that appears in *The Fury*; Lispector wrote "The Woman Who Killed The Fish," a children's story that both parallels "The Buffalo" from *Family Ties* and contains the same material as "Monkeys," a later tale from *The Foreign Legion.* These unusual companion tales are particularly revealing with regard to both authors' dynamic consideration of children and childhood.

Additionally, there are three Ocampo-Lispector pairings which I will introduce here and analyze in further detail in the body chapters of this dissertation: Ocampo's "The Photographs" and Lispector's "Happy Birthday," Ocampo's "Sarandí Street" and Lispector's "Mystery in São Cristóvão" ("Preciousness" also fits into this pairing, as this Introduction indicates), and Ocampo's "Icera" and Lispector's "The Smallest Woman in the World." All of these stories belong to *Forgotten Journey* and *Family Ties*, with the exception of "The Photographs" and "Icera," from Ocampo's *The Fury* (1959) and *The Guests* (1961), respectively, and a revised "Icera" also appears in *The Magic Orange*. These juxtapositions will be analyzed throughout the dissertation, building off one another across chapters and case studies. Most importantly, all of these pairings reflect their

authors' shared interest in rereading and rewriting a cross-cultural constellation of foundational girlhood stories, beginning with the Demeter-Persephone myth, moving toward folk and fairy tales, and culminating in works of nineteenth-century Anglophone children's literature. What's more, their rewritings reflect an interdisciplinary stance that expands the scope of their girlhood stories and grounds them in undeniable social contexts; their embodied fictions of girlhood incorporate Ocampo's involvement in modern art and Lispector's insight into the field of cultural anthropology. Throughout this dissertation, I have three major aims: to position Ocampo and Lispector as dialogic partners, to shed light on their joint writerly project to disrupt traditional literary portrayals and the accompanying social expectations of girlhood and adolescence, and to employ their representations of gendered violence experienced during girlhood as an ethical imperative to build a different and safer world for all genders and ages.

The pairings of Ocampo-Lispector stories introduced here are exemplary of a fundamental element of Ocampo and Lispector's writing: "the transformation of canonical texts through migratory reading acts," in Dominique Jullien's wording (2). For Ocampo and Lispector, certain works of children's literature—early fairy tales, literary fairy tales like Andersen's, and Victorian classics like *Alice in Wonderland*, *Peter Pan*, as well as Frances Hodgson Burnett's *The Secret Garden* and *A Little Princess*, which provide a more feminine perspective within the Anglophone children's literature canon—meet to form a focal point of what Jullien (2011) aptly defines as the benchmarks of foundational texts of world literature:

> Inherent to the notion of foundational texts is a certain relative stability, stemming from the idea that certain texts are more durable and fecund than others, due to their capacity to beget ever more readings, misreadings and rewritings. Foundational texts are foundational because they are in some

> sense common and central to more literatures, more writers, more readers, have spawned more derivatives, imitations, translations. (2)

The stability and durability of the folk-fairy tale, to begin, figures here, especially when Ocampo and Lispector are concerned with the universal experiences of girlhood (e.g. underestimation of the heroine, the looming threat of sexual violence, the complicated questions of kinship and daughterhood), to the extent that they exist, or perhaps systemic is the better characterization. In a chapter called "Folktale Liberation" from *Don't Tell the Grown-Ups: The Subversive Power of Children's Literature* (1990), Alison Lurie points to two feminist and subversive characteristics of early fairy tales that encompass the work of Ocampo and Lispector: firstly, not bowdlerizing material for young readers and secondly, focusing on *female initiative* within portrayals of family unity.

Lurie raises the connection between anthropological field work and folktale scholarship, a dynamic that marks Lispector's fairy tale rewritings in *Family Ties*, especially one of the collection's most famous and enduring stories: "The Smallest Woman in the World." (Ocampo's "The Photographs" is the closest she comes to explicitly engaging ethnography or anthropology, though her awareness of the discipline's major texts and teachings is certainly present in other indirect ways in her work on girlhood.) "Folktales recorded in the field are full of everything the Victorian editors left out: sex, death, low humor, and especially female initiative," Lurie tells us (21). Ocampo, we know from her editorial work on a volume of children's stories, preferred fairy tales with agentive heroines, including Afanasyev's "Vasilisa the Beautiful" in the Russian tradition and Madame D'Aulnoy's "The White Cat" from the French, and thus, along with Lispector, rejects the bowdlerized tales in the Anglophone tradition that Lurie describes.

> The stories we know best today reflect the taste of the literary men who edited the first popular collections of fairy stories for children during the nineteenth century. They read the hundreds of folktales that had been gathered by scholars, chose the ones that most appealed to them as conventional upper-middle-class Victorians, and then rewrote these tales to make them suitable for Victorian children. (Lurie 20-21)

Ocampo and Lispector will offer their own takes on the conventions of folk and fairy tales, including double discourse as it engages readerships of varying ages and, for Lispector, the construction of the family across lines of age and gender.

Following Ocampo and Lispector's merging of genres, languages, and disciplines, an analysis of their work benefits from scholarly insights from diverse fields and traditions, including childhood studies, children's literature research, and crosstextuality. Contemporary research on children's literature and childhood studies (Rose 1984; Coe 1984; Steedman 1995; Lurie 1998; Dusinberre 1999; Orellana 2009; Bernstein 2013; Konstantoni and Emejulu 2017, Weld 2020) offers insight into the duality of childhood and adulthood that characterizes Ocampo and Lispector's early fictions as they move beyond a thematic treatment of childhood and coming of age. As stated above, a study of Ocampo and Lispector's work demands an amplified context that includes their writing for children and thus clarifies their uses of the figure of the child and complex perspectives on childhood and adolescence. Weld (2020) terms this mutually informative process *crosstextuality* and demonstrates "the value of disregarding an audience-defined boundary in an author's literary production." She argues:

> Children's literature should be taken seriously not only for its own sake. Children's literature can and should illuminate our understanding of literature for adults, while literature for adults can and should illuminate our understanding of children's literature. Failure to recognize this mutualism risks doing a disservice to both, as well as to the material.

Weld's definition enables us to consider Ocampo and Lispector's collected works unpartitioned, and from multiple vantage points. I will not only consider the intertextuality of Ocampo and Lispector's works, but also the *crosstextuality* that encompasses each of their oeuvres, which necessitate an inclusive approach. I view the so-called difficult elements of their writing as extensions of their play with child and adult themes, as well as child and adult language, which could not be analyzed comprehensively without first attending to their writings for children, which will be undertaken predominantly in Chapter One of this dissertation.

Jacqueline S. Rose's piece, "The Case of Peter Pan: The Impossibility of Children's Fiction," (1984) is a landmark in contemporary research on childhood studies and children's literature, and one that informs this dissertation's engagement with liminality. Rose writes of an unbridgeable gap—a space in-between—that she perceives between adults and children and thus adult writers and child readers of children's fiction.

> Children's fiction is impossible, not in the sense that it cannot be written (that would be nonsense), but in that it hangs on an impossibility, one which it rarely ventures to speak. This is the impossible relation between adult and child. Children's fiction is clearly about that relation, but it has the remarkable characteristic of being about something which it hardly ever talks of. Children's fiction sets up a world in which the adult comes first (author, maker, giver) and the child comes after (reader, product, receiver), but where neither of them enter *the space in between*." (58, emphasis added)

Rose's argues that children's fiction expresses the drives of its adult authors, notably Barrie and Carroll in her treatment of this issue, and that there are, in fact, no authentic representations of childhood in their works raises important ethical concerns that will figure into my readings of Ocampo and Lispector's stories, and the power dynamics at play in them. Reading Rose's argument, however, I cannot help but think of Lispector's ideal

girl reader, active and agential (see page 12 of this Introduction), and left out of Rose's definition of children's passive consumption of fiction written by adults.

In this dissertation, I argue that the space in-between childhood and adulthood, authorship and readership, and children's literature and adult literature, is neither fixed nor impenetrable. It is a productive space, not only for examining the ethics of writing for children, Rose's primary undertaking and one we will find is ultimately shared by Ocampo and Lispector, but also for re-envisioning the child's agency in the creative process and in the social world. In the work of authors like Ocampo and Lispector, for whom the child is an active, respected agent, the space in-between adulthood and childhood is ever-evolving, a state most clearly manifest in but not exclusive to adolescence or coming of age, that "zone of impetuous transition," to use Gloria Anzaldúa's befitting description of what twentieth-century structural anthropologists van Gennep and Turner identify as the liminal or threshold stage, itself informed by the initiate's experience during the Eleusinian Mysteries and the rites of Demeter (28). Turner, writing in 1960, the year *Family Ties* was published, writes that those on the threshold are "neither here nor there; they are betwixt and between" (95). While Ocampo and Lispector would have been aware of van Gennep's work during the writing of their debut story collections, and their representations of ritual can accordingly be read as a response to *Les rites de passage*, I will include discussion of scholars that have revisited and contested his foundational text in ways that resonate with *Forgotten Journey* and *Family Ties*. The space in-between, we will find, while discounted by Rose, becomes fertile ground when analyzing these texts alongside Ocampo and Lispector's writings for children.

Robin Bernstein's 2011 piece "Childhood as Performance" responds to Rose's partitioning of childhood and adulthood, defining childhood as co-constituted by both children and adults, and informs both this dissertation's focus on crosstextuality and its larger aim of uncovering the relationship between literary portrayals of childhood and childhood itself during Ocampo and Lispector's lifetimes.

> Childhood is best understood as a legible pattern of behaviors that comes into being through bodies of all ages. The process of constructing childhood, of imagining childhood into being, occurs not only in literary and visual texts but in collaborative performances, the bodily practices, of people of all ages. (204)

Bernstein's claim regarding the co-constitution of childhood and adulthood echoes Turner's discussion of the dialectic of the developmental cycle (1960) and Schechner's work on ritual-as-performance (1985), both of which build on van Gennep's initial theorization. Turner writes:

> From all this I infer that, for individuals and groups, social life is a type of dialectical process that involves successive experience of high and low, communitas and structure, homogeneity and differentiation, equality and inequality. The passage from lower to higher status is through a limbo of statuslessness. In such a process, the opposites, as it were, constitute one another and are mutually indispensable. Furthermore, since any concrete tribal society is made up of multiple personae, groups, and categories, each of which has its own developmental cycle, at a given moment many incumbencies of fixed positions coexist with many passages between positions. (97)

Turner rightly acknowledges the varied ways rites of passage take different shapes depending on an initiate's individual circumstances. Ocampo and Lispector's fictions show us how the feminine developmental cycle is shaped and altered by patriarchy—and the particular dangers of the "statuslessness" experienced during the passage from childhood to adulthood for young and adolescent girls.

*Forgotten Journey* and *Family Ties* offer a glimpse into the lives of young girls in particular—and how childhood was imagined and performed across lines of gender, sexuality, class, race, and geography in early and mid-twentieth-century Latin America. Within Robin Bernstein's paradigmatic childhood-as-performance framework, we can see the stories engaging a complex social construction of girlhood that has significant political ramifications. In "Toward Political Agency for Girls: Mapping the Discourses of Girlhood Globally," Jackie Kirk, Claudia Mitchell, and Jacqueline Reid-Walsh (2010) show how literary representations of girlhood can be an indicator of girls' well-being within specific cultures and times. Their language powerfully echoes Bernstein's:

> There are a variety of ways that different cultures at different times make meaning out of girls' bodies (especially their sexual and biological development), there are many different ways that girls have responded as agents to international and transnational developments… and there are many different ways that girls' well-being is correlated with national and international choices regarding girls' education, health, and welfare. (15-6)

These meaning making processes are scrutinized by Ocampo and Lispector in the strongest and most memorable stories included in *Forgotten Journey* and *Family Ties*, collections that were ahead of their time in reckoning with the silencing of abuses against young and adolescent girls, bodily and otherwise, especially as reified in previous literary texts, offering a very different version of girlhood and demanding a social and political acknowledgment of it.

It is important to note that both Ocampo and Lispector embodied what might be called insider-outsider positionalities as women in twentieth-century Argentina and Brazil, respectively. Villares (2011) insightfully reads Lispector's work through anthropologist Valentina Napolitano's concept of *prisms of belonging*, a concept that is useful for readings of Ocampo's work as well (9). Villares (2011) argues that:

> Lispector's protagonists engage in introspective explorations—and therefore disconnect from the outside world, disrupting action and the linearity of the plot—because they need constantly to rebuild their subjectivities at the *interface between a multitude of external factors with which they have to negotiate in their continued attempt to survive and belong.* One could argue that since Lispector came to Brazil when she was very young she therefore always belonged. But the fact of coming from an immigrant family leaves its long-term marks even on the children born after arrival in the host country. (9, emphasis added)

The window into the lives of young girls offered in *Forgotten Journey* and *Family Ties* is profoundly shaped by Ocampo and Lispector's privileged positions as white women, and also by Ocampo's bisexuality, Lispector's immigrant roots, and both of their early experiences of childhood trauma;[17] in other words, Ocampo and Lispector's complex positionalities inform their investigations into childhood and belonging. Orellana (2009) comments that as constructions of childhood shift, "the juxtapositions of diverse forms of childhood make clear that changes are not homogenous and unifying; childhood experiences are not undergoing transformation in the same way for all children" (Orellana 18). While both Ocampo and Lispector make plain that changes in conceptions of childhood, and coming of age more precisely, do not affect boys and girls equally, Lispector additionally, we will see in Chapter Three of this dissertation, mentions migration in relation to gender, and girlhood in relation to citizenship. Orellana discusses how immigrant childhoods are especially apt in clarifying childhood as socially constructed and performed.

> Similar to historical research, studies of children's experiences in varied cultural contexts have illuminated the socially constructed nature of childhoods, and challenged presumptions of normative child development in the West. Immigrant childhoods are particularly useful for illuminating

[17] Ocampo's childhood was marked by the trauma of the death of her sister Clara, Lispector's by its tragic connections to anti-Semitism.

> the socially constructed nature of childhoods because changes are often hastened through families' movement across cultural and geopolitical borders. (Orellana 17)

Childhood studies, especially when united with related fields like migration studies and intersectionality studies, can illuminate Lispector's acute awareness of her characters' bodies in their surrounding worlds.

In my acknowledgment of the complexity of their writerly points of view, I will take an intersectional approach, which as scholars have noted (Orellana 2009; Konstantoni and Emejulu 2017) shares with childhood studies a critical view of identity, power, and oppression. As Konstantoni and Emejulu write:

> Even though childhood studies has a key concern with age as a social category, there are many different childhoods and 'childhood' is not a universal and homogenous experience. Childhoods are constituted by the particular dynamics of gender, race, disability, sexuality, class and geography. Perhaps intersectionality and childhood studies are closer than might first appear. If the starting point of understanding childhood is not necessarily a homogenous and universalising notion of 'age' but, rather, 'difference,' this creates a powerful link between intersectionality and childhood studies. (11)

Rather than presenting Ocampo and Lispector's constructions of girlhood as representative of all Latin American girlhoods, I will be mindful of both the depth and limitations of their points of view, and of their simultaneously marginalized yet privileged positions that permeate their texts. As a result, I read *Forgotten Journey* and *Family Ties* as pieces of a larger puzzle, and as steps toward more ethical, aware, and expansive global literature of girlhood.

This study contributes to the international, interdisciplinary, and ever-evolving field of girlhood studies. It is inspired by Kirk, Mitchell, and Reid-Walsh's "ongoing task" since 1998: "mapping girls in a global context [and encouraging] critical perspectives that

examine the interplay of age, cultural context, sex, and gender so that issues of the cultural construction of girlhoods are at the center of inquiry" (Kirk, Mitchell, and Reid-Walsh 26-7). Their articulation of the nature of girlhood globally as "complex, transitory, shifting, and contradictory" aligns with Ocampo and Lispector's fictions, and with my aims in reading them together, through the lens of their authors' dynamic interplay (Kirk, Mitchell, and Reid-Walsh 26). A key component of this interplay is the question of girls' agency and the exclusion of girls' voices and stories that could ultimately change laws and policies.

> For many years, women's movements have fought—and continue to fight—for widespread recognition of women's agency. They have insisted that women's voices be heard and respected in decisions affecting them, that they have the right to participate in policy development at all levels… In more recent years, young women activists, individuals, and organizations… have, in many different domains, called for girls' voices to be heard in public policy development processes. Critical as well is the recovery of girls' voices within the historical record. (24)

As literary texts, the analogous narrative voice of *Forgotten Journey* and *Family Ties* critiques the historical silencing of girls' testimonies. Elsewhere Kirk, Mitchell, and Reid-Walsh specifically mention sexual trauma and violence: "we are thinking of girls' sexuality, of the fact that, worldwide, girls are more likely to be sexually abused … How do we ensure the full participation of girls in talking about what has happened to them or about what might happen to them?" (20). A revealing element of Ocampo and Lispector's stories about girlhood trauma, as this dissertation uncovers, involves telling silences, repressed memories, and events that are disassociated into the stories themselves, representing barriers to this "full participation" that still need to be collapsed.

**Overview of the Dissertation**

*Chapter One: "Stories for Children Young and Old": The All-Ages Literature of Silvina Ocampo and Clarice Lispector*

The first chapter introduces pairings of Ocampo-Lispector stories that, on both thematic and linguistic levels, are uncannily similar as examples of hybrid, all-ages literature, a term translated from the Norwegian *allålderslitteratur* (see AnnaKarin Kriström 2006) that dismantles the audience-based binary of writing "for adults" and writing "for children." That both Ocampo and Lispector mined the same source material for children's stories and for adult stories is highly unusual and necessitates not only an intertextual approach that shows the authors in dialogue with one another but also a *crosstextual* approach (Weld 2020) in order to fully understand their diverse representations of the figure of the child. Accordingly, this chapter places Ocampo and Lispector's fictions in dialogue with the contemporary childhood studies canon (Rose 1984; Coe 1984; Steedman 1995; Lurie 1998; Dusinberre 1999; Orellana 2009; Bernstein 2013; Konstantoni and Emejulu 2017; Weld 2020) and shows the duality of childhood and adulthood in their work. This chapter specifically applies intersectional, childhood studies, world literature approaches to the mid-century Latin American context, resulting in a fuller picture of two avant-garde women writers who have been, in a manner of speaking, frozen in time and within certain genres and expectations.

*Chapter Two: Silvina Ocampo's Feminine Doubles: A Study of* Forgotten Journey*'s Girlhood Stories*

The second chapter examines Ocampo's innovations of the fantastic, children's, and Bildungsroman genres via the figure of the feminine double in *Forgotten Journey*, in

order to spotlight the vulnerability of the young girl in twentieth-century Argentina. We will see how Ocampo took back and repurposed the fantastic genre, in which feminine characters are so often reduced to narrative symbols, and used it to show the very real effects on girls and women of living under a patriarchal system. Her generic innovations spring from the lineage she writes herself into, with a focus on Hans Christian Andersen's "The Little Sea-Maid" and Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland.* In Ocampo's stories, formative memories from girlhood function as memories of birth or rebirth—a symbolic, ritual birth into the new existence of adolescence or womanhood. Ocampo invented a new narrative voice for the coming-of-age story to reflect a distinctly feminine temporality. The absolute entanglement of childhood and adulthood, we will see, consistently informs the originality of Ocampo's narrative voice—and her innovations of the fantastic genre via the rewriting of children's literature.

*Chapter Three: The Mysteries of Girlhood in Clarice Lispector's Fictions: A Study of the Rite of Passage in* Family Ties

The third chapter analyzes Lispector's use of the anthropological construct of the rite of passage in *Family Ties* to demonstrate the systemic nature of sexual violence against girls and women. Lispector's engagement with the Eleusinian Mysteries, itself foundational to twentieth-century ritual theory, is integral to her depiction of feminine coming of age. The transitional moments Lispector portrays represent a regression into a less empowered state of existence than that of the agential and untraumatized young girl. That the characters in *Family Ties* strive to protect their girlhoods illuminates the fear of what awaits them at the end of the threshold stage. Ultimately, Lispector questions the very notion of "coming of age." Initiation, for women, is a coming of age in reverse, an

unbecoming of age, an anti-coming of age. Ultimately, she exposes the need for a new model that doesn't "devour" its participants, to use the phrasing from her story "The Smallest Woman in the World."

**A Note on the Role of Translation, Gender, and the Translator's Positionality**

Throughout the dissertation I include reflections on the immense role translators play in speaking into being Ocampo and Lispector's activist depictions of girlhood. In these reflections I am inspired by translator-translation theorists like Ana Castillo and Emily Wilson. As discussed in this Introduction, *Forgotten Journey* and *Family Ties* contain layered narratives; in some stories, there exists an encoded narrative for the elect, to use the language of the Eleusinian Mysteries. Translation and criticism can give voice to the unspoken stories that are written between the lines—those that tackle issues that are deeply relevant today. At moments this chapter compares the various translations into English of *Family Ties* and includes reflections on my own process as co-translator of *Forgotten Journey* to see what is tellingly missed or misunderstood in certain translations, and what is recovered—and thus spoken into being—in others.

## Chapter One

## "Stories for Children Young and Old": The All-Ages Literature of Silvina Ocampo and Clarice Lispector

I have thought of you often if not always, not only because I like swings, spinning tops, carousels, and the circus (things you'll like forever), but also because the world of expression and imagination is yours, and without it literature wouldn't exist. Perhaps the most concise and vivid sentences I have ever heard have come from your lips. I know you because I know those who resemble you most. I can't imagine a world where your opinions, sensibilities, and tastes are excluded, for that would be a world without poetry. The games you play are not so different from the best stories ever written—in them reality is modified, transformed, recreated.

– Silvina Ocampo[18]

### The Space In-Between: Liminality, Gender, and Genre

In her germinal yet controversial 1984 piece on what she calls "the impossibility of children's fiction," Jacqueline S. Rose writes of an unbridgeable gap between adult writers and child readers. "Children's fiction," she claims, "sets up a world in which the adult comes first (author, maker, giver) and the child comes after (reader, product, receiver), but where neither of them enter the space in between" (58). Rose's characterization, though of

[18] "He pensado frecuentemente, casi siempre, en ti, no sólo porque me gustan las hamacas, los trompos, las calesitas, los circos, estas cosas que te gustarán siempre, sino porque el mundo de la expresión y de la imaginación es tuyo y sin él no existiría la literatura. Las frases más concisas y pintorescas que he oído, tal vez las haya oído de tus labios. Te conozco porque conozco a tus semejantes. No podría imaginar un mundo donde estuvieran excluidas tus opiniones, tu sensibilidad, tus gustos, pues sería un mundo sin poesía. Tus juegos no son muy distintos a los mejores cuentos; es decir, son una modificación, una transformación, una recreación de la realidad" (*El dibujo del tiempo: Recuerdos, prólogos, entrevistas* 86).

All translations are mine unless otherwise noted. I will include the original Spanish and Portuguese in footnotes, as done here.

great value to discussions of the ethics involved in writing for children, rests on a rather traditional definition of the genre, rooted in dismissing the child's agency, as well as a rather traditional definition of active author and passive reader. Rose does not account for hybrid genres, forms, and audiences, for instance a concept that was coined in Norway around 1986 as *allalderslitteratur* (all-ages-literature) and is known in the Spanish-speaking world as *libros para todas las edades*, or books for all ages (Beckett in Nel and Paul, eds. 61). The existence of such hybrid forms is itself a testament to what Robin Bernstein (2013) in "Childhood as Performance," which is in part a response to Rose, characterizes as the co-constitution of childhood and adulthood, and what Dusinberre (1999: 1) calls the interaction of writing for children and writing for adults. What Rose identifies as the fixed, impenetrable "space in between" adulthood and childhood is in fact fluid and fluctuating, a state most clearly manifest in but not exclusive to adolescence or coming of age, that "zone of impetuous transition," to use Gloria Anzaldúa's befitting description of what twentieth-century structural anthropologists Turner and van Gennep identify as the liminal or threshold stage, itself informed by the initiate's experience during the Eleusinian Mysteries and related ancient Greek rites (28). The space in-between, while discounted by Rose, becomes fertile ground when analyzing the work of authors for whom the child is an active, respected agent. This is the case for the Argentine author Silvina Ocampo (1903-1993) and the Brazilian author Clarice Lispector (1920-1977), two writers whose debut stories in particular display a shared renewal of the Bildungsroman and fantastic genres, via the theme of childhood and an all-ages model, that hasn't yet been analyzed in detail.

Though scholars have attended to their writings for adults, Ocampo and Lispector's writings for children, which include short stories, picturebooks of varying and hybrid formats, and in Ocampo's case poetry, drama, and a novella, have remained relatively neglected. Incorporating Ocampo and Lispector's children's books as worthy of attention and as a way of shedding light on their stories for adults, and vice versa, illuminates the elements of their writing that have, paradoxically, been seen as the most mystifying or opaque. These difficult elements are both formal and thematic, ranging from the use of an unorthodox and unrestrained narrative voice that can shift abruptly from third person to first person, to explorations of gender- and age-based trauma and violence. Neither of these elements could not be convincingly called "childish" but still very much benefit from an amplified context that includes their writing for children and thus clarifies their complex perspectives on childhood. Weld's definition of *crosstextuality* (2020) enables us to consider a writer's collected works unpartitioned, and from multiple vantage points. I will not only consider the intertextuality of Ocampo and Lispector's works, but also the *crosstextuality* that encompasses each of their oeuvres, which demand an inclusive approach. I view the so-called difficult elements of their writing as extensions of their play with child and adult themes, as well as child and adult language, which could not be analyzed comprehensively without first attending to their writings for children.

Another murky element that benefits from an analysis of childhood in their works is their use of the fantastic. Also generic in nature, this question may be posed as: where do Ocampo and Lispector belong on the Todorovian spectrum (1970) of fantastic fiction? This question, we will see, is similarly wrapped up in the question of perspective and the figure of the child in Ocampo and Lispector's works. Lauded Lispector translator Katrina

Dodson[19] perceptively notes that Lispector's surrealism is "sly" rather than staunch, "[*veering*] into the absurdist or fantastical" but refusing to linger long enough to be pinned down as uncanny or marvelous (633, emphasis added). Dodson's description extends to Ocampo's brand of the fantastic, which hinges on intense moments that seem to belong to the realm of fantasy or magic but are in fact filtered through what is real for children, and young girls in particular. In my discussion of Ocampo and Lispector's genre-bending fictions, I concentrate on the question of age but also enter an isolated but integral piece of the scholarly debate surrounding the fantastic: Sigmund Freud's response, in his foundational essay "The Uncanny" (1919), to Enrst Jentsch's "On the Psychology of the Uncanny" (1906). Freud begins his analysis by disavowing Jentsch's centering of the breakdown of the barrier between the animate and inanimate that is, for Jentsch, both natural in children and the origin of uncanny feelings.

Freud uses Jentsch's "On the Psychology of the Uncanny" as a point of departure for his own divergent theorizing of the phenomenon, which shares core concerns with Bennett's *Vibrant Matter* (2010). He quotes Jentsch's pinpointing of animism (and its inverse) as a uniquely potent and universal circumstance that gives rise to the uncanny: "namely, doubt as to whether an apparently living being is animate and, conversely, doubt as to whether a lifeless object may not in fact be animate" (Jentsch 11; Jentsch in Freud 135). Freud then rejects Jentsch's reading of E. T. A. Hoffmann's "The Sand-man," which focuses on dolls as exemplary of his definition of the uncanny: "Uncertainty as to whether

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[19] Though I reference previous translations of *Family Ties* as well as other translations of Ocampo's work, here I use Dodson's spectacular translations of Lispector's *Family Ties* from the *Complete Stories* (New Directions 2015), as well as my own translation with Suzanne Jill Levine of Ocampo's *Forgotten Journey* (City Lights Books 2019).

an object is animate or inanimate, which we are bound to acknowledge in the case of the doll Olimpia, is quite irrelevant," Freud writes (138-9). Yet Ocampo and Lispector's incorporation of fantastic techniques demands a return to Jentsch's initial focus on animism and children's magical thinking, especially as it engages the overlap between children's literature and fantastic literature. Jentsch argues that the uncanny can "easily be observed in children: the child has had so little experience that simple things can be inexplicable for him and even slightly complicated situations can represent dark secrets" (9). *Forgotten Journey* and *Family Ties* bring the dark secrets of girlhood to life and to light, and their fantastic moments hinge on animate and inanimate worlds collapsing into one another. What's more, neither Ocampo nor Lispector present the knowledge of children as less-than that of adults, instead showing the ways in which their perception of the world—and the language they use to describe it—is distinct but, to use the words of developmental psychologist Alison Gopnik, "equally complex and powerful" (2009: 9). It is important to note that Freud also dwells on Otto Rank's related notion of the double in his discussion of the uncanny, "the appearance of persons who have to be regarded as identical because they look alike," in his phrasing, which will figure in Chapter Two of this dissertation (141). Ocampo in particular offers her own take on the double motif within the fantastic genre that is similarly grounded in rewriting children's literature tropes, the perceptions of childhood, and the overlapping identities of girls and women.

Ocampo and Lispector's mid-twentieth-century fictions take place in the space in-between fantasy and realism, children's and adult fiction, girlhood and womanhood, modernist and contemporary representations of gender, and Anglophone and Latin American literary traditions. Their stories bear witness to the child as co-creator, either via

the child's input at various stages of the creative process—which we'll see in this chapter in a pair of strikingly similar stories, Ocampo's "The Golden Hare" and Lispector's "The Mystery of the Thinking Rabbit"—or the presence of each author's pseudoautobiography in their early works, evidencing the authors in dialogue with their child and adolescent selves or personae, in the manner of a subgenre of autobiography that Coe (1984) calls *the Childhood*. Many of their stories might be termed the childhood fantastic or the fantastic childhood, and their multi-genre take on the fantastic aligns with that of Tobin Siebers (1984), who examines the confluence of Romanticism and the fantastic. Seibers argues that the fantastic can indeed be subtler more fluid than Todorov's model suggests and, like pivotal theorist Irène Bessière (1974) before him, demonstrates that its narrative mode need not be divorced or distanced from social realities. Ocampo and Lispector's layered stories reflect the dual consciousness of the young girl, and point to each author's awareness of the performance of gender, age, and class in their surrounding social contexts, which grounds their narratives as they dip into the fantastic realm but maintain footing in the everyday.

**Ocampo the Anthologist and the Childhood Fantastic**

Historically, Silvina Ocampo has been recognized for co-editing with Jorge Luis Borges and Adolfo Bioy Casares *La antología de literatura fantástica* (1940). The reception of her own fiction—and the critical language used to categorize it—has long been entwined in that volume whose origin story has fascinated many, including Ursula K. Le Guin (2004), who wrote about the implications of "the making of such a book by such makers" (42). In one respect it can be read, in Le Guin's words, as a "notebook of [the]

sources and affiliations and elective affinities" of its editors, and as a compendium of fantastic tales it is famously eclectic (42). In its pages, Le Guin tells us, "perhaps for the first time, horror story and ghost story and fairy tale and science fiction all came together between the same covers" (42).[20] Scholars and readers have long pondered which editor selected each tale. The editors themselves are all included, and Ocampo is one of only four women writers represented in the anthology of eighty-five tales, including Delia Ingenieros, Elena Garro, and May Sinclair. The volume successfully illuminates Borges' "company of fantasists" (Le Guin 42) and even the selected fairy tales, a foundational genre for Ocampo, belong to Borges' repertoire (e.g. "The Blind Beggar of Baghdad" from *The Thousand and One Nights*). Ocampo had editorial plans of her own, though, that I argue are just as vital, if not more so, in locating her particular source texts, affiliations, and affinities. During those landmark years for the then-marginal genre of the fantastic following the publication of the anthology, Ocampo was individually planning another literary resurgence, this time for an even further marginalized genre, that received significantly less attention.

In 1950, Ocampo worked on a proposal for a series of children's books, which I read as notebooks of her personal influences (*El dibujo del tiempo* 240). From October to December that year she presented the proposal to Carlos Frías, then an editor at the Argentine publishing house Emecé Editores (he was also Borges' editor there). The idea, as summarized by the curator of Ocampo's estate, Ernesto Montequin, was to compile

[20] The anthology was translated into English in 1988 under the bizarre but perhaps more marketable title *The Book of Fantasy*, which seems to be based on the false equivalence of fantasy with the fantastic. At that time, Borges added tales to the volume and Le Guin wrote an Introduction.

several anthologies of classic children's stories, grouped by theme, and the books would be, in an especially avant-garde maneuver, illustrated by children themselves. The project, which would have promoted children's art and co-authorship, unfortunately never came to fruition, but Ocampo's prologue and tables of contents for some of the proposed volumes survive in her archive in Buenos Aires.[21] Ocampo's proposed collections—*Animal Tales*, *Christmas Stories*, *Fairy Tales*, *Oriental Tales*, and *Snowy Stories*—include both the genre's usual suspects (Hans Christian Andersen, whose sensitive young girl protagonists are a touchstone for Ocampo, and Rudyard Kipling, who bridges the genres of children's fiction and fantastic literature) and tales translated from Arabic, Chinese, Farsi, French, Hindi, Japanese, Russian, and Turkish, showing the reach of her world as a reader. The series affirms Ocampo's view and use of children's literature as *the* world literature in many ways, in its universal bent and longevity across borders. For Ocampo, it's clear that children's literature, as well as the literature of girlhood, which will be discussed in detail later in this chapter, fulfills the criteria that Dominique Jullien enumerates in her 2011 definition of the *foundational* texts of world literature, cited in the Introduction. What's more, it is Ocampo's elected "company," to return to Le Guin's term, of children's literature authors that sets her apart from the trio that so determined her initial critical reception.

There's some, though not a lot, of overlap between Ocampo's proposed anthologies and the famous anthology of fantastic literature, and a side-by-side study of the two

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[21] The prologue (86-88) and lists of titles (including the contents of *Cuentos de Oriente, Cuentos de Navidad, Cuentos de la nieve, Cuentos de hadas y genios, Cuentos de animales*, 378-80), as well as a summary of her plans for the series, were included in a recent volume of Ocampo's unpublished work, *El dibujo del tiempo*, edited by Montequin (2014).

volumes hints at which stories in the anthology were of Ocampo's choosing. The story that opens the anthology of fantastic literature, for example, "Sennin" by Japanese writer Ryunosuke Agutagawa, was meant to close *Oriental Tales*, and Rudyard Kipling appears in both. Though it's certainly not a stretch to imagine Ocampo selecting Lewis Carroll's "The Red King's Dream" from *Through the Looking Glass* for the fantastic anthology, it's significantly more likely that Borges was that tale's champion, especially given his use of the fragment as an epigraph to his famous story "The Circular Ruins." Both Borges' and Carroll's tales are themselves spins on Chuang Tzu's "The Butterfly Dream," another Borges favorite that appears in the anthology. Ocampo and Borges were certainly united in their love for Carroll and also for Virginia Woolf, whose works are haunted by childhood and who wrote at least one children's book in her lifetime. As it happens, one could organically extend Dusinberre's title *Alice to the Lighthouse: Children's Books and Radical Experiments in Art*, her study on Carroll's indefatigable influence on Woolf and other modernist writers to: *Alice to the Lighthouse to Sur*, the name of the literary journal and surrounding group of writers to which Ocampo, Borges, and Bioy Casares belonged and that, with Ocampo's prodigiously well-connected older sister Victoria at the helm, became the locus of the avant-garde in twentieth-century Argentina (see King 1986; Calomarde 2004). Enriquez (2018) has detailed the complex relationship between the Ocampo sisters, and one element feels especially relevant here: within the literary politics of *Sur*, Silvina's fictions, especially *Forgotten Journey*, did not fully embrace any of the

institution's presiding trends. Enriquez quotes Judith Podlubne: "[Silvina's] singularity left in suspense the dominant approaches in the journal" (Podlubne in Enriquez 43).[22]

Ocampo's editorial project, especially when analyzed alongside Borges' professed distaste for children's literature, is similarly singular and illuminates the authors' divergent uses of *Alice in Wonderland* and other world children's classics. Contemporary Argentine novelist César Aira (2001) surmises that it was not in fact children's literature that Borges detested, but rather the unfortunate reality that the publishing industry had given rise to the commercialization and bowdlerization of many of Borges' favorite tales. Aira begins by stating that "Borges' aversion to children's literature was widely known,"[23] and goes on to denounce the damaging and artificial commercial division between children's literature and adult literature. Despite Borges' lack of child characters or apparent concern for childhood in his fictions (see Mackintosh 2003), he clearly admired and drew on classical authors of children's literature like Carroll and Robert Louis Stevenson. Stevenson's fictions, which can be categorized as "crossover classics" (Beckett 2009: 4) in their eventual embrace by adult readers, were the subject of an anthology edited by Borges and Bioy Casares without Ocampo. Still, Fiona J. Mackintosh rightly comments that "Borges' attitude to childhood and to childhood games is more literary and cerebral than that of Ocampo," and that though he had an interest in children's literature he was not interested in "childhood per se" (98). Ocampo, on the other hand, revels in children's play in its varied forms, but especially as it encroaches on the realm of art and literature, engaging what

[22] "su singularidad dejó en suspenso los criterios dominantes en la revista."

[23] "Fue famosa la aversión de Borges por la literatura infantil."

Sutton-Smith (1997: 3) calls "the diversity of play forms and experiences." In her prologue to her proposed collection of children's books, an excerpt of which gives this chapter its epigraph, Ocampo argues that children's play is a necessary precedent to artistic play. "The games you play aren't so different from the best stories ever written," she reminds child readers. Ocampo's argument synthesizes two of Sutton-Smith's rhetorics of play: the rhetoric of play as progress, or the notion that play is integral to development, and the rhetoric of play as the imaginary, usually applied to writerly play or wordplay (9-11). Play informs Ocampo's distinct reading and prevailing use of *Alice in Wonderland*.

While Borges remains fascinated with Carroll's metaphysical questions and his practice of "authentic fantasy," as he called it,[24] when Ocampo draws on Carroll's tale, her interest lies in Alice as a young girl heroine: her body, her growth, her daughterhood, her voice, her agency, her experience of time, and, of course, the games she plays throughout the book (Alice's croquet matches will be analyzed in Chapter Two of this dissertation). Similarly, Andersen's fairy tales, which are not fantastic in nature and do not make an appearance in the fantastic anthology, abound in Ocampo's proposed series, appearing in nearly every volume, sometimes twice. It's interesting to note that Andersen, like Carroll, despite the adult, masculine stance of their narrators, writes many sensitive, young, feminine protagonists, from the little seamaid to the little match girl, and pays careful attention to their embodied girlhood experiences. (One moment for the little seamaid—when walking with her new legs feels like stepping on knives—is particularly striking in

[24] See *Jorge Luis Borges: Conversations* 162. Authentic fantasy, for Borges—and also for Bioy Casares—anticipates "to a surprising extent" Todorov's model, according to King (46). See also "Borges: Una teoría de la literatura fantástica" (1976) by Emir Rodríguez Monegal.

the way it evokes an experience emblematic of the transition from girlhood to womanhood, the sensation of wearing high heels, which Carroll also captures when Alice's legs stretch out in a sudden and disorienting growth spurt.) In *Forgotten Journey* Ocampo offers rereadings of Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland* and Andersen's *Fairy Tales Told for Children* that draw out and complicate their consideration of feminine embodiment, which will also be taken up in detail in Chapter Two.

Ocampo's prologue to her proposed collection orients the child reader while also articulating her views on the entangled worlds of childhood, children's literature, and world literature. She addresses the child directly, encouraging the child to play with the book as an object before reading its contents: "Place this book, half-open, resting on the edges of its hardcover  and you will see a miniature camping tent," she instructs. Ocampo intended to call the series *Las Carpas* (literally *Tents*), and she explains that "the symbol is quite apt: under the shelter of these pages you will be an explorer" (*El dibujo del tiempo* 88).[25] Her directions to take the book and turn it into something new—to take an active, playful role in reading—encapsulate the kind of skill and ease with shapeshifting needed to read her as an adult, while also pointing to the legacy of the folk-fairy tale's double discourse in her work. Furthermore, she hopes this reading-as-play will beget new generations of writers: "If one day you can write or read with the same consideration you bring to your games, you will be a great writer or reader, like the ones who wrote the stories

[25] "Coloca este libro, semiabierto, apoyado sobre el canto de frente  y verás una pequeña carpa… el símbolo es muy justo: al amparo de estas hojas serás un explorador."

that make up *Las Carpas*" (88).[26] Here, Ocampo draws a clear analogy between children's serious play and the imaginative activities and creativity of writers.

Like Borges, Ocampo places reading and writing on an equal plane, in a move that further challenges Rose's separation of the two acts as mutually exclusive processes. Her bold claim that literature wouldn't exist without the expressive and imaginative capabilities of children, as well as the pronounced visual aspect of the proposal, are very much in line with her artistic practices and values; she wrote for both children and adults throughout her career, and got her start as a painter. Her overt interest in childhood, child audiences, and writing for children, however unusual in the *Sur* crowd in Argentina, fits into a European modernist context beyond her immediate surroundings. What's more, her fixation on the figure of the child was a guiding force for her singular take on the fantastic, as we will see, and engages the canonical pieces that belong to the rich framework of contemporary critical childhood studies. In my readings of Ocampo's continued returns to childhood and childhood sensibilities, childhood becomes the font of her creativity.

That the child is a dialogic addressee in Ocampo's prologue—and that, had the series been published, *Las Carpas* would have displayed children's artwork in its pages, prominently exhibiting the child's creative contributions and making the child the equal of authors like Kipling and Andersen—is especially significant. Ocampo shared an impulse with Pablo Picasso (with whom she wanted to study as a young painter) and Joan Miró, both of whom are featured in her children's picturebook about a little girl who sneaks into an art museum at night, *El caballo alado* or *The Winged Horse* (1972), and both of whom,

[26] "Si algún día puedes escribir o leer con la aplicación que pones en tus juegos serás un gran escritor o lector como lo fueron los que escribieron estos cuentos que figuran en Las Carpas."

as demonstrated by Jonathan Fineberg in *The Innocent Eye: Children's Art and the Modern Artist* (1997), "observed [children] at work with rapt attention" (120). One sentence of Ocampo's prologue is particularly revealing in the way it speaks to the experience of children in both life and art, and also to Ocampo's own experience in the literary world: "I can't imagine a world where your opinions, sensibilities, and tastes are *excluded*, for that would be a world without poetry" (emphasis added). One of the primary narrative tensions in Ocampo's fiction derives from the very fact that children—especially young girls—have particular ways of being in the world that are misunderstood, discounted, and dismissed by adults, and very much excluded or erased from the world at large. Of course, Ocampo is speaking directly to children here, assuring them that their ideas are not only valid and valuable but also instrumental in the production of art, yet her statement also reads as though she were in dialogue with her own early writing and its exclusion from the canon during her lifetime. As critics have more recently noted (Ulla 1998; Henighan 2015; Enriquez 2018), within her oeuvre, Ocampo's first book of stories, *Forgotten Journey* (1937), is both intensely visual and especially interested in telling the stories of girlhood, with over half of the collection's twenty-eight stories featuring young girls and women as protagonists.

When asked by Argentine novelist Noemí Ulla if she began writing children's stories so her grandchildren could read them, Ocampo responded that she "always, always" felt compelled to write for children. She was insistent in her response, resisting pigeonholing (a critical impulse to which she was subject throughout her career) and the notion that a link to an actual child, rather than a theoretical or internal one, was the only avenue available to a woman writer in the production of children's literature. Her work, we

will find, also resists the notion that a link to an actual child is mutually exclusive from a link to an imagined or interior one. She locates the impulse to write for children in a memory from the space in-between girlhood and adulthood, what Lispector in one *Family Ties* story calls "nostalgia for the present," a girlhood sensation marked by the fear of growing up—a sensation that is wrapped up in, as both authors show, paralyzing fear of sexuality and sexual violation (*Complete Stories* 187).[27] Ocampo poignantly stated, "I could feel my childhood getting farther away… At the same time I was a girl I had the sensation that I would no longer be a girl, and it pained me" (*Encuentros* 72-3).[28] Though she has been typically known as a practitioner of the Borgesian fantastic, I argue that Ocampo's stories are much more fully and richly defined by the language, sensations, behaviors, and politics of childhood—and girlhood specifically; even her brand of the fantastic, what I have termed the childhood fantastic, which resists the objectification of girls and women in its breakdown of the barrier between the animate and the inanimate, can be encompassed by her abiding interest in writing—and in many cases, rewriting—a global literature of girlhood.

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[27] "Nostalgia do presente" (*Todos os contos* 210). The story in which this phrase appears, "Preciosidade" or "Preciousness," will be discussed in detail in Chapter Three.

[28] N. U.: "¿Did being close to your grandchildren Florencio and Victoria signal a change in your interests? I'm thinking of the children's stories that you wrote?" S. O.: "No, I've always liked [writing children's stories.] Always. Also, I could feel how my childhood was getting farther away, right? At the same time I was a girl, I had the sensation that I would no longer be a girl, and it pained me." ["¿La cercanía de tus nietos Florencio y Victoria te significó algún cambio de intereses? Estoy pensando en los cuentos infantiles que escribiste." "No, siempre me han gustado. Siempre. Además yo sentía como si mi infancia se fuera alejando, ¿no? Cuando yo era chica, tenía al mismo tiempo la sensación de que iba a dejar de ser chica, y me daba lástima."]

Ocampo's affirmation of the varied and overlapping avenues available to women writers of children's literature notwithstanding, actual children (though not necessarily her own) are shown to be creative partners in her stories. This is also the case for Lispector, however her children's stories are often, as we will see, apparently in dialogue with the children in her own family. Both Ocampo and Lispector offer their own take on the generic convention of artificial orality in the tradition of folk-fairy tales, which "were told to groups of all ages" (Beckett 2009: 4). Maria Tatar (2005) cites the frame tale in the work of Giambattista Basile and Charles Perrault as pivotal seventeenth-century examples in the European tradition that exhibit feminine storytellers and childhood audiences. She notes that the frame tale of Basile's *Pentamerone* defines the collection as composed of "those tales that old women tell to amuse children," and Perrault's 1697 *Tales of Mother Goose* is often cited as the earliest example of written tales that address both adults and children in the fairy tale canon (285). Both texts are marked by a tension resulting from their adult male scribes' engagement with both the feminine and the infantile. In both instances Tatar links the presence of the frame tale with the development of child audiences, and with the "historical juncture at which folktales, in particular fairy tales, transformed themselves from adult entertainment into children's literature" (285). In these early cases, those stories that, according to Sandra Beckett, belong to "the oldest and most universal forms of crossover literature," the frame tale positions the child as the original listener and emergent or potential audience member (2009: 4).

For Ocampo and Lispector, however, the presence of the child—and their resulting use of a frame tale that reconstructs a story's oral origins—goes beyond this maneuver toward authenticity and beyond the question of audience. Children are not merely present

as addressees, but also as co-creators; the child is not only present in the history or preliminary address of a text, but rather embedded in the text itself. In the following section I will examine Ocampo and Lispector's tales with folktale origins that go beyond crossover fiction and evidence an all-ages approach. While predominantly categorized as "for children," these stories transcend age-based categorization and, when analyzed alongside Ocampo and Lispector's debut story collections "for adults," illuminate elements of *Forgotten Journey* and *Family Ties* that may otherwise be missed.

## The Thinking Rabbit, the Golden Hare, and the Forgotten Goldfish: Ocampo and Lispector's Animal Tales for All Ages

While living in Washington D.C. in 1957, Lispector wrote the first story she published for children, "O mistério do coelho pensante," or "The Mystery of the Thinking Rabbit." It was not, however, as Brazil's foremost Lispector scholar Nádia Battella Gotlib clarifies in her magnificent biography *Clarice: Uma vida que se conta* (1995), the first piece she wrote for children. She wrote a "curious story, a *mise en abyme*," in a letter to her niece Márcia in 1946 about a boy who eats a pumpkin, and inside the pumpkin he discovers another smaller boy eating a smaller pumpkin, which continues recursively like Russian nesting dolls (285). This Carrollesque mixture of charm and philosophical rigor characterizes all of Lispector's writings for children, including "The Mystery of the Thinking Rabbit." Unlike Ocampo, she began writing the story—the tale of a pet rabbit's improbable escapes from his pen—at the request of the youngest of her two sons, according to Gotlib. Based on real events, she wanted to write something that would be familiar to

her children. Gotlib tells us that Lispector initially wrote the story in English,[29] and recounts that an editor from São Paulo asked if she wanted to write a children's book. She said no before suddenly remembering that she had written "The Mystery of the Thinking Rabbit," which only needed to be translated into Portuguese, a powerful instance of her work inhabiting the space in-between her multiple languages, and it ended up winning the prize for the year's best children's story (*Clarice: Uma vida que se conta* 286). It was (re)translated into English by Suzanne Jill Levine in 1973 and later published in *Fiction Magazine* in 2016. Though all of her children's books have been translated into and been through multiple editions in Spanish, it is, as of the writing of this dissertation,[30] one of only two of her children's stories to be translated into English. *A mulher que matou os peixes* or *The Woman Who Killed the Fish*, like "The Mystery of the Thinking Rabbit," was published in a journal that, like *Fiction Magazine*, has been dedicated to promoting Latin American literature in the United States since the boom. Earl E. Fitz, who along with Gregory Rabassa, Giovanni Pontiero, Elizabeth Bishop, and Elizabeth Lowe was one of Lispector's earliest translators into English,[31] translated *The Woman Who Killed the Fish*, which will be discussed in detail below, in 1982 for the *Latin American Literary Review*.

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[29] Auto-translation is another element of each writer's linguistic innovation, not only between languages but between the oral and the written. Ocampo, for example, recorded herself reading her own translation of *El caballo alado* in English, though it was published as a picturebook in Spanish (*Encuentros* 55).

[30] In June 2021, New Directions will release a collection of Lispector's children's stories under the title *The Woman Who Killed the Fish.*

[31] An early bibliography of Lispector's works in English translation, including those published in journals, appears in *Women's Fiction from Latin America: Selections from Twelve Contemporary Authors*, edited by Evelyn Picon Garfield (1988: 343).

When the story was published in Portuguese in 1967, Lispector included an introductory note that, like Ocampo's prologue to *Las Carpas*, offers a glimpse into her views on childhood, cross-generational storytelling, and literary interpretation. Signed C. L., it explains why she left empty space in the published book:

> I left all the spaces between lines for oral explanations. I hope fathers and mothers, uncles and aunts, and grandparents will pardon me for the contribution they will have to make. But at least I can guarantee, from my own experience, that the oral part of this story is the best. (Levine, trans. 61)[32]

The white spaces come to represent children's readerly agency and subversion: the space in-between authorship and readership that, like Ocampo's prologue, dismantles Rose's partitioning of the two states of being. C. L. continues, "The 'mystery' is more of an intimate conversation than a story. That's why it is longer than its apparent number of pages. To tell the truth, it only ends when the child solves other mysteries" (61-2).[33] Like Ocampo's books-turned-camping-tents, "The Mystery of the Thinking Rabbit" is not complete until in the child's—or rather, the intergenerational family's—hands. And not even then, since the act of interpreting the mystery is always new and changing. The story cannot be easily explained away, and the rabbit's escapes have no neat resolution except the one, or ones, imagined by the reader. While the story is intended for all ages, and all

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[32] "Deixei todas as entrelinhas para as explicações orais. Peço desculpas a pais e mães, tios e tias, e avós, pela contribuição forçada que serão obrigados a dar. Mas pelo menos posso garantir, por experiência própria, que a parte oral desta história é o melhor dela." I am using the 2013 picturebook version illustrated by Kammal João. The story has seen many editions with different formats in Portuguese.

[33] "Aliás, esse mistério é mais uma conversa íntima do que uma história. Daí ser muito mais extensa que o seu aparente número de páginas. Na verdade só acaba quando a criança descobre outros mistérios."

ages are involved and implicated in its creation and reading, the child is very much a primary and prioritized addressee. In this sense it is a potent reversal of Zohar Shavit's claim that the child is "pseudo-addressee" in a lot of children's literature (Shavit in Beckett 2009: 3). It is a story that's meant to accompany the child on the journey to solving the "other mysteries" of adolescence and adulthood, as a kind of gauge of growing up. In the meantime, it is the mother-narrator's voice that mediates.

The story itself is a scene of intergenerational storytelling—another kind of *mise en abyme*, like Lispector's first and unpublished children's story, but this time a more advanced and involved one, performed by a caregiver reading the story itself to a child, and by the child reading in an interpretative, writerly, and agential way. What's more, "The Mystery of the Thinking Rabbit" is seemingly written in Lispector's own voice, evidenced by the initialed introductory note and in the story's use of her son's real first name, Paulo. In fact, as Gotlib shows, children wrote Lispector letters with their own creative solutions to the mystery. That Lispector succeeded in initiating dialogue with real children is exceptional, and testament to the authenticity of her address to children and the efficacy of her all-ages methods. In addition, this dialogue is evidence of Bernstein's central claim of "the simultaneity and mutual constitution of children and childhood [and] the processes by which children and childhood give body to each other" (2013: 203). Lispector's story seamlessly fits into Bernstein's paradigm of the co-constitution of childhood, by giving children a decisive role in writing, reading, and "imagining childhood into being," both within the parameters of the literary text itself as well as outside of it, in the performance of the text's teachings (204).

Lispector's metafictional move—evidencing the story's origins in the story itself—highlights the child's creative contributions here; documenting the transition from oral to written also preoccupies Ocampo in "La liebre dorada," or "The Golden Hare," which, as previously mentioned, is a strikingly similar story to Lispector's "Thinking Rabbit." It belongs to a unique group of Ocampo tales that are doubles themselves and exist in two versions: one she wrote for an adult audience and one she wrote for children. First published for adults in 1959, it too has roots in the real, and is based on a scene Ocampo witnessed at the Bioy family's country house and that she then retold to a seven-year-old boy (*Encuentros* 68-9). The plot itself is simple but Carrollesque in its juxtaposition of the proper and the absurd, like the caucus race in *Alice in Wonderland*: a group of dogs chases a hare from the woods to a patio, where the race disrupts the late afternoon tranquility and decorum of a ladies' merienda.[34] The dogs in the story have masculine names (including one called "Señor" and two with the mythological name "Ayax," also the name of one of Ocampo's own dogs) while the hare is gendered as feminine. Like Lispector's rabbit, the hare escapes her captors via her capacity for human thought. She runs until the exhausted dogs fall asleep and places damp clover on their heads to gently wake them. She then mimics them, hiding in plain sight among her hunters before they give up and run away to rejoin their owners, a trick that saves her life. For Enriquez (2018), "The Golden Hare,"

[34] "The women set down their cups to watch the frantic race, which destroyed the tablecloth, the oranges, the clusters of grapes, the plums, the bottles of wine as it passed" (Rosenberg, trans.). In Ocampo's original 1959 version for adults: "Las señoras dejaron las tazas, para ver la carrera desenfrenada que a su paso arrasaba con el mantel, con las naranjas, con los racimos de uvas, con las ciruelas, con las botellas de vino" (*La furia* 8). In her 1977 version for children the sentence is almost identical, but the bottles of wine are replaced with cookies, cakes, and chocolates (*La naranja maravillosa* 118).

which she calls "intensely elegant and autobiographical," is "almost a fable, a Gobelin tapestry set in a countryside mansion" (77).[35] One could easily imagine the story as a tableaux: the scene is visually rich in detail, each player's role is specialized, and the action is swift and occurs, both spatially and temporally, on a single plane.

With the genders as they are, the story in both versions lends itself to an allegorical reading about the plight of the woman writer who hides in plain sight. The forked endings of Ocampo's animal tale, which share a core but are articulated differently, give additional weight to this allegorical reading. In Ocampo's subsequent version of "The Golden Hare" for children, the frame tale is removed and replaced with "Había una vez" or "Once upon a time," but the mystery of the hare remains firmly intact, or perhaps even more so. The version for adults ends after the dogs' owner calls them, shouting each of their names, and Ocampo distinguishes the animals by highlighting the hare's home in a wild, sublime setting, as opposed to the dogs' domestication: "God or something like God called to her, and the hare, perhaps revealing her immortality, fled in one bound" (Rosenberg, trans.).[36] The version for children, in simpler but paradoxically more ambiguous prose, reads: "No one called to her, because hares don't have names" (*La naranja maravillosa* 120).[37] The hare without a name alone in nature is much like the woman writer who goes unnamed or misnamed, left alone outside of the canon or miscategorized alongside her male

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[35] "el elegantísimo y autobiográfico 'La liebre dorada,' casi una fábula, una escena de gobelino en una mansión de campo."

[36] "Dios o algo parecido a Dios la llamaba, y la liebre acaso revelando su inmortalidad, de un salto huyó" (*La furia* 10).

[37] "Nadie la llamaba, porque las liebres no tienen nombres."

contemporaries. That the children's tale enriches this reading of "The Golden Hare" is itself ample evidence of the need for a *crosstextual* approach, to use Weld's term, in literary studies.

Ocampo's version for adults uses the same frame tale device as Lispector's children's story: an unnamed woman narrates the tale to a young boy whose voice, like that of Lispector's son, never appears on the page but who remains an integral player as a named (and that part is key, as discussed above), "nearby interlocutor," to use Nádia Battella Gotlib's apt phrase (*Clarice: Uma vida que se conta* 288). "This is not a children's story, Jacinto," Ocampo's narrator says after the dogs threaten to kill the hare, a line that gains traction, charm, and profundity in the version for children. With Ocampo's signature humor, the narrator adds that the animal tale was "perhaps influenced by Jorge Alberto Orellana, who is seven years old and always demanding stories from me, [thus] I quote the words of the dogs and the hare, which enchant him" (Rosenberg, trans.).[38] In a Borges story, passingly alluding to someone's full name as part of an apocryphal literary history would reference some forgotten intellectual. For Ocampo, it is an allusion to a real seven-year-old boy who inspires her tale for adults and children alike in which animals talk. An interesting gender reversal takes place here: for the male Carroll, his tale with talking animals is about a seven-year-old girl, based on the real Alice Liddell, and the effects of this are far reaching (Carroll 3). While the genesis of *Alice* is fraught and troubling as a result of the gendered dynamic and age difference between Carroll and the real Alice, one

[38] "Éste no es un cuento para niños, Jacinto; tal vez influida por Jorge Alberto Orellana, que tiene siete años y que siempre me reclama cuentos, cito las palabras de los perros y de la liebre, que lo seducen" (*La furia* 8).

of Rose's (1984) enduring insights, Ocampo's interactions with the real Jorge are not rife with the same suspicions. Beyond these origin stories, though, is the child on the page: for Ocampo, Jorge is a named presence and contributor as the story unfolds, not just appearing in the paratext as in Carroll's work and as is typical historically of folk-fairy tales like Basile's and Perrault's.

Behind the humor in "The Golden Hare" lies Ocampo's belief in taking children's creativity seriously, and in plainly exhibiting the influence of children—and children's literature—on adult fiction. In a 1975 interview with Argentine newspaper *La Nación*, Ocampo recalls having pleasant chats in the countryside with a boy named Jorge Orellana who, as in the story, asked her to tell him stories (*El dibujo del tiempo* 205). Perhaps this dynamic of the child as ideal reader and co-creator is what prompted Noemí Ulla to ask if Ocampo began writing children's stories as a grandmother rather than simply as a fiction writer. Present in both "The Mystery of the Thinking Rabbit" and "The Golden Hare" is a child demanding stories of a female caregiver, and while Ocampo eschewed such characterizations, maintaining that she was "always, always" interested in children's literature and writing for children, Lispector scholars have presented a different case. Gotlib concludes from the evolution of "Thinking Rabbit" that it was as a hybrid figure—a *mãe-escritora,* or mother-writer—that Lispector began writing children's stories (*Clarice: Uma vida que se conta* 287). Gotlib tells us that Lispector wrote her second story for children in a manner similar to the first, but the latter tale came into existence following an interaction with her other son, Pedro.

*A mulher que matou os peixes* or *The Woman Who Killed the Fish* was published in 1968 after she, consumed by writing, forgot to feed her eldest son's goldfish while he

was away on a trip. The fish starved to death, and though Lispector, in her telling, wrote the story as a compensatory act to assuage her guilt, it ultimately solidified her interest in writing for children, which she pursued until her death in 1977 (*Quase de verdade,* or *Almost Real,* was published posthumously, in 1978). In Lispector's remarks, she reflects on the origins of her children's books more generally, in a way that runs counter to Ocampo's experience of perpetual interest, regardless of her status as mother or grandmother. Yet her description, coupled with the origin story of *The Woman Who Killed the Fish*, engages the pressures that women writers who are also mothers face. "Things happen as they should," Lispector begins. "I never thought I would write books for children. The first one came at the request of my son Pauluca, many years ago, and the other came out of a feeling of guilt—I wanted to redeem myself" (Gotlib 383).[39] Though writing for children took her by surprise in a certain respect, she also suggests that it evolved into a serious literary interest, that it happened "as it should." Her writing for children, though subject at times to maternal or material characterizations rather than purely artistic ones, displays a serious engagement with the conventions of classic children's literature.

*The Woman Who Killed the Fish* has been published in Brazil as a longform picturebook, told in chapters of sorts, though in Earl E. Fitz's translation it appears without pictures and is, interestingly enough, not marked as a children's story in any way in his introduction that emphasizes the "demanding and challenging" nature of Lispector's short

[39] "As coisas acontecem porque devem acontecer. Nunca pensei escrever livros para crianças. O primeiro surgiu de um pedido de meu filho Pauluca, há muitos anos, e o outro, de uma sensação de culpa da qual queria me redimir."

stories (89). The vignettes, like "The Mystery of the Thinking Rabbit," are marked by an intimate dialogue between adult author and young readership. Early on the narrator introduces herself as Clarice and asks, echoing a narrative maneuver in *Peter Pan,* "And you all, what are your names? Say your names quietly and my heart will hear them" (*A mulher que matou os peixes* 10).[40] She confesses to her crime in the opening sentence: "The woman who killed the fish is, unfortunately, me… I give you my word that I am an honest person and that my heart is kind: I would never let a child or animal suffer in my presence" (7).[41] She then promises, deferentially, not to lie to her readers and hopes they will forgive her by the book's end. The last line is a question and a plea left unanswered, for each child reader to decide their own resolution: "Do you forgive me?" (62).[42] The narrator only lies to certain kinds of grown-ups, never to children, she reassures them, and explains, "There are grown-ups who are so boring! Don't you think? They don't understand the child's soul, either. A child is never boring" (9). Her identification with the child who is surrounded by boring adults reads like a reverberation of Ocampo's admiration for the child's "vivid" sentences, or the untamed hare surrounded by pet dogs. It also shares Antoine de Saint-Exupéry's *The Little Prince*'s philosophy on the perils of growing up and the grown-ups who "never understand" (1943: 2). The implication, ultimately, is that authors are those that retain their childhood and are in some sense children themselves.

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[40] "Antes de começar, quero que vocês saibam que meu nome é Clarice. E vocês, como se chamam? Digam baixinho o nome de vocês e o meu coração vai ouvir."

[41] "Essa mulher que matou os peixes infelizmente sou eu… Dou minha palavra de honra que sou pessoa de confiança e meu coração é doce: perto de mim nunca deixo criança nem bicho sofrer."

[42] "Vocês me perdoam?"

What's more, the story intersects with Lispector's early stories for adults, beginning with "O búfalo" ("The Buffalo") from *Family Ties*, in its premise and progression. This pairing is not as explicitly defined as Ocampo's two versions of "The Golden Hare," but it is notable nonetheless. In "The Buffalo," a woman reeling from a breakup visits the Rio de Janeiro Zoological Garden in São Cristóvão. Her motivation is to witness examples of animal predation that validate her feelings of hatred and abandonment, but instead she finds unexpected tenderness, and the story's climax is her overpowering encounter with a buffalo, whose gaze, in Peixoto's reading, causes her to confront her own captivity as a woman (1994: 31). Like *The Woman Who Killed the Fish*, the story unfolds as the woman contemplates each animal's relationship to humans, moving closer to the titular animal in question. As she visits them one-by-one, she comments on their human-like appearance and behavior as a reflection of her own internal state: two blond[43] lions in love, a virgin[44] giraffe with braided tufts of hair (a girlhood image of innocence used by both authors[45] in *Forgotten Journey* and *Family Ties*), a monkey with endearing cataracts, and an elephant whose eyes possess "an old man's benevolence" and is thus in the woman's estimation "a children's elephant," suitable for the circus (*Complete Stories* 229).[46] Two love stories in

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[43] Lispector describes the two animals as "louros" in Portuguese immediately prior to mentioning the giraffe's braids (*Todos os contos* 248). Dodson uses "blond," which is closer to Lispector's original word choice and reinforces the protagonist's objective of juxtaposing human and animal nature (227). Pontiero opts for "golden," less human and more commonly associated with lions (145).

[44] "virgem" (*Todos os contos* 248).

[45] References to hair abound in both collections—braiding, graying, tying—are charged in terms of maturation, magic, and sexuality, as in folk traditions.

[46] "bondade de velho"; "elefante de crianças" (*Todos os contos* 25).

*Forgotten Journey* similarly take place alongside animals: the defining memory of the protagonist's life in "Eladio Rada y la casa dormida" ("Eladio Rada and the Sleeping House") is a day spent at the Buenos Aires Zoo with his old girlfriend, and in "Paisaje de trapecios" ("Landscape with Trapezes") a circus performer's boyfriend grows increasingly jealous of the intimacy she shares with Pliny, her primate partner ("Landscape with Trapezes"). The anthropomorphism of animals to explore questions of love, family, age, and human relationships is a prominent feature of children's literature and its origins in folktales and fables, but Lispector and Ocampo filter the device simultaneously through the conventions of the fantastic—not of fairy tales—and the laws of the everyday, similarly to their portrayal of the animism of objects as occurring in the child's mind. Furthermore, the device is integral to their discussions of femininity and captivity, and the forces that inhibit feminine coming of age.

In a story from Lispector's 1964 collection that succeeds *Family Ties*, *A legião estrangeira* or *The Foreign Legion*, we see a more explicit parallel with *The Woman Who Killed the Fish*; as with Ocampo's "The Golden Hare," the same animal tale is presented for two distinct yet overlapping audiences. Lispector wrote the version for adults, "Macacos" ("Monkeys" in Dodson's 2015 translation, "Marmosets" in Elizabeth Bishop's earlier version), first, then revisited the tale four years later in *The Woman Who Killed the Fish*. In *The Woman Who Killed the Fish* she speaks frankly about her relationship with various land animals, before delving underwater and finally taking up the matter of the dead fish. First, she comments on cockroaches, with whom she is engaged in a constant battle for control of her house; then rats, whom all mothers find disgusting; then tropical geckos, who graciously eat pesky flies and mosquitoes ("because I'm not a gecko, I don't

like the things that they like, and they don't like the things that I like," she muses existentially [17-18][47]). She discusses loyal dogs and skinny chickens, two species that populate many stories in Lispector's all-ages universe, and the latter of which will be analyzed in Chapter Three of this dissertation. Most notably for our purposes now, though, she tells the children of monkeys and rabbits. In a vignette about halfway through the book, two monkeys visit her house on separate occasions. The first is a wild male marmoset who stays temporarily and whom the narrator gets rid of, much to the chagrin of her sons. The narrator doesn't underestimate her child reader's intelligence or scientific knowledge: "You all know very well that monkeys are the animal most similar to people," she says in the line that becomes the crux of each tale (28).[48] In both versions, the first marmoset is a hybrid figure in his humanness, but also in that he is not fully grown yet. In "Monkeys," he is described as "little-big" an oxymoron that is reminiscent of children's neologisms and that, in Dodson's unfailingly smart translation, captures Lispector's concern for in-betweenness as it relates to familial roles (*Complete Stories* 277; *Todos os contos* 302).

The second is a ladylike, jewelry-wearing marmoset, a female purchased on the street by the woman as a permanent pet and christened Lisete by the family. When Lisete unexpectedly dies shortly thereafter (monkeys sold on the street tend to be terminally ill, the narrator tragically and belatedly learns), both versions end on the same note, but played in a different key. In "Monkeys," a week after Lisete's death, the woman reports, "my eldest said to me: 'You look so much like Lisete!' 'I like you too,' I replied" (*Complete*

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[47] "como não sou lagartixa, não gosto de coisas que ela gosta, nem ela gosta do que eu gosto."

[48] "Vocês sabem muito bem que macaco é o bicho que mais se parece com as pessoas."

*Stories* 279).[49] In the children's tale, Lispector intersperses the mother-son dialogue with additional commentary:

> "Do you know, mom, that you look a lot like Lisete?"
>
> If you all think that I was offended by looking like Lisete, you're mistaken. First, because people really do look like monkeys. Second, because Lisete was very pretty and full of grace.
>
> "Thank you, my son," is what I said to him as I bent down to give him a kiss on the cheek.
>
> One of these days I will buy a healthy monkey. But will I forget Lisete? Never. (34)[50]

In an earlier vignette about rabbits, she encourages readers of "The Woman Who Killed the Fish" to read "The Mystery of the Thinking Rabbit," which she tellingly characterizes as "para gente pequena e para gente grande," or "for young people and for old people" (*A mulher que matou os peixes* 19). Fitz charmingly translates the line more literally and also alters Lispector's punctuation in a way that separates the two groups: "for little people—and also for big people" (92). Lispector expands, "I greatly enjoy writing stories for children and adults. It makes me very happy when grown-ups and small children like what I write" (19).[51] Her second children's book echoes her first in many ways, in its

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[49] "Uma semana depois o mais velho me disse: 'Você parece tanto com Lisete!' 'Eu também gosto de você,' respondi" (*Todos os contos* 302).

[50] "— 'Você sabe, mamãe, que você se parece muito com Lisete?' Se vocês pensam que eu me ofendi porque me parecia com Lisete, estão enganados. Primeiro, porque a gente se parece mesmo com um macaquinho; segundo, porque Lisete era cheia de graça e muito bonita. — 'Obrigada, meu filho' — foi isso que eu disse a ele e dei-lhe um beijo no rosto. Um dia desses vou comprar um miquinho com saúde. Mas esquecer Lisete? Nunca."

[51] "Gosto muito de escrever histórias para crianças e gente grande. Fico muito contente quando os grandes e os pequenos gostam do que escrevi." Fitz's interesting translation, which may include a typo (it seems like the word "felt" is missing), perhaps separates adults and children as distinct readerships, and also plays with the literal translation of the size-based Portuguese terms for both: "I like to write stories for children, and also for grown-ups. I've [sic] very pleased when people, big and little, like what I've written" (92). "Grown-ups" and "small children," more natural in English, retain their preoccupation with size but in a less pointed manner. At the same time,

autobiographical and intergenerational dimensions, in the truths it holds for both children and adults, and in its utmost respect for the child reader. Gotlib mentions that this story prompted a new round of letters from children, which, according to her son, Lispector lovingly kept for the duration of her life (*Clarice: Uma vida que se conta* 383).

It is essential to note that the intergenerational dynamic reflected in Ocampo and Lispector's animal tales is embedded in the various definitions of crossover literature, literature that has a dual address, a mixed audience, or an all-ages focus (Shavit 1987; Wall 1991; Beckett 1999; Falconer 2004; Beckett 2009). Ocampo and Lispector's fictions transcend most of these definitions in revealing ways. Some of these definitions, like Beckett's, are limited geographically. As we will see in the following section of this chapter, Lispector was embraced by readers in Latin America earlier than Ocampo, and she also gained earlier entry onto the world literature stage, in part as a result of her children's fiction. In *Crossover Fiction: Global and Historical Perspectives* (2009), Beckett includes Lispector in a long list of non-Anglophone and non-Francophone "crosswriters" "from other countries" who wrote for adults and children (6). Beckett's categories show how Latin America has been neglected in pivotal studies of crosswriting, which tend to focus on, in Rachel Falconer's reading, "the Netherlands, France, the former Soviet Union and Italy" (558). Within this context, Beckett's mention of Lispector is telling.

For Lispector especially, who succeeded in initiating and sustaining dialogue with children throughout her career, definitions like Zohar's fall short of capturing the duality

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"people, big and little,"declares adults and children both people on equal terms, apart from size, as opposed to real people (adults, unmarked) and lesser people (children, marked).

of her process at all stages, when all ages are welcomed into the text at multiple points: during the recorded writing of the text, alongside the intergenerational characters of the text, and, finally, in the reading and rereading of the text. The cases of Ocampo and Lispector show that certain definitions of dual audience can, paradoxically, reify Rose's boundaries that limit the child to the role of passive reader. As previously mentioned, Zohar Shavit's 1987 study *The Poetics of Children's Literature* is one such study, "where she claims that many children's books with an 'ambivalent status' address two implied readers: 'a pseudo addressee [the child] and a real one [the adult]'"(Shavit in Beckett 3). Ocampo and Lispector's children's books, in their multivalent hybridity, destabilize this traditional notion of readership and thus avoid the pitfalls of this ambivalence.

"The Golden Hare" as written for children belongs to a collection called *La naranja maravillosa*, or *The Magic Orange* (1977). Its untranslatable subtitle echoes Lispector's audience-based characterization of "The Mystery of the Thinking Rabbit" as dual-address, "para gente pequena e para gente grande," in "The Woman Who Killed the Fish." It incorporates an additional layer, though, and explains a key element of the defamiliarizing effects of both Ocampo and Lispector's fictions for all ages. *Cuentos para chicos grandes y grandes chicos* might literally translate to *Stories for Adult Children and Child(-like) Adults*, or *Stories for Mature Children and Youthful Adults.* That American English struggles to express Ocampo's two central oxymorons (childish as an adjective is pejorative rather than celebratory, so that wouldn't work for the former, and young adult for the latter would refer to something else entirely) reflects how strict the social boundaries between child, adolescent, and adult are in the United States. That it works in Spanish (or Portuguese) isn't necessarily because these boundaries are less rigid; the wordplay instead

reflects the candid discourse in Latin America regarding size as a social category, which often manifests in nicknames that refer to someone's height or weight: *chico* mean both small and child, and *grande* means both big and adult, reflective of the power of the adult and the disempowerment of the child.

Like the scholars of childhood studies who came after them (Rose 1984; Coe 1984; Steedman 1995; Lurie 1998; Dusinberre 1999; Orellana 2009; Bernstein 2013; Konstantoni and Emejulu 2017), Ocampo and Lispector both reject the conflation of size and age with intellectual or emotional maturity in their work. As Orellana puts it while introducing readers to a field with which they may not be familiar, childhood studies is indebted to the legacy of gender and sexuality studies in this rejection. "Just as feminists distinguish between gender (as a social construct) and biological sex," Orellana writes, "critical childhood scholars differentiate the social phenomenon of childhood from the fact of biological immaturity" (16). Both authors, for instance, have stories that concern pygmy women, which are central to any discussion of girlhood in either author's work: Lispector's most famous (and most translated) story from *Family Ties,* "The Smallest Woman in the World," and Ocampo's "Icera," which appears twice, first in *The Guests* (1961, for adults) and then in *The Magic Orange* (for children). I'll discuss both below and in more detail in Chapter Three. The most successful translation of *The Magic Orange*'s elusive subtitle also rejects this all-too-common false equivalence, and gives this chapter its name: *Stories for Children Young and Old*. This ingenious translation—which retains the focus on *chicos* and has the added bonus of reversing the usual hierarchy by prioritizing childhood rather than adulthood—comes from contemporary Ocampo scholars Patricia Klingenberg and

Fernanda Zullo Ruiz, who co-edited *Beyond Fantasy: New Readings of Silvina Ocampo* (2015), the first book of essays in English dedicated entirely to Ocampo scholarship (225).

Ocampo and Lispector both wrote stories for children young and old—stories that continuously blur and question the line between children's literature and the literature we know as unmarked, literature for adults. "The Golden Hare" in its two versions and "The Mystery of the Thinking Rabbit," which has been embraced by adult readers, affirm each author's belief in the social construction of childhood.[52] This belief permeates their fictions, raises important questions, and opens a new avenue of critical thought through which to approach their work. Despite the patronizing questions and characterizations to which they were subject during their lifetimes, both were often regarded as difficult writers: difficult to classify in terms of genre, difficult in terms of intense and at times grotesque subject matter, and difficult in terms of language. Juliet Dusinberre argues in *Alice to the Lighthouse* that Lewis Carroll ushered in a new approach to language—the child's approach—that made possible the subsequent innovations of modernist poetics, which Ocampo and Lispector also embody when placed in a wider mid-century context. Carroll's precedent is encapsulated in one of Alice's most famous lines. When unexpected growth—John Tenniel's drawing shows Alice's neck shooting up like a flamingo's—prompts the girl to utter the words "Curiouser and curiouser!" Carroll includes a telling explanation. Alice "was so much surprised [by her growth] that for the moment she quite forgot how to speak good English," suggesting that "proper" or "standard" language is the wrong thing to care about when considering literary impact (13). Instead, he revels in linguistic

[52] See, for example, Andréa Stella's 2017 essay "Clarice Lispector's Children's Story Taught Me to Read Her Like an Adult."

creativity and Alice's communicative agency as a child character, twin strands in the literary innovations put forth by Ocampo and Lispector, who also incorporate codeswitching between Spanish or Portuguese and English,[53] leading to additional innovation. Another form of codeswitching present in both writers' linguistic repertoires is the alternation between child language and adult language, moving fluidly across the spectrum of language acquisition and use, many times within the same story and certainly within their collected works.

Both rabbits, of course, have canonical folk and literary predecessors: first, the hare as trickster hero, and second, the White Rabbit in Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (1865) that leads Alice from a sleepy summer day to the world of wonderland. Like Carroll's rabbit, about whom "nothing [is] *so very* remarkable" (that is, until he takes out a pocket watch), neither Ocampo's golden hare nor Lispector's thinking rabbit is notably otherworldly (Carroll 7). Lispector's rabbit thinks, charmingly enough, with his nose, and Ocampo's does too, but in a way that's not revealed to the humans around her (and when she speaks, it's only heard by the dogs in the story). It's the silence of the animals that, true to reality, permits the stories' mysteries. Ocampo reflected on her story, stating "I like it when I find a real source for a story. I always remember details that have seemed magical to me" (*Encuentros* 69).[54] As Lispector's interviews and commentaries

[53] For example, in Lispector's "Happy Birthday," the guests codeswitch between Portuguese and English while singing the birthday song (*Todos os contos* 183).

[54] "A mí me gusta cuando encuentro un motivo real. Siempre me acuerdo de detalles que me han parecido mágicos."

tell us, her stories similarly spring from real sources, and from the real animals and children in her life.

Ocampo and Lispector's fictions are frequently populated by animals and children side by side, drawing our attention to other forms of language, including its absence—and the inner lives of those we can't hear or to whom we don't always listen. Like Carroll's seemingly unremarkable White Rabbit, Ocampo and Lispector scrutinize the quotidian presence of animals, dwelling on the small but fleeting moments in our everyday world that are gateways to the possibility of magic. In *Voiceless Vanguard: The Infantilist Aesthetic of the Russian Avant-Garde*, Weld clarifies the White Rabbit metaphor: "In many senses Lewis Carroll's Alice plays the role of the White Rabbit in leading modernist writers out of a chronologically linear time to a new linguistically constituted childhood space" (218). The fantastic in Ocampo and Lispector springs from their attention to the particulars of the child's perspective, inseparable from the child's use of language. As we will see, *Forgotten Journey* and *Family Ties* teem with references to Carroll's urtext, from nods to Alice's many metamorphoses to curious and curiouser moments of linguistic innovation to Ocampo and Lispector's rewritings of didactic children's tales. By drawing on children's literature and girlhood texts more overtly than their peers, they lead the fantastic genre to a newly constituted space in which the language of childhood leads the adult reader to experience the world anew.

## The Birthday Girls: Ocampo's "The Photographs" and Lispector's "Happy Birthday"

Although it may seem simple at first, it would be irresponsible to analyze Ocampo and Lispector's disruptions of girlhood as traditionally defined in their eras and contexts

without first asking the vital but endlessly complicated question, what is girlhood? In *Keywords for Children's Literature* Jacqueline Reid-Walsh rightly calls girlhood an "ideologically loaded term in Western culture," referring both to the stage in one's life as well as "girls collectively" (92). She then offers two theories on the etymology of the word *girl*, both fraught, and the implications of both are taken up by Ocampo and Lispector in their fictions. The first theory is that *girl* derives from *gyrela*, the Old English word for dress, and is thus wrapped up in clothing and appearance. The second proposes that *Gör* or *Göre*, the diminutive of the Middle Low German word for small child, is the source, emphasizing physical smallness and all that comes with it: underestimation, secondary status, and vulnerability to violence.

Reid-Walsh then asks an absolutely imperative question that echoes Bernstein's discussions of the racialized "de-childing" of Black children in the United States: "Who is included and who is excluded from being a girl? In other words, according to which definitions are used, who is *not* experiencing girlhood?" (93, emphasis added; Bernstein 210). I want to make plain that this mention of Bernstein's term is by no means intended to assume an equivalent set of circumstances for Ocampo and Lispector's predominantly white protagonists in Latin America, which would be dangerously reductive, only to point to the relevant phenomenon of "de-childing" in its varied forms across intersectional categories. Reid-Walsh answers her own question with a series of more questions, and in such a way that affirms the valid participation of all ages in the processes of constructing and understanding girlhood, a phenomenon also affirmed by Ocampo and Lispector in their fictions:

> Does it matter if a girl is of preschool age, between the ages of ten and fourteen (a young adolescent as defined by the Population Council),

> eighteen (at the age of consent in many countries and at the far edge of American adolescence)? … At the other extreme, if the United Nations definition of childhood is applied to a girl, the age limit rises to twenty-nine and young and not-so-young women are included, making their experiences valid to an understanding of girlhood. If participating in the popular culture of girls or in commercialized girl culture is considered an aspect of girlhood, then the age rises even further to include middle-aged women. (93)

Here Reid-Walsh raises relevant issues that are implicated in defining girlhood, and that will show up in *Forgotten Journey* and *Family Ties*: education, consent, coming of age, geography, local and global concerns, and consumption of culture. Ocampo and Lispector add to this list in their explorations of class, disability, and maternity, which are the focal points of two stories in particular that feature birthday parties.

The events of both Ocampo's "The Photographs" and Lispector's "Happy Birthday," from 1959 and 1960 respectively, unfold around the birthday rite in upper-class families—the decorations, the cake, the song, the presents, the toast—and thus center the slippery questions of age, ritual transformation, and what Bernstein calls the *performance* of childhood and adulthood. In both stories the suffocating summer days,[55] rifts in the families, and vulnerability of the protagonists stand in stark contrast to the elaborate, pretty, pink trappings of each celebration. Ocampo's Adriana is a turning fourteen and was recently paralyzed in an accident, which her family views as an immense burden, and Lispector's Dona Anita is a widowed, elderly woman turning eighty-nine who is disgusted

[55] Flies buzz around in each story, and while Ocampo mentions the hot day directly, Lispector creates the atmosphere: "What I remember of the story 'Happy Birthday,' for example, is the impression of a party that was no different from other birthdays; but it was a stifling summer day, and I don't think I even put the idea of summer in the story. I had an 'impression,' from which a few vague lines resulted, set down just for the enjoyment and necessity of deepening a feeling," she writes in her text called "Useless Explanations" (*Complete Stories* 629).

by the family she will soon leave behind. Despite their age differences, both characters are placed at the head of the table and made to cut their own birthday cakes.

Both stories immediately put into play the fraught association of dress with femininity, which reads as an extension of the ceremony's emphasis on decorum and the families' insistence on the appearance of happiness and togetherness. In "The Photographs," the unreliable narrator is a party attendee who arrives and greets Adriana. Ocampo highlights her over-the-top dress while also giving clues to Adriana's age, which isn't confirmed until later, as well as her family's socioeconomic class:

> She was wearing a very full skirt of white organdy, with a starched petticoat underneath whose lace trim would slip into view at her slightest movement, a metallic headband with white flowers in her hair, and some orthopedic leather boots, and she was holding a pink fan in her hand. (*La furia* 87)[56]

The guests enthusiastically state how much she resembles a bride, except for the unfortunate orthopedic shoes. The excessive, girlish adornments serve to conceal her paralysis, which, we learn, her family deeply resents. Their combined effect also objectifies Adriana, turning her into a doll-like figure, as if she has an ugly stand and fancy exterior, to be admired but not in need of water or rest, to be "seen but not heard," which Weld reminds us is a defining idiom in the "silencing" of both children and children's literature (2020).

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[56] "Tenía una falda muy amplia, de organdí blanco, con un viso almidonado, cuya puntilla se asomaba al menor movimiento, una vincha de metal plegadizo, con flores blancas, en el pelo, unos botines ortopédicos de cuero y un abanico rosado en la mano" (1959). Translator Daniel Balderston confusingly calls Adriana's headband a "clasp" instead, perhaps referring to a kind of clip or barrette? (*Thus Were Their Faces* 121). For me, however, this kind of headband is a girlhood marker, emblematic of the early teen years.

Family resentment marks the opening scene of "Happy Birthday" as well, as guests arrive at a grandmother's birthday party. Lispector includes an allusion to the collection's title of *Family Ties*, itself preoccupied with the anthropological notion of kinship, deeply involved in the rite of passage in a structuralist theory put forth in 1949 by Claude Lévi-Strauss, a figure with whom Lispector was certainly familiar, as a thinly-veiled version of him turns up in "The Smallest Woman in the World" (cf. Hart 2012). "Happy Birthday" introduces each family member via their clothing; the descriptions of a mother and her two daughters stand out in the way their dresses are designed to suppress the unruly aspects of their feminine bodies—the mother's postpartum stomach, the girls' developing breasts—and cover up the major life moments of pregnancy and puberty.

> The daughter-in-law from Olaria [a neighborhood of Rio de Janeiro] showed up in navy blue, glittering with "pailletés" and *draping that camouflaged her ungirdled belly*. Her husband didn't come for obvious reasons: he didn't want to see his siblings. But *he'd sent his wife so as not to sever all ties*—and she came in her best dress to show that she didn't need any of them, along with her three children*: two girls with already budding breasts, infantilized in pink ruffles and starched petticoats*, and the boy sheepish in his new suit and tie.[57] (Complete Stories 156, emphases added)

The girls, in a time of transition, are infantilized by starched petticoats in the same way Adriana's disability is denied by the same treated garment. Dona Anita, meanwhile, cannot dress herself and has to be dressed by her only daughter, much like her granddaughters and Adriana have to be dressed, and Lispector includes a cruelly ironic line about obscuring

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[57] "A nora de Olaria apareceu de azul-marinho, com enfeite de paetês e um drapeado disfarçando a barriga sem cinta. O marido não veio por razões óbvias: não queria ver os irmãos. Mas mandara sua mulher para que nem todos os laços fossem cortados – e esta vinha com o seu melhor vestido para mostrar que não precisava de nenhum deles, acompanhada dos três filhos: duas meninas já de peito nascendo, infantilizadas em babados cor-de-rosa e anáguas engomadas, e o menino acovardado pelo terno novo e pela gravata" (*Todos os contos* 177).

the woman's elderliness in order to make her presentable for a party that ostensibly celebrates her reaching such a revered age. Her daughter "sprayed her with a little perfume to cover that musty smell of hers [and] seated her at the table,"[58] Lispector writes (*Complete Stories* 157). Her daughter also puts a tight pendant around her neck that chokes her at one point during the party, another similarity with Adriana's painful adornment. Both protagonists become, in a sense, inert dolls for their family members who dictate their dress and movements, as though at players in child's tea party. While maleness is largely unmarked, absent, and unseen before and during the birthday ritual, Lispector shows the innumerable ways femininity across generations is marked, visible despite attempts to cover it, and burgeoning, while also contested, in flux, and objectified.

The birthday ritual not only brings out and accentuates the contrast between the masculine and the feminine, but also the shared marginality of the puerile and the senile. Despite Dona Anita's old age, Katrina Dodson makes the astute choice to call her "the birthday girl" when Lispector writes "a aniversariante," a general term that, like "la cumpleañera" in Spanish, refers to the person who is celebrating her birthday but doesn't imply a specific age (*Complete stories* 157; *Todos os contos* 180). Even though there is no fluid way to refer to the same person in English without the addition of "boy" or "girl,"[59] Dodson's choice befits the story's critique of the birthday ritual (which, as the English vocabulary of the rite indicates, fetishizes young, able bodies) and also Dona Anita's

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[58] "borrifara-lhe um pouco de água-de-colônia para disfarçar aquele seu cheiro de guardado" (*Todos os contos* 180).

[59] Giovanni Pontiero tried, though, in his 1984 translation of *Family Ties*. He starts with the clunkier "the old lady celebrating her birthday" and then simply uses "old lady" or "old woman" thereafter (75).

actions, which mimic the children's behavior in the story. In other words, Dona Anita becomes a hybrid character. Mackintosh notes that some of the last sentences Ocampo published in her lifetime tellingly read: "There is no difference between the elder and the child. The elder and the child are equals," referring to a shared inequality among children and the elderly (Ocampo in Mackintosh 81).[60] Similarly, in Ocampo's story "Icera," a man who works in a toy store reflects on his clients over the years in a manner that destabilizes traditional age boundaries: "So many children who turn into grown-ups and so many grown-ups who turn back into children!" (*La naranja maravillosa* 50). "Happy Birthday" profoundly echoes the sentiment that we return to childhood in our old age in the subtle connections between grandmother and grandchildren. When the family from Olaria arrives, "the two little misses in pink and the boy, sallow and with their hair neatly combed, *didn't really know how to behave*," and Dona Anita has no idea how to behave during the party either (*Complete Stories* 156-7, emphasis added).

Lispector writes a series of incomplete sentences to capture the birthday girl's bewilderment, and while previous translator Pontiero mostly makes them complete,[61] Dodson as a later translator trusts Lispector's fragments that present Dona Anita's disjointed experience of the birthday rite. Lispector connects Dona Anita's doll-like muteness at the party with her disempowerment. She is separate from the group, like the

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[60] "No hay diferencia entre el viejo y el niño. El viejo y el niño son iguales" ("Anotaciones").

[61] "From time to time *she was* conscious of the colored napkins. *She* looked inquisitively as one or other of the balloons started to shake with the vibration of the passing traffic. And from time to time that mute anguish, when her gaze accompanied, fascinated and impotent, the flight of some fly around her cake" (75, emphases added).

children, and the syntax of Lispector's sentences feels as though a child's voice were articulating the old woman's perceptions, at least for the first two fragments:

> Occasionally aware of the colorful napkins. Looking curiously when a passing car made the odd balloon tremble. And occasionally that mute anguish: whenever she watched, fascinated and powerless, the buzzing of a fly around the cake. (157-8).[62]

The latter fragment evidences a shift out of Dona Anita's internal perceptions of the party and into the external perceptions of her presence. While first translations of already complex literatures often prioritize readability so as not to alienate new readers who have less context for an author's peculiar innovations, Dodson's translation assumes a familiarity with Lispector's linguistic experiments that often accompany a story's roving narrative voice, which allows Lispector, like Woolf with Clarissa Dalloway or Mrs. Ramsay before her, to give readers an unusually full picture of a feminine character whose internalized misogyny must reflect an interior state as it responds to external forces. Later, when Dona Anita's youngest great-grandchild blows out her candle as children do, with more saliva than breath, Lispector previews the story's climax: Dona Anita, who has barely uttered a word and whose necklace is choking her—again, another powerful parallel with Adriana's dress and the silencing effects of feminine dress and adornment, which echoes *The Little Sea-maid*—forcefully and exasperatedly spits on the ground, and everyone reacts as though she were a child (much like the two prepubescent girls in petticoats and pink ruffles, she is infantilized by adult family members) or, in the narrator's assessment, a dog that had an accident in the house (*Todos os contos* 187).

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[62] "De vez em quando consciente dos guardanapos coloridos. Olhando curiosa um ou outro balão estremecer aos carros que passavam. E de vez em quando aquela angústia muda: quando acompanhava, fascinada e impotente, o voo da mosca em torno do bolo" (*Todos os contos* 180).

It's worth noting that in the moments after she spits, Lispector briefly shifts from the story's third-person narration to an unexpected and passing "I," something Ocampo also does in the *Forgotten Journey* stories "Skylight" and "Siesta in the Cedar Tree," which will be analyzed in detail in Chapter Two. "They looked like rats jostling each other, her family. The boys, though grown—probably already in their fifties, for all *I* know!—" is a moment in "Happy Birthday" that raises questions but ultimately complements and rounds out the protagonist's experience of gendered old age (*Complete Stories* 163, emphasis added).[63] Who is the I? An unnamed narrator or Lispector herself? The most likely candidate is that it offers a quick foray into Dona Anita's consciousness, who must confront the powerlessness of an imperfect legacy that is out of her control. As Peixoto (1983) notes in "*Family Ties:* Female Development in Clarice Lispector," Dona Anita's actions are intimately connected to the marginality of her senility:

> The old woman rails against the loss of her power; in a sense she is a victim of old age. Her dominance stemmed from her personal capacity to play the most powerful role traditional Brazilian society allows women, that of mother in a mother-dominated extended family. (Peixoto in Abel, Hirsch, and Langland, eds. 298)

In the story's last lines Dona Anita ponders death, a thing much larger in her mind than the control her family currently exerts over her clothes or meals. They will have no say in her death, she reminds herself, and she quietly welcomes the thought that she won't have to attend her ninetieth birthday party the following year, which her children mention as they

[63] The original Portuguese reads "que sei eu!" so Dodson's is a literal translation. Pontiero changes it to "who knows!" and glosses over the troublesome shift in perspective (81).

depart. “What if there’s no dinner tonight, she mused. Death was *her* mystery” (*Complete Stories* 169, emphasis added).[64]

While “Happy Birthday” ends with Dona Anita’s foreshadowed death, “The Photographs” ends with Adriana dying on the page, after a grueling photography session that exhausts and depletes her, and that seemingly goes unnoticed by her family, who is consumed by the birthday ritual. Ocampo, however, leaves a trail of birthday cake crumbs for her reader that possibly implicates the family in the girl’s death in a more direct, malicious way. Like much of the fiction from Ocampo’s middle years, “The Photographs” is peppered with the gossipy dialogue of the upper classes in the private enclaves of their homes, conversations that Ocampo satirically captures with precision and black humor, in all their immaculate pettiness, and that are often the key to unraveling a story’s fantastic knots. It is important to remember that this kind of interpretation is not invited by *Forgotten Journey*’s stories; the work from the middle decades of Ocampo’s career bends toward the traditionally fantastic, with the marked presence of Borges and Bioy’s influence, who actually suggested she title the collection *The Fury*,[65] rather than her initial, more grounded choice of *In Buenos Aires.* In “The Photographs,” for instance, Ocampo plays with the superstition that having one’s picture taken can have catastrophic consequences for your spirit, evoked by the photographer’s name, Spirito, and engages the fundamentally

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[64] “Será que hoje não vai ter jantar, meditava ela. A morte era o seu mistério.”

[65] *The Fury* is perhaps a more evocative title, and one that points to the many furies that come with being a girl in a patriarchal society. It is also perhaps a Carroll reference: “Fury said to / a mouse…” (25). *In Buenos Aires*, however, shows Ocampo’s original impulse to ground her short stories in a recognizable and unifying social reality; she reminds readers that *real* girls are vulnerable in the various ways she documents in her fictions. Place names and markers, for instance, abound in her stories and titles for this reason. This is also the case for Lispector.

unanswerable question of fantastic tales: what actually happened, objectively speaking? What is the role and function, as Siebers investigates, of superstition? As the family awaits Spirito's long-delayed arrival, which can symbolically be read as the arrival of the spirit coming for Adriana's soul, they entertain themselves by telling stories about near-fatal accidents in other people's families, arousing another superstition, this time "speak of the devil and the devil appears." They remind one another of all they selflessly did for Adriana after her near-fatal accident a year earlier: the least she could do in return, their conversations intimate, is smile for the photographer.

The narrator recounts the events of the party in the past tense, in the manner of an eyewitness testimony, and the verisimilitude of her statement grows increasingly suspect. She begins by seeking the reader's confidence in her shrewdness and noting Adriana's "aptitude for misfortune, which [she] perceived in the girl long before the accident" (*La furia* 87).[66] She then lists the party guests by names, nicknames, and defining features, including the one with the glasses, the blond to whom she has rudely not been introduced, and the wretched Humberta,[67] who is the first to crassly drink the sparkling cider before the ceremonial toast has taken place. The narrator then announces each photograph—one, two, three, all the way to eight, you can almost see the blinding flashes on each count—and makes note of Adriana's corresponding condition, which worsens audibly and visibly. "Adriana grimaced in pain and poor Spirito had to photograph her all over again," the

[66] "vocación por la desdicha que yo había descubierto en ella mucho antes del accidente."

[67] In this choice of name, Ocampo invokes Humbert Humbert in Vladimir Nabokov's *Lolita*, a text Ocampo admired about girlhood, violation, and trauma.

narrator absurdly comments at one point (89).[68] Adriana sweats and winces as they apply rouge and lipstick to her face; she can't breathe when they treat her like a doll by propping up her head; she cries out for a glass of water as shifting groups of relatives pose around her; she struggles to speak as the birthday song blares from the loudspeaker; she is unmistakably about to faint during the final photograph. "It wasn't until later," however—after tasting the cake, guzzling cider, and ironically toasting to Adriana's health—that they notice she is unconscious, the narrator avows. At first, she says, they believe her to be asleep: the excitement of the party must have been too much for her on what readers find out is her very first day out of the hospital. They don't realize she is dead until after they laugh at her for falling asleep and a few relatives, awfully enough, try to wake her up by forcefully patting her on the back. The narrator's melodramatic last line is Ocampo's final scoff at bourgeois hypocrisy: "How unfair life is! Instead of Adriana, who was a little angel, death could have taken the wretched Humberta!" (93).[69]

Adriana Mancini (2003) illuminates the reader's essential role in the story, the kitsch and cruelty of the ritual, and Ocampo's class-based caricature.

> The structure of the party does not provide a space for the birthday girl's death, saturated as the text is with indications that it is impending. It is the reader who sees the signs and deduces the brutality of the events, the lack of judgment, the blindness to the suffering of a girl with a disability, all underpinned by the quest to carry out all of the requisite steps of a kitsch ritual, the origin of which is the mark of a bourgeois way of life. With the

[68] "Adriana hizo una mueca de dolor y el pobre Spirito tuvo que fotografiarla de nuevo, hundida en su silla."

[69] "¡Qué injusta es la vida! ¡En lugar de Adriana, que era un angelito, hubiera podido morir la desgraciada de Humberta!"

> birthday girl's death, the story puts forth a decisive deviation from the order of the ritual and gives way to caricature. (Mancini 65)[70]

"The brutality of events" and the family's role in their unfolding, however, may be more complicated than Mancini's reading, which concentrates on the emptiness of the ritual and attentively illustrates the irony of the birthday girl's death. Of course, the narrator's detailed account demonstrates that she was not too distracted by the ritual to notice Adriana's mounting distress. Ocampo certainly implicates the narrator's neglect, though the narrator attempts to blame the camera and also Humberta for necessitating an eighth photograph, in causing Adriana's death. Ocampo also offers a more sinister take, though: that the narrator and some other resentful family members took advantage of the captivating ritual to ensure Adriana's death. Like in Lispector's "Happy Birthday," Ocampo includes an elaborate description of the table, decorations, and the cakes, which the guests are not to touch until the photographer has documented them, including one with pink icing that has Adriana's name, birthdate, and the word *Happiness* (*Felicidad*) on it. Cutting and distributing the cake to the birthday girl and the partygoers, well, "these things take time and care," the narrator remarks, noting that everybody thanked her for her role in the rite's success. After the story's overlay of superstitions, Ocampo's penultimate line invokes the

[70] "La estructura de la fiesta no tiene previsto un espacio para la muerte de la homenajeada, aunque el texto esté saturado de indicios que la anticipan. Es el lector quien recibe las señas y colige la brutalidad de los hechos, la falta de criterio, la ceguera frente al sufrimiento de un ser debilitado, sostenidas en el afán de cumplir con todos los requisitos de un ritual kitsch en cuyo origen está la marca del modo de vida burgués. Con la muerte de la homenajeada el cuento propone un decisivo desvío del esquema del ritual y da paso a la caricatura."

birthday cake and communicates that it was possibly poisoned: "Others secretively filled their pockets with slices of crumbled cake without frosting" (93).[71]

In Lispector's tale, the interfamilial violence, however insidious, is ultimately symbolic; in Ocampo's, it's anything but, culminating in the death of a child, significantly more brutal than the grandmother's dramatic outburst. Yet both "The Photographs" and "Happy Birthday" are bleak disavowals of the trappings of the birthday ritual that functions as a false marker of coming of age, especially in the upper echelons of South American society. Ocampo and Lispector push us to ask the urgent question articulated by Reid-Walsh: who is *not* experiencing girlhood, even if their *gyrela* or outward dress suggests otherwise? To use Bernstein's phrasing, which young girls in these carefully-constructed social worlds are suffering a "de-childing" or adultification? Which adolescents and women are suffering a "re-childing" or infantilization, to invoke the inverse? What vulnerabilities and violences—often represented by, in the case of Ocampo's fiction, the premature death of a young girl—are the byproducts of both processes? In the following section, I will introduce a pair—or, more accurately, a trio—of stories that explore these questions as they surround sexual violence against young and adolescent girls, and as they engage the Demeter-Persephone myth, the Eleusinian Mysteries, and the dangerous discrepancy between the rites of passage that are celebrated publicly and the unsanctioned encounters that invisibly mark too many girlhoods.

**Persephone in São Cristóvão (Rio de Janeiro Province, Brazil) and Mar del Plata (Buenos Aires Province, Argentina)**

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[71] "Otros, disimuladamente, guardaban trozos de torta estrujada y sin merengue, en el bolsillo."

The word "mystery" abounds in Lispector's work, often in her stories of generations of women, of mothers and daughters, and of loss and bereavement, and also, as we have seen, in her readings and explanations of her own work. She wrote, for instance, of one of the strongest stories in *Family Ties*, the one that was meant to open *Some Stories*, "'Mystery in São Cristóvão' is a mystery to me: I went on writing it calmly like someone unwinding a ball of yarn," itself a mythic reference to Penelope's weaving work (*Complete Stories* 630). *Family Ties* recalls the gendered organization of the ancient Greek world, especially the verticality of the feminine sphere, which highlighted the passing down of practices and traditions, and resulting relationships across generations between young girls, adolescent girls, and women. Persephone, the Eleusinian Mysteries, and the pattern of the seasons, for example, have a strong presence in "Mystery in São Cristóvão," named for the neighborhood north of Rio where Lispector lived as a young girl.

In the story, a girl of nineteen—what Lispector describes as a delicate age—watches as three masked boys cut a hyacinth stalk from her family garden in the middle of the night, stealing the blossoms for their Carnival costumes: a rooster, a bull, and a devil. Marta Peixoto (1994) calls the story a parable of female sexual initiation and highlights the boys' facelessness (84). The story takes place in spring, that in-between time, and in her choice of flower Lispector invokes Persephone, the daughter of Demeter and the mythic mother, so to speak, of girlhood stories. In the Homeric hymn, Persephone is picking irises and hyacinths when the earth cracks open beneath her, and Hades kidnaps and rapes her (Cashford, trans., lines 4-6; 429-30). In Ovid's take on the myth, like in Homer's, a distinctly male, outsider narration of Persephone's experience prevails, as Ovid translator Stephanie McCarter clarifies ("The Brutality of Ovid"). In "Mystery in São Cristóvão,"

Lispector at once disrupts and spotlights this troubling perspective by breathing life into the girl's subjectivity while also utilizing her roving narration technique that maintains a bit of distance, à la Homer and Ovid, from her Persephone-inspired protagonist's point of view. This narrative technique, exemplified in the shift in "Happy Birthday" from "she" to "I," is often what allows Lispector and Ocampo to portray girlhood and sexuality with such fullness, and with careful consideration of the social and patriarchal systems at work in initiation rituals.

It is perhaps this mix of intimate and distant narration, which is part and parcel of the story's efficacy in portraying the dangers every girl faces—dangers that are so often unperceived and unacknowledged by the outside world—that has prompted misreading by certain male critics. In "Useless Explanations," Lispector herself contemplated the apparent distance in the story's narration:

> I didn't encounter the least difficulty. I believe that the absence of difficulty arose from the very conception of the story: its atmosphere may have needed this detached attitude of mine, a certain non-participation. The lack of difficulty might have been an internal technique, an approach, *delicateness*, *feigned* distraction. (*Complete Stories* 630, emphases added)

It is important to note that Lispector herself stated that a delicateness was needed on her part to write the story of a girl at a delicate age, in the midst of a period of intense but concealed transition and transformation, intimating an authorial connection with her in-flux heroine. I will analyze "Mystery in São Cristóvão" in detail in Chapter Three alongside its companion story in *Family Ties*, "Preciousness," and including an in-depth comparison with Ocampo's "Sarandí Street" from *Forgotten Journey*, which I will discuss in detail in Chapter Two. This pairing of Ocampo-Lispector stories echoes "Happy Birthday" and "The Photographs" in that the events of Lispector's story are symbolic of sexual violation,

while the rape in Ocampo's story is concrete and specific rather than parabolic or foreshadowed.

"Sarandí Street," though the wider setting is unnamed, presumably takes place in Mar del Plata, a vacation town on the Argentine coast where the Ocampo family maintained a residence for summer trips (the house is now a museum dedicated to Ocampo's sister Victoria). The city evolves with the shifting seasons and corresponding tourist trade, lively and populated in summer and dormant and sparsely inhabited in winter, a kind of modern-day Eleusis. Like "Mystery in São Cristóvão," it engages the Demeter-Persephone myth in its exploration of daughterhood, generations of trauma, and the experiences of girls in the underbellies of cities where danger is ever-present, latent during the warmer, livelier months and enabled or covered up during the colder, quieter months. Ocampo's first-person narration—"Sarandí Street," as we will see, is one of two stories in all of *Forgotten Journey* to use this perspective—exists at the intersection of girlhood and womanhood, and Lispector's narrative voice, as previously mentioned, is roaming, fluctuating between the detached and the intimate, the masculine and the feminine. In both cases, though, Ocampo and Lispector transform the legacy of Persephone's story by placing it back in the hands of the girls at the center of their fictions that shed light on the unseen and underexplored elements of girlhood sexual trauma. In other words, as we shall see in Chapters Two and Three, "Mystery in São Cristóvão" and "Sarandí Street" belong squarely and resolutely to their girl protagonists. This is also the case for "Preciousness," a companion story to "Mystery in São Cristóvão" in *Family Ties* that also shares a thematic core with "Sarandí Street," in addition to numerous remarkably similar expositional images and stylistic

maneuvers at the sentence level, which we saw in the epigraphs to this dissertation's Introduction.

This crucial point of the girl's subjectivity and centrality must be highlighted, as underscored by Benjamin Moser's egregious mischaracterization of "Mystery in São Cristóvão" in his 2009 biography of Lispector *Why This World*, itself a fraught text.[72] Moser introduces "Mystery in São Cristóvão" by stating that the masked boys—the protagonist's violators—are the story's subjects and, taking his misreading to the heights of misogyny, the characters with whom Lispector herself identified.

> Besides 'Love,' the book [*Alguns contos*] included 'Mystery in São Cristóvão,' the story of three children, disguised in costumes, who sneak into a garden and steal hyacinths. The story recalled Clarice's own experiences as a girl in Recife, when she and her friend stole roses… The book also included a longer work called "Family Ties," which would lend its name to the collection published in 1960. (Moser 202)

The girl is the subject of the story in every sense, even the structural; she is marked or branded by the story's events, an event that typifies the hero or heroine's experience, as emphasized in Vladimir Propp's enumeration of the functions of the dramatis personae in *Morphology of the Folktale* (1927), which contributes to the fairy tale quality of story, which is also at play in "Sarandí Street." As we will see in Chapter Three, Lispector both

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[72] And one that I will not cite in any substantive capacity, instead using Gotlib's superior *Clarice: Uma vida que se conta*. Magdalena Edwards (2019) has bravely written about the troubling at best, abusive at worst "stewardship of [Lispector's] legacy" by Moser, who has been credibly accused of plagiarizing Gotlib. Edwards translates an excerpt of a 2010 academic review of *Why This World* by Benjamin Abdala Junior called "The Biography of Clarice, by Benjamin Moser: Coincidences and Mistakes." ["Biografia de Clarice, por Benjamin Moser: coincidências e equívocos".] "[T]he similarities are not just in the narrative arc. If in Nádia Gotlib's book there is a subchapter titled 'The Witch's Recipes,' in Moser's there is a chapter titled 'The Witch.' In the Brazilian critic's book there are 'The Possible Dialogues,' in Moser's there are 'Possible Dialogues'. In *Clarice: Uma vida que se conta* there is 'The Hurricane Clarice,' in *Why This World* there is 'Hurricane Clarice'" (Junior in Edwards).

incorporates the fairy tale structure and subverts it by exposing the violence of the heroine's journey, a back-and-forth that has been read as a feminine Bildungsroman (1983). As Peixoto and her editors, Abel, Hirsch, and Langland, contend:

> The tensions that shape female development may lead to a disjunction between a surface plot, which affirms social conventions, and a submerged plot, which encodes rebellion; between a plot governed by age-old female story patterns, such as myths and fairy tales, and a plot that reconceives these limiting possibilities; between a plot that charts development and a plot that unravels it. The developmental tale may itself be concealed in coded memories. (12)

Moser's reading neglects both the surface plot and the submerged plot, as well as the legacy of the Persephone. That Moser places the story back in the hands of the girl's violators echoes his own patterns of plagiarizing the scholarship of female Lispector critics and translators, especially that of Brazilian women like Gotlib, whose illuminating biography has played an invaluable role in contextualizing the progression of Lispector's work for children and adults.

**Writing/Righting the Wrongs of *Peter Pan*: "Icera"**

I would like to close with a brief discussion of Ocampo's "Icera" as it relates to the essay that opens this chapter: Jacqueline Rose's "The Case of Peter Pan: The Impossibility of Children's Fiction." "Icera" is the story of a five-year-old girl who "considers dolls rivals; she did not even accept them as gifts; she only wanted to occupy the space they occupied" (*La naranja maravillosa* 45-6).[73] In the story Ocampo describes the dolls in a toy store window on Florida Street, a popular shopping district in Buenos Aires. There are

[73] "Icera consideraba las muñecas como rivales; no las aceptaba ni de regalo; sólo quería ocupar el lugar que ellas ocupaban."

dolls ready for their first communion, wintry dolls dressed to go skiing, Little Red Riding Hood dolls, schoolgirl dolls, and one that Icera sets her sights on: while multiple versions of most of the dolls are available, there is only one doll dressed as a bride. Ocampo compares the doll dressed for her first communion and the bridal doll in a way that echoes the partygoers' misguided perception of Adriana as bride-like in "The Photographs." In "Icera" the only difference between the two dolls is the bride's bouquet of orange blossoms and the fact that she is nestled in a light blue box festooned with lace and filled with tissue paper, the kind found in boxes of chocolates in Ocampo's description, which reads as a reference to the ways young girls are not only objectified but consumed (*La naranja maravillosa* 49). The moment is also salient in the way Ocampo calls attention to the dolls' *gyrela*, which has the power to obscure their very different stages of life, as represented by two Catholic rites that are meant to take place at very different ages.

Icera's internalized desire to be not only a child bride, but a doll bride, grotesquely hangs over the story's events. The man in charge of the doll section, Darío, allows her to lie down on a display doll bed and look at herself in a doll-sized mirror, which foreshadows the story's conceit: Icera's resistance to growing up and her desire to become the bridal doll. Darío gives Icera doll clothing for Christmas, which she ecstatically wears, thus beginning a fantastic transformation in which the girl's *gyrela* transforms her body in a literal manner. Her mother responds to Icera's desire, which recalls J. M. Barrie's 1904 *Peter Pan; or, The Boy Who Would Not Grow Up*:

> "Children grow up," Icera's mother told her with sincere sadness. What mother does not secretly lament her daughter growing up, even though she wants her to stand taller and stronger than all the rest! … "One day this little dress won't fit you anymore," she protested, waving the doll's dress in front

> of her daughter. "It *is* a shame! I too was little once, and now look at me." (47)[74]

Ocampo's narrator follows Icera's mother's speech with the universal statement, "Children grew up, it was true. In fact, few things in life were as true," but Icera's mother seems to be commenting directly on femininity, and the disempowerment that comes with a girl growing into a woman as opposed to the power that comes with a boy growing into a man (47).[75] Ocampo's fictions teem with the dark experiences of girl characters whose growth is stunted by parental control, sexual trauma, and untimely death. In *Forgotten Journey* this stunting is psychological, embodied, and in part socially constructed; in "Icera," it's physical in a more extreme, fantastic way: wearing the doll's clothing effectively inhibits Icera's growth. She falls ill at first, propelling the story into Todorovian territory: is Icera's transformation the result of an unusual illness or is it supernatural? The story ends on Icera's thirtieth birthday, when she visits a now-elderly Darío, who takes stock of her appearance. She has grown no more than ten centimeters over the course of twenty-five years, but her body undergoes other startling, hormonal changes, including developing prematurely wrinkled skin, which Darío, who remarks that he is obsessed with old age in his twilight years, thinks is a figment of his imagination.

When Darío describes Icera, there is a key difference in the version for adults and the version for children. In the version for adults, Darío notices that Icera has dentures as

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[74] "—Los niños crecen —decía la madre de Icera, con sincera tristeza. ¡Qué madre no deplora secretamente el crecimiento de su hija, aunque la quiera más alta y más robusta que las demás! … Un día, este vestidito no te servirá —proseguía, enseñándole el vestidito de la muñeca—. ¡Qué pena! Yo también fui chiquita, y aquí me ves."

[75] "Los niños crecían, era cierto. Pocas cosas en el mundo eran tan ciertas."

well as facial hair sprouting from her upper lip and chin; in the version for children, no such hairy details are mentioned, but her make-up is excessive like Adriana's in "The Photographs," her hair curled into ringlets, false lashes framing her eyes and pearly gloss on her lips (*Las invitadas* 126; *La naranja maravillosa* 49). Despite the disquieting sheen of the protagonist's appearance in the children's version, both images of Icera are grotesque in their evocation of what Vanessa Joosen calls "the social distinction between a child's and an adult body" (*Adulthood in Children's Literature* 101). The adult tale draws upon the "association [of excessive androgenic hair on feminine bodies] with old age and sickness," and the children's tale presents an incongruence of "bodily adornment" (here Joosen cites anthropologist Terence Turner's notion of *social skin*) and stage of life (101). Both cause dissonance, and Darío's confusion is a stand-in for the reader's. This confusion proves to be productive, however, in Ocampo's ethical consideration of and approach to all-ages literature, which, it is urgent to note, does not equate to reckless agelessness or lack of regard for certain age boundaries.

In both versions, Icera asks Darío for the bridal doll's luxurious light blue box, which she climbs into and which will inhibit her growth even further, itself a comment on marriage and ritual coming-of-age gone wrong. Darío fastens her to the box with ribbons, and a newspaper photographer who is fascinated with her appearance arrives to takes her picture. This documentary detail will be important for the intertext with Lispector's "The Smallest Woman in the World," a tale from *Family Ties* which will be discussed in Chapter Three. The strength of the flash erases her wrinkles momentarily as Icera is immortalized in the newspaper, but as the trick of the light fades away, Ocampo's ending in the children's version pushes child readers to ask themselves if this transformation is beautiful or terrible:

"And that is the end of the prettiest story in the world that takes place in a toy store" (52).[76] Like in Lispector's tales for children, the questions prompted by Ocampo's Kipling-like closing line are never explicitly answered. Ultimately, though, the grotesque and literal nature of Icera's metamorphosis into a doll, in which the blue box becomes a kind of coffin, points to an aspect of Rose's thesis with which Ocampo and Lispector doggedly agree, especially in its application to girlhood: the fetishization and "freezing" of children in time—and the ironic role that ritual can play in such stunting—is dangerous and must be paid mind by authors of children's literature, of literature with child characters, and of all-ages literature.

**Conclusion**

In conclusion, this dissertation seeks to illuminate both the intertexuality and crosstextuality of the all-ages fictions of Silvina Ocampo and Clarice Lispector. This chapter specifically applies intersectional, childhood studies, world literature approaches to the mid-century Latin American context, resulting in a fuller picture of two avant-garde women writers who have been, in a manner of speaking, themselves frozen in time and within certain genres. Their choice to go between, and to use of hybrid forms—hybrid genres and hybrid languages—reflects both the resonances and dissonances of fantastic literature and children's literature, of adult language and children's language, and of Latin American and Anglophone traditions. My aims are to open a critical and translational space in-between, one in which Ocampo and Lispector are dialogic partners who attend to the

[76] "Y este es el fin de la historia más bonita del mundo de las jugueterías."

muteness and silencing of their characters, speaking the unspeakable experiences of girlhood into being, for the sake of silenced others.

## Chapter Two

## Silvina Ocampo's Feminine Doubles: A Study of *Forgotten Journey*'s Girlhood Stories

Mis cuentos, que no son fantásticos—. [My stories, which are not fantastic—.][77]

– Ocampo's 1968 dedication to Norman Thomas di Giovanni, Borges's English-language translator, in a first edition of *Las invitadas* or *The Guests* (1961)

### *Forgotten Journey* and the Emergence of Silvina Ocampo's Writerly Voice

Like most debut works, *Viaje olvidado* or *Forgotten Journey* (1937) occupies a complicated place in the oeuvre of Silvina Ocampo (1903-1993), who until recently was best known for her role alongside Jorge Luis Borges and Adolfo Bioy Casares in redefining the fantastic genre in Argentina. *Forgotten Journey* was Ocampo's first foray into fiction after years of studying surrealist painting in France with Giorgio de Chirico and Fernand Léger, and for some critics it represents her strongest output. For others, including the author's sister Victoria, who published a notoriously acerbic review in *Sur*, its grammatical inconsistencies overwhelm and distract. Its champions and critics alike agree on what

[77] All translations are mine unless otherwise noted. Translations into English of *Viaje olvidado* come from my translation, with Suzanne Jill Levine, of *Forgotten Journey* (City Lights Books 2019). I will include the original Spanish in footnotes, as done here. All original Spanish quotations are from the first edition of *Viaje olvidado* (*Sur* 1937), the only version of the book approved by Ocampo during her lifetime.

Judith Podlubne calls "the strangeness of the narrative voice"[78] and diverge in their admiration or distaste for it (237). Unlike Borges, who condemned his juvenilia, Ocampo grew to value and uphold what she characterized as the innocence or unconsciousness with which she wrote *Forgotten Journey* (Kristal 47; *Encuentros* 14). In an illuminating moment that points to the author's avant-garde influences, Ocampo describes the development of a writer's voice as a process analogous to child language acquisition, the debut work in accord with the babbling stage.[79] The metaphor of a child's first attempts at speech is an apt one for *Forgotten Journey* which, perhaps more than any of Ocampo's later collections, presents the young girl as subject and explores girls' subjectivities. This chapter will analyze the "innocent eye" of *Forgotten Journey*'s narrative: Ocampo's verbal paintings of the young girl's experience, and how the avant-garde aesthetic of her debut work is informed by "how children see," placing her in a global context of modernist artists and authors who turned to infantile creativity to reinvent art and literature (Fineberg 9; 120).

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[78] See Podlubne's 2011 article "'Volverse otra': la extrañeza de la voz narrativa en los primeros relatos de Silvina Ocampo."

[79] While discussing *Viaje olvidado* with Noemí Ulla in 1982, Ocampo reflected on babbling, Borges, and their opposing—and very telling—stances toward immaturity: "Ver cómo son las frases de un cuento, cómo se ha ido desarrollando un cuento a través del tiempo… Por eso es interesante ver cómo han escrito los grandes escritores en el principio de su experiencia. Borges no está de acuerdo con que se toquen las cosas. Él corrige, pero es su pudor, él no quiere que vean cómo ha balbuceado al principio. Yo di a una alemana *Viaje olvidado* y quería traducirlo. Se enojó un poco conmigo, me dijo 'esos balbuceos… He traducido a fulano; a tal otro; a tal otro, y esos balbuceos de *Viaje olvidado*…'" (37-38). ["To see what the sentences of a story are like, how a story has gone on developing over time… That's why it's interesting to see how the great writers were writing at the beginning of their experience. Borges disagrees with meddling in such things. He corrects his early work, but it is a source of shame for him, and he doesn't want anyone to see how he babbled at the start. I gave *Viaje olvidado* to a German woman and she wanted to translate it. She ended up getting a bit angry with me, she said 'those babbles… I've translated so-and-so, this, that, and the other thing, and the babbling of *Viaje olvidado…*'"].

As seen in Chapter One, Ocampo's enduring interest in the child's perspective, language, and creativity took various forms throughout her career. When asked who her favorite painter was, Ocampo would reply, "un niño" (*El dibujo del tiempo* 177). She identified her favorite heroine in literature as Hans Christian Andersen's little seamaid, thus declaring the text literature, not children's literature (178). Fiona J. Mackintosh cites the countless editions in translation of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* as a testament to its "extreme and continuing popularity" in Argentina and in Ocampo's literary circles (3). In *Alice to the Lighthouse Children's Books and Radical Experiments in Art*, Juliet Dusinberre argues that the development of modernist fiction sprang from *Alice*: "Radical experiments in the arts in the early modern period began in books which Lewis Carroll and his successors wrote for children" (5). Virginia Woolf, who Ocampo admired, "referred to her own need for a childish vision," Dusinberre tells us; Ocampo referred to a similar need when she wrote that an adult artist "may try to imitate a child but will never reach that perfection" (Dusinberre 2; *Encuentros* 15).[80] In *Forgotten Journey*, however, rather than imitating children's speech, she allows it to inform her avant-garde construction of the young girl as subject for an adult audience, often calling upon the way children learn and use language in her prose.

[80] She laments the loss of her childhood writings: "Todo eso que yo escribía cuando era chica lamentablemente se ha perdido, porque veo que los chicos escriben cosas muy interesantes, cosas simples y directas. Encuentran una frase simple, que no encuentra una persona adulta, aunque se esfuerce en imitar a un niño, nunca llega a esa perfección." ["All that I wrote when I was a girl has unfortunately been lost, because I see that children write very interesting things, very simply and directly. They find a simple phrase that an adult wouldn't find, though they may try to imitate a child they will never reach that perfection."]

Ocampo's prose is situated similarly to babble, which Weld (2014) locates "at the boundaries of discourse."

> A psychoanalytical approach to language thus reveals how the avant-garde liberates itself from conventional forms of signification by returning to the origins of meaning in the infantile state before language. Children's babble, which is analogously located at the boundaries of discourse, thus provides a source of linguistic renewal that proves productive for those who practice and theorize infantile primitivism. Through the practice of infantilism, and a consciously infantile approach to language and form, the avant-garde seeks to create new forms of art with a renegotiated relationship to meaning. (Weld 5)

Ocampo's narrative voice draws on her belief in a consciously childlike approach to language. "One issue for language acquisition is how children find out which meanings there are words for; another is just how they map each meaning to the right word," Eve V. Clark writes *in First Language Acquisition* (2003: 9). The sentences that make up Ocampo's stories contain synaesthesia, animism, contradictions, words used outside their usual contexts—often by children who have heard them for the first time as the story takes place—and experimental syntax that mixes spoken and written, Spanish and English. (Her multilingual experimentation, found most strongly in *Forgotten Journey*, is also in step with the babbling stage; Jakobson proposed that infants babble the sounds of all languages [Jakobson in Clark 104].) The foundational nature of babble—its continuity with the sounds that show up in a child's linguistic repertoire even years after babbling has ceased—echoes another element of Ocampo's debut (Clark 104). In *Forgotten Journey* we see the multimodal, multilingual process by which Ocampo locates her writerly voice at its most unadulterated—an emergent voice she returns to only in her last and posthumous works.

Ocampo employs a liberal use of girlhood in *Forgotten Journey*, and the child's consciousness often informs her descriptions of adolescent, adult, and aged characters.

Like in the fiction of Woolf, whose authorial "mind often displays the consciousness of the child when she was not in fact writing of children," childhood memory and coming of age form the collection's undercurrent (Coveney in Dusinberre 2). In *The Labyrinth of Solitude* (1950) Octavio Paz defines adolescence as "a break with the world of childhood and a pause on the threshold of the adult world" (Kemp, trans. 203).[81] This break is not always clean, especially when trauma is involved in the transition, and Ocampo's stories dwell in the space in-between girlhood and womanhood. Ocampo's intense focus on childhood—in particular the vulnerable, in some ways ephemeral, in some ways perpetual, moment of girlhood—is among the strategies that distinguish her practice of the fantastic from her male contemporaries. It also distinguishes *Forgotten Journey* from her later works; its deep-feeling prose and unique narrative voice, shaped by the language of concealment and the child's imagination, takes seriously the trauma of young girls, the collective voicing of which gave rise to the twenty-first-century #MeToo and #NiUnaMenos movements in the Americas. Some of the stories dare you to look away as a reader—especially those that show violence against young girls—but they display hard-earned truths about the treatment of women and children during and after Ocampo's time. *Forgotten Journey* presents a different side of Ocampo, and it showcases her writing at its most feminist, idiosyncratic, and subversive. Like Woolf in *To the Lighthouse*, Ocampo draws on the child's consciousness and overtly displays the influence of children's literature—especially Alice and the little seamaid as heroines—on *Forgotten Journey*'s short fictions.

[81] "La adolescencia es ruptura con el mundo infantil y momento de pausa ante el universo de los adultos" (Paz 350).

## The Feminine Double: *Forgotten Journey*'s Rewritings of Carroll and Andersen's Girlhood Tales

As established in Chapter One, Carroll and Andersen in their most well-known tales represent the dual consciousness of the young girl who is on the precipice of coming of age. After Alice falls down the rabbit hole, for example, a glimpse of "the loveliest garden you ever saw" occasions the first of her many disorienting physical transformations, often said to represent the confusion of adolescence (8). The doorway to the garden is no bigger than a mouse hole, and Alice must "shut up like a telescope" in order to pass through (Carroll 11). After shrinking, she realizes she forgot to grab the key, impossible to reach at her current size, and sits down to cry. Alice reprimands herself both for the mistake and for crying, and the narrator likens this instance to a time she boxed her own ears after cheating during a croquet match that "she was playing against herself." The narrator explains Alice's behavior, which he (there's something decidedly male and adult about the narrator's voice) characterizes as strange: "this curious child was very fond of pretending to be two people" (12). Alice not only embodies two people during this croquet game; when she scolds herself afterward, she is also two people at once: child and adult, self and Other, I and Thou. The book's next croquet game—with hedgehogs as balls, flamingoes as mallets, soldiers contorting their bodies into arches, and players playing all at once—occurs at the height of Wonderland's grip on Alice. Which is curiouser, Lewis Carroll invites us to ask, this absurd and chaotic match or a child pretending to be two people?

Carroll's concern for the interrelated themes of perspective, embodiment, and metamorphosis recall another children's literature heroine: Hans Christian Andersen's little seamaid. When Alice consumes the cake that makes her grow taller, her first worry is her feet moving farther and farther away, out of her reach (13-4). Who will put on her

stockings and shoes, she wonders? When the seamaid turns fifteen and is of age to visit the water's surface, her grandmother "adorns" her, attaching decorative oysters to the fish tail she eventually trades for legs (65). Both the ritual-sanctioned and transgressive transformations cause her physical pain, but the latter she chooses and seeks out, trading in her voice[82] for a walk that feels like stepping on knives but appears graceful (66). Camille T. Dungy (2017) reads Andersen's "The Little Sea-Maid" through the intersecting lenses of girlhood and womanhood, as a story about "the fact that fitting into the human world is a difficulty beyond words" (38). Still, through the heroine's efforts, she proves a powerfully "fluid figure" for young girls. Dungy reflects on her daughter's obsession with the tale: "She likes the prospect of making a seemingly inaccessible place her home… Who could blame her for coveting such transformational power? Her hero can go anywhere she wants to go. She can breathe anywhere she needs to breathe" (38-9). Underground and underwater, Alice and the little seamaid break through some sort of ceiling or bottom, presenting girl readers with spaces for subversion and agency, and the possibility of refuge from a world intent on controlling their bodies. Yet there's something remarkably solitary and lugubrious about both figures: they imagine other worlds into being to create space for new versions of themselves, but their transformations are largely internal, self-contained, fugitive, and mournful, limited by the masculine, adult, and religious conventions that shape their texts—and ultimately more reflective of their authors' drives than the experiences of girls.

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[82] Both Ocampo and Lispector reconfigure, as we will see, this foundational representation of muteness—and the silencing of feminine voices in fairy tales (Bottigheimer (2009).

Octavio Paz's comments on coming of age and the child's perception of the world recall Jentsch's (1906) observations about the uncanny breakdown of the barrier between animate and inanimate worlds. "The child uses the magic power of language," Paz writes, "to create a living world in which objects are capable of replying to his questions." "Through magic," he continues, "the child creates a world in his own image and thus resolves his solitude" (Kemp, trans. 203).[83] Through Wonderland, a world in her own image (cf. Auerbach 316), Alice confronts her solitude; by finding a way to inhabit the world above ground, the seamaid confronts hers. Both Carroll and Andersen capture the strange sensation of growing, as well as the transition from childhood to adolescence, but the social element of girlhood—what Valerie Hey (1997) calls "the social fact of girls' unique attachments to each other"—is largely missing (2). The influence of Carroll and Andersen on *Forgotten Journey* is apparent, but with one key revision: Ocampo's girl protagonists resolve their solitude—and navigate their coming of age—via friendship rather than individual imagination. Ocampo's use of the theme of the double and layered narrative voice follows this rewriting: a feminine perspective in the Bildungsroman genre is "defined in terms of community and empathy rather than achievement and autonomy," Abel, Hirsch, and Langland (1983: 10) maintain, and this certainly applies to *Forgotten Journey*.

Ocampo places her heroines in the social context in which she wrote: twentieth-century Buenos Aires and its outskirts. The girls that populate *Forgotten Journey*

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[83] "Por la virtud mágica del lenguaje… el niño crea un mundo viviente, en el que los objetos son capaces de responder a sus preguntas… El niño, por virtud de la magia, crea un mundo a su imagen y resuelve así su soledad" (Paz 350).

collaboratively reckon with the world in their possession, rather than creating a new one. While we never meet Ada and Mabel during Alice's adventures underground (Carroll's darker and more threatening but telling original title), Ocampo shows us "the subterranean world of girls' friendships" (Oakley viii) *within* our everyday world, and this, I argue, is the hallmark of her practice of the fantastic. Her use of the double (Rank 1914 and 1971; Freud 1919), a defining motif in fantastic literature, is inseparable from her studies of girlhood relationships. The feminine doubles in *Forgotten Journey* not only reflect Ocampo's abiding interest in children's literature, but also her ethnographic eye. It is a question of mediation that sets her apart from Borges and Bioy Casares, who as fabulists often, like Carroll and Andersen before them, created other worlds (e.g. the planet Tlön in "Tlön, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius," the strange island with two suns in *La invención de Morel*) for their fictions to reflect this one. I take Ocampo's authorial instructions—that her stories should not be read as fantastic fictions—with appropriate skepticism and not as a disavowal of the fantastic genre, but rather as a suggested repositioning of her own take on its conventions, especially those that are rooted in the world of childhood and that overlap with the conventions of children's literature.

**Mediating Fantastic Fiction: Other Worlds Versus Ocampo's Everyday World**

Ocampo, rather than making the unreal real, inflects the everyday with strangeness (Cozarinsky 1970; Mancini 2003; Negroni 2009) and grounds her stories in a recognizable social world. Ocampo often notes the change in seasons taking place in *Forgotten Journey*, and the stories abound with urban gardens, rural gardens, secret gardens, and Carrollesque gardens. Ocampo catalogues the contents of haberdasheries, doctor's offices, bedrooms,

basements, rooftops, and courtyards. The stories in turn become a kind of museum of early twentieth-century Argentine domestic artifacts, an archive of household spaces, objects, and secrets. A strong example of this geographical and seasonal grounding is "The Backwater," a story about the daughters of a ranch caretaker who grow up alongside and then grow apart from the ranch owner's daughters, suggesting that children transgress the boundaries of social class more readily than adults. The opening sentence orients the reader: "The Backwater Ranch was four hours away by train, to the west of Buenos Aires," Ocampo writes.[84] The next image, informed by the child's consciousness and surroundings, shows a surreal warping of the countryside, as the image of a common domestic fixture intrudes on the outdoor landscape: "The country was so flat that the horizon climbed up the sky on all four sides, in the shape of a bathroom sink. Chinaberry trees flourished on the grasslands, plum-colored in the summer and golden in autumn" (15).[85] Even when the everyday world feels like another world in Ocampo's tales, domestic spaces reign. The girls that populate *Forgotten Journey* are trapped in a world where their agency is disallowed, unlike Alice and the seamaid who, written by men, break through to other worlds to recover their agency; the act of writing forgotten girlhood stories, however, offers a similar breakthrough for women writers like Ocampo, and in the act of reading, her heroines are translated and the girlhoods they come to represent are remembered, no longer trapped in one time or place.

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[84] "La estancia 'El Remanso' quedaba a cuatro horas de tren, en el oeste de Buenos Aires" ("El Remanso" 28).

[85] "Era un campo tan llano que el horizonte subía sobre el cielo, por los cuatro lados, en forma de palangana. Había varios montes de paraísos color de ciruela en el verano y color de oro en el otoño" ("El Remanso" 28).

As critics have noted, *Forgotten Journey* is particularly interested in telling the stories of girls and women. The majority of the twenty-eight stories have feminine protagonists (a few that don't instead engage boyhood and masculine adolescence, others explore romantic relationships, usually from the perspective of a male protagonist, an interesting subversion of traditionally gendered plots), and fourteen have protagonists who are young girls. Eight of these feature two girls at the center of the narrative, either best friends or sisters;[86] one features a young girl's friendship with an adult woman;[87] three explore a girl's role within her family;[88] and three more have characters who are hybrid selves of sorts, women remembering or embodying their girlhoods with such potency that some critics have misread their narrative voice as that of a young girl (cf. Henighan).[89] In these cases, Ocampo creates images of agelessness, of liminality, and of child and adult encompassing one another. "The Olive Green Dress," for example, opens with a quotidian description of a schoolteacher, who has travelled the world, buying hairpins at a haberdashery. An *Alice*-like animism kick-starts the passage, and Miss Hilton energetically commands the movement of the objects around her: "The display windows stepped forward

[86] "Cielo de claraboyas" or "Skylight," "El Remanso" or "The Backwater," "El caballo muerto" or "The Dead Horse," "Las dos casas de Olivos" or "The Two Houses of Olivos," "Siesta en el cedro" or "Siesta in the Cedar Tree," "Extraña visita" or "A Strange Visit," "Día de santo" or "Saint's Day," and "El Pabellón de los Lagos" or "The Pavilion on the Lakes."

[87] "El pasaporte perdido" or "The Lost Passport."

[88] "Viaje olvidado" or "Forgotten Journey," "Nocturno" or "Nocturne," and "La familia Linio Milagro" or "The Linio Milagro Family."

[89] "El vestido verde aceituna" or "The Olive Green Dress," "El corredor ancho de sol" or "The Wide and Sunny Terrace," and "La calle Sarandí" or "Sarandí Street."

to greet her. The only reason she had left the house that morning was to go shopping" (11).[90] Ocampo then describes Miss Hilton's physical appearance:

> She was ageless, and just when one noticed the deepest wrinkles on her face, or her long white braids, it was possible to catch an unexpected glimpse of her youth in some childlike gesture. Other times she seemed to have the smooth skin of a young girl and light blond hair, precisely at a moment when she looked as if old age had caught up with her. (11)[91]

The confusion of youth and old age—and their closeness, in fact, their intimate interaction with one another—destabilizes traditional, linear views of aging. Implied in the image is that neither childhood nor old age is a fixed state, and that girlhood persists, even if only in glimpses.

All of the stories engage a complex social construction of girlhood, especially when read through the lens of contemporary childhood studies scholar Robin Bernstein's childhood-as-performance framework (2013). *Forgotten Journey* offers a glimpse into the lives of young girls—and how childhood was imagined and performed across lines of gender, sexuality, class, race, and geography in early twentieth-century Latin America. This glimpse is of course profoundly shaped and limited by Ocampo's own positionality and immense privilege, but her foregrounding of characters and bodies so often overlooked in literature is an important precedent worthy of critical attention. Ocampo was notably, like the little seamaid, the youngest of six sisters—a number she references in two of

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[90] "Las vidrieras venían a su encuentro. Había salido nada más que para hacer compras esa mañana" ("El vestido verde aceituna" 22).

[91] "No tenía ninguna edad y uno creía sorprender en ella un gesto de infancia, justo en el momento en que se acentuaban las arrugas más profundas de la cara y la blancura de las trenzas. Otras veces uno creía sorprender en ella una lisura de muchacha joven y un pelo muy rubio, justo en el momento en que se acentuaban los gestos intermitentes de la vejez" (22-3).

*Forgotten Journey*'s girlhood stories (cf. "Sarandí Street" and "The Linio Milagro Family").

Ocampo was a member of the white, wealthy, and famed Ocampo family, but she always feared being an "etcetera," and her friendships as a young girl crossed class lines, which upset her relatives and shows up in *Forgotten Journey*. "My family thought it was a really bad thing, that I would have those friendships. They were scared that they would steal from me, that they would infect me with some disease, that they would do who knows what to me," she said in an interview (Ocampo in Enriquez 13).[92] *Forgotten Journey*, following its author's positionality, is in many ways emblematic of white upper-class Argentinian girlhood, which I will name and analyze as such, taking an intersectional approach, which as scholars have noted (Orellana 2009; Konstantoni and Emejulu 2017) is very much compatible with a childhood studies approach. As Konstantoni and Emejulu write:

> Even though childhood studies has a key concern with age as a social category, there are many different childhoods and 'childhood' is not a universal and homogenous experience. Childhoods are constituted by the particular dynamics of gender, race, disability, sexuality, class and geography. Perhaps intersectionality and childhood studies are closer than might first appear. If the starting point of understanding childhood is not necessarily a homogenous and universalising notion of 'age' but, rather, 'difference,' this creates a powerful link between intersectionality and childhood studies. (11)

Rather than presenting Ocampo's construction of girlhood as representative of all Latin American girlhoods, I will be mindful of both the depth and limitations of her own

[92] "A mi familia le parecía muy mal que yo tuviera esas amistades. Tenía miedo de que me robaran algo, de que me contagiaran alguna enfermedad, de que me hicieran quién sabe qué cosa."

perspective, and of her simultaneously marginalized yet privileged position that permeates the collection. [93]

In 1994 Marta Peixoto remarked that Lispector's *Family Ties* is rarely analyzed as a collection: "*Family Ties* contains Lispector's most celebrated, studied, and anthologized short stories, and yet the collection is rarely read in its entirety as a set of interacting texts" (*Passionate Fictions* 24). Though *Forgotten Journey* does not contain Ocampo's canonical texts (in fact, quite the opposite, though that is changing), it also has not yet been read as a collection. In response, I analyze *Forgotten Journey* as an interlocking whole—as a collection organized around the question of perspective, especially that of the young girl. I argue that the pair of characters Leonor and Elena, who appear in several stories, form a thread that runs throughout the collection, pointing readers to the book's obsession with feminine doubling within the social context of girlhood. When Leonor and Elena appear in separate stories, I argue that they are not merely different characters who coincidentally have the same name; instead I show that Ocampo invites a reading of the collection in which they are in fact the same characters and in which their identities blur. As we'll see, Leonor first appears in "Skylight," Elena first appears in "Siesta in the Cedar Tree," and both Leonor and Elena appear as close friends in "Strange Visit." This reading highlights

[93] Following the legacy of gender studies in a childhood studies approach, I will most often use the inclusive term feminine rather than female. Ocampo was a queer writer, and her characters are not only frequently cis women and girls, but also gender nonconforming; she rewrote Blue Beard (Barba Azul in Spanish) as Bárbara Azul; in her posthumous novel *The Promise* a character is born Gabriela but is frequently called and embodies the name Gabriel; and Ocampo dedicates a gender-bending poem to Saint Theodora, who identified as a woman but presented as a man in order to gain entrance to a monastery (see Zullo-Ruiz 2016).

the girls' subjectivities and gives necessary context for their close friendship, while also pointing to the stories' shared world.

The stories with friendships across class lines in *Forgotten Journey* are also of particular interest ("The Backwater," "The Two Houses of Olivos," "Siesta in the Cedar Tree," and "Saint's Day") because they dramatize what Valerie Hey identifies as the "intense sources of personal affiliation" among young and adolescent girls in *The Company She Keeps: An Ethnography of Girls' Friendship* (136). Hey's ethnography clarifies the root of the feminine double in Ocampo: "It is precisely the lack of powerful *public* discourses for different groups of girls that potentiates the significance of girls' *private* relations with each other" (132, original emphasis). The girlfriendships, to use Hey's term, in Ocampo are constantly in dialogue with a social world into which young girls do not readily fit as subjects and are instead objectified. In turn, the girls turn to each other to make sense of their identities.

> Girls have to make sense of themselves *against* other girls but they have to do so not in conditions of their own choosing. We can locate some of the key features of girls' relations here. We have seen girls' longings for certain girls, for a sense of belonging to certain groups, and argued that these affinities resonate as another politics of 'desire' played out in the inclusions and exclusions of personal forms of feminine intimacies (see Steedman 1986: 33). There is however more to it than that. Not only were 'places' desired, they were loathed, not only wanted, they were repudiated. Moreover… the 'places' were *embodied* by 'other girls' and all they represented – looks, clothes, manners… (Hey 136, original emphasis)

Ocampo both affirms and disrupts this notion of *place*, and how it is embodied by the trappings and *gyrela* of girlhood. Her focus on the domestic spaces that girls inhabit and subvert complements this key doubling dynamic.

**Urban Gardens, Childhood Spaces, and Haunted Objects**

The opening, Alice-like image of *Forgotten Journey* is a garden seen through a child's eyes—a garden wrought of iron in an elevator gate, signifying the book's first journey—and its early twentieth-century Buenos Aires setting: "The elevator gate had gold chalices with flowers and spirals of black iron foliage that would catch your eye when you were sad, watching, hypnotized by those huge snakes, the uncoiling elevator cables" (3).[94] The narrator, a young girl whose exact age is never given, but who is likely around six or seven years old, spends Saturdays at her aunt's house, a house that is mysterious, gothic, and personified, like those found in the tales of Henry James and, most prominently, *The Turn of the Screw*. Like most of *Forgotten Journey*, "Skylight" immediately feels like a painting in its visual detail, and recalls one painting in particular by Ocampo's mentor. De Chirico's 1939 *The Anxious Journey* seems straightforward at first: one end of the canvas depicts a moving train, represented realistically, but as the viewer's gaze moves toward the other end of the canvas, the painting grows darker and becomes disorienting, the train's path disrupted. "Skylight" uncoils in this hypnotizing way, like a dizzying train ride or like the elevator cables that ominously resemble snakes during a descent. Ocampo begins with a precise image, a young girl's seemingly straightforward memory of spending Saturdays her aunt's house, but the story takes a sudden plunge into uncertainty that is made possible by its child narrator.

*Forgotten Journey*'s fantastic atmosphere is established immediately in "Skylight" and is deeply rooted in the child's partial perspective as an observer of the sometimes cruel

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[94] "La reja del ascensor tenía flores con cáliz dorado y follajes rizados de fierro negro donde se enganchan los ojos cuando uno está triste viendo desenvolverse, hipnotizados por las grandes serpientes, los cables del ascensor" ("Cielo de claraboyas" 9).

adult world—in this case quite literally, as the child looks up to watch another family through a skylight. Ocampo uncharacteristically writes in the first person here, and readers see only what the young girl sees, which creates a palpable tension:

> It was my oldest aunt's house, where I was taken on Saturdays to visit. Above the hall in that house with a skylight was another mysterious home, and through the glass you could see a family of feet, surrounded by halos, like saints, and the shadows of the rest of the bodies to which those feet belonged, shadows flattened like hands seen through bathwater. There were two tiny feet and three pairs of big feet, two with spiked high heels which took short steps. (3)[95]

Disembodied feet are clear to the narrator, but the rest of the scene is murky or changed, as if seen through bathwater, Ocampo writes, an image that is itself grounded in the child's knowledge or perception of the world, during a stage when bath time was a form of play. The image of the little and big feet—the contrast in size, and the fact that the little feet are outnumbered three to one—previews the story's central conflict: "Skylight," and *Forgotten Journey* as a whole, explores the power dynamics between children and adults, in this case how children are vulnerable to caregivers who abuse their power.

The story then arrives at a defining motif of *Forgotten Journey,* objects—often trunks, suitcases, or travel chests, symbolic of journeys—that seem to move on their own, without the aid of human hands. (Ocampo's first children's story is called *El cofre volante*, or *The Flying Trunk,* and it's worth noting that Andersen has a tale with an identical name.) In another story called "Sarandí Street," the only other story told in the first person in the

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[95] "Era la casa de mi tía más vieja adonde me llevaban los sábados de visita. Encima del hall de esa casa con cielo de claraboyas había otra casa misteriosa en donde se veía vivir a través de los vidrios una familia de pies aureolados como santos. Leves sombras subían sobre el resto de los cuerpos dueños de aquellos pies, sombras achatadas como las manos vistas a través del agua de un baño. Había dos pies chiquitos, y tres pares de pies grandes, dos con tacos altos y finos de pasos cortos" ("Cielo de claraboyas" 9-10).

collection, Ocampo also writes about an adult's abuse of a young girl—a woman reflects on the sexual trauma she suffered as a child at the hands of a strange man. Ocampo begins "Sarandí Street" by stating, "The gardens and houses looked as if a move were underway; invisible trunks seemed to float on the breeze" (79).[96] It's an image that's repeated throughout the collection that seems to ask: How does change happen? Here Ocampo invokes the connection between territorial passages and rites of passage (van Gennep 1909: 15-6). How does coming of age—represented as a trip or voyage, a child's journey into adulthood—happen? What happens when it is abrupt and violent? In "Skylight,"

> Trunks moved across the floor with the noise of a thunderstorm, but the family never seemed to travel. They always sat in the same bare room, unfolding newspapers while melodies flowed incessantly from the player piano, which was always stuck on the same tune. From time to time, voices bounced like balls against the floor or fell quietly onto the rug. (3)[97]

Ocampo's first-person voice in this paragraph captures the innerworkings of childhood cognition and imagination—animism in particular, in which objects have agency because key information—the connecting threads of everyday adult life—is invisible or missing or understood differently in the child's eyes. This point of view is represented spatially here, and domestic spaces are described in powerful detail. Ocampo also emphasizes the connection between adult matters or conversations and childhood games, in the last paragraph, in which the family's voices are compared to balls bouncing against the floor.

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[96] "Los jardines y las casas adquirían aspectos de mudanza, había invisibles baúles flotando en el aire" ("La calle Sarandí" 117).

[97] "Viajaban baúles con ruido de tormenta, pero la familia no viajaba nunca y seguía sentada en el mismo cuarto desnudo, desplegando diarios con músicas que brotaban incesantes de una pianola que se atrancaba siempre en la misma nota. De tarde en tarde, había voces que rebotaban como pelotas sobre el piso de abajo y se acallaban contra la alfombra" ("Cielo de claraboyas" 10).

Ocampo's concern for the secret life of objects permeates the collection. In one moving and funny story, "The Enmity of Things," a young man begins to feel that the everyday items in his life are conspiring against him. His name and age are never given, but he seems to be in his twenties. He starts to "feel vastly and unaccountably apprehensive about all the things that surround him. Sometimes it was a tie, other times a sweater or a suit that seemed to provoke his misery" (24).[98] When he wears a blue cardigan that his mother ordered for him, his girlfriend is distant. Filled with anxiety, he takes a train to his family's countryside home to reacquaint himself with childhood memories:

> He could barely remember the time when he was a boy on this ranch, how he had loved the walk he had to take at night: with only a kerosene lamp or the light of the moon to guide him from the dining table to the room where he slept, a certain joy would take him by the hand, leading him across the courtyard. (25-6)[99]

This memory prompts a moment of realization that the blue cardigan is the culprit, and when he returns home and undresses, it feels "like being set free" (26).[100] His girlfriend calls on the telephone the moment he removes the cardigan, and her "tenderness [is] for him alone—a bed to sleep in when exhausted" (26).[101] The last line, which compares a relationship to a place of rest and respite in an otherwise restless story, draws on beds as

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[98] "una aprensión inmensa crecía insospechadamente por todas las cosas que lo rodeaban. A veces era una corbata, a veces era una tricota o un traje que le parecía que provocaba su desgracia" ("La enemistad de las cosas" 42).

[99] "Ya no se acordaba más: cuando era chico, en esa estancia le gustaba tener que cruzar la noche alumbrada por una lámpara de kerosene o por la luna, para llegar desde el comedor hasta el cuarto de dormir, y esa felicidad lo había llevado siempre de la mano al cruzar el patio" (43).

[100] "al desvestirse había sentido como una liberación" (44).

[101] "la ternura de su novia era para él solo: una cama donde uno se duerme cuando uno está muy cansado" (44).

signifiers in children's books (Nikolajeva and Taylor 147). Ocampo represents how our childhoods (symbolized by the magical cardigan) continue to shape our adolescent selves (symbolized by the protagonist's time alone on the ranch), and the ending—a moment of genuine connection between the protagonist and his girlfriend—feels like an arrival in the world of adulthood. Octavio Paz's observation about adolescence (as "a break with the world of childhood and a pause on the threshold of the adult world") holds true here. For Paz, this break is defined by extreme self-consciousness and solitude, which is "the distinctive characteristic of adolescence" (203).[102] I would add that solitude is a distinctive characteristic of traditional portrayals of masculine adolescence within the Bildungsroman genre—a trait that is visible in Andersen and Carroll's tales. "The Enmity of Things" is about this self-contained, self-conscious pause for a young man, while adolescence for *Forgotten Journey*'s teenage girls is social rather than utterly solitary. In both cases, however, Ocampo's concern for coming of age and the role that domestic spaces and objects play—from skylights and corridors to suits and cardigans—unite the stories in *Forgotten Journey.*

In the collection's girlhood stories, these domestic spaces and objects are often used to highlight how the bodies of young girls are vulnerable to outside control, abuse, and violence. Returning to "Skylight," the owner of the small pair of feet, a little girl named Celestina, is left alone with a strange caregiver who wears sinister, strict lace-up booties and a black hoop skirt, contrasted with Celestina's bare feet and white night gown. "Skylight" takes a sinister turn and, like other stories in the book, shows a child's first

[102] "la nota distintiva de la adolescencia" (Paz 351).

brush with trauma—and her resulting abrupt initiation into adult life. Our narrator watches as the woman (referred to as "la pollera" or "the hoop skirt," all that is visible to the child watching from below, a perspective that echoes the opening image, the narrator dwarfed by the elevator cables) first punishes Celestina for being up past her bedtime, then as the punishment turns deadly, and as the woman pretends it was an accident when Celestina's parents return from their night out. When Celestina apparently dies, "a vast silence [takes] over, as if the whole house had moved to the countryside; the chairs sat in a silent circle where visitors had been the day before" (5).[103] Witnessed by another powerless child alone (the empty chairs symbolize the absence of adults), the events are even more tragic and uncertain: "all the feet that entered turned into knees… You could no longer see a single foot, and the black hoop skirt had become a kneeling saint, bowed lower than anyone else on the glass" (5).[104] Ocampo follows this last image of the scene with white space, and then a final paragraph—a kind of anti-epiphany—that initially appears quite disconnected from the rest of the story. [105]

**Leonor and Celestina: "Skylight"**

> The final paragraph of "Skylight" reads:
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> Celestina was singing 'The Chimes of Normandy' and running with Leonor behind the trees in the plaza, around the statue of San Martín [a public

[103] "Había un silencio inmenso; parecía que la casa entera se había trasladado al campo; los sillones hacían ruedas de silencio alrededor de las visitas del día anterior" (13).

[104] "todos los pies que entraron se transformaron en rodillas… Ya no se veía ningún pie y la pollera negra se había vuelto santa, más arrodillada que ninguna sobre el vidrio" (13).

[105] When my co-translation of "Skylight" appeared in the *New Yorker* online flash fiction series in July 2019, it was published without the final paragraph for this reason.

> landmark in Buenos Aires.] She wore a sailor dress and had a horrible fear of dying while crossing the street" (5).[106]

It leaves the reader wondering, who is Leonor? When does this memory take place in relation to the rest of the story? To whom does this memory belong? Ocampo doesn't provide easy answers to these questions, but a little girl named Leonor appears in another *Forgotten Journey* story, "A Strange Visit." In "A Strange Visit," which I'll discuss in more detail later, Leonor reflects on a memorable playdate with her dear friend Elena (who also appears in another story called "Siesta in the Cedar Tree") and longs for another visit. I read the last paragraph of "Skylight," coupled with the events of "Siesta," as a preview of the friendship shown in "A Strange Visit." I argue that this memory of Celestina belongs to the first-person narrator of "Skylight," who is Leonor.

In the final paragraph, offset by white space, readers find out that the narrator was friends with Celestina, which dramatically changes the impact of the story and introduces us to the character of Leonor. It wouldn't be the only time in *Forgotten Journey* that Ocampo abruptly and briefly shifts the narrative voice, in this case from first to third person. (In "Siesta in the Cedar Tree," a switch from third to first person happens, which I'll discuss later.) It's worth noting that the narrator of "Sarandí Street," a survivor of childhood sexual abuse, also has a fear of crossing the street (evoked in Ocampo's choice of title), as referenced in the Introduction, though her assault takes place in her attacker's home while she is alone. That Ocampo mentions fear of crossing the street twice reflects the folk belief regarding its danger: the danger of crossing a threshold, of unprotected

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[106] "Celestina cantaba 'Les Cloches de Corneville', corriendo con Leonor detrás de los árboles de la plaza, alrededor de la estatua de San Martín. Tenía un vestido marinero y un miedo horrible de morirse al cruzar las calles" (13-4).

liminal space, and of the transition from the individual or familial to the communal. For young girls, the private, domestic sphere can be just as threatening as the public sphere, if not more so, Ocampo suggests. Narrative threads emerge across these interrelated stories that show the collection operating as a whole, in order to illustrate the complex moment of girlhood. "Skylight" introduces Leonor as a young girl who has witnessed the death of her friend; in "Siesta in the Cedar Tree" we meet Elena, another young girl who suffers her first major loss. In fact, many of the girlhood stories in the collection prominently feature actual rather than symbolic loss, as Ocampo subverts the traditional Bildungsroman plot; it is not an abstract loss of innocence, she warns, but the wounding or death of young girls that brings about the end of childhoods both individual and writ large.

**Elena and Cecilia: "Siesta in the Cedar Tree"**

In "Siesta in the Cedar Tree," Elena loses her best friend, Cecilia, to tuberculosis and struggles to understand her grief. Here coming of age also happens abruptly, in the child's first brush with trauma or confrontation with death. The story contains exquisite descriptions of the intimacy between young girls, children's knowledge in a world controlled by adults, and fleeting images of summertime in Buenos Aires—an apt setting for Elena's accelerated coming of age. The image that bookends the story—the label on a Humphrey's Witch Hazel bottle, which Elena uses after she falls on purpose and hurts her knees—also exemplifies Ocampo's brand of the fantastic, in which the mundane objects that become indelibly intertwined with our early experiences give form to our otherwise ineffable childhood memories. That Ocampo chooses Witch Hazel evokes both Alice's "drink me" moment (and the way children must heed warning labels on bottles), the story's

symbolic use of trees and natural imagery, and the young girl as a witchlike, subversive figure.

Elena deliberately falling off the swings also recalls Alice boxing her own ears, and the passage shows Elena adjusting to a reality without Cecilia without the help of adults:

> Swinging higher and harder to reach the highest branches, then dragging her feet on the ground to stop short and letting go of the swing suddenly, she had finally succeeded in falling. Nobody heard her in that house of sleeping shutters at siesta hour. She cried, her face against the ground, her mouth filling with pebbles and tears—. (57)[107]

While her rushed movement on the swings is symbolic of Elena's development, maturation, and sexuality, the house is personified to highlight Elena's solitude, the ignorance of her caregivers, and a child manufacturing an opportunity to express her grief, much like the text itself. Ocampo portrays the shutters as eyelids sleeping against the windows, just as the adults are sleeping at siesta time, unaware of or deliberately turning away from their daughter's whereabouts. The passage closes with two images of Cecilia's absence, palpably felt by Elena: "any tear that wasn't shared seemed wasted, lost like a forgotten penance… She came crashing down so that someone would feel her suffering as she kneeled, baring her knees like two wounded little hearts" (57).[108] Elena's grief is unparalleled, though she wishes to share it with someone. The story as a whole, as well as the image of Elena's two injured knees resembling two little hearts (hers and Cecilia's)

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[107] "Hamacándose fuerte, fuerte, hasta la altura de las ramas más altas y luego arrastrando los pies para frenar se había agachado tanto y había soltado tan de golpe los brazos que, finalmente, logró caerse. Nadie la había oído, las persianas de la casa dormían a la hora de la siesta. Lloró contra el suelo mordiendo las piedras, lágrimas perdidas" ("La siesta en el cedro" 90-1).

[108] "—toda lágrima no compartida le parecía perdida como una penitencia—. Y se había golpeado para que alguien la sintiera sufrir dentro de las rodillas lastimadas, como si llevara dos corazones chiquitos, doloridos y arrodillados" (91).

engages doubling. Cecilia, for example, has a twin sister, though she is much closer to Elena. Elena and Cecilia explore their Buenos Aires neighborhood together and interpret their place in the world via their friendship—through and against one another.

When Elena first hears the word tuberculosis in relation to Cecilia, Ocampo includes a striking moment of synaesthesia: "What in the world was so sensual about that ivory-colored word?" It's followed by a warning from her nanny and her sister that refers to physical proximity but also suggests that Elena and Cecilia's intimate friendship is somehow dangerous: "'Don't get too close, just in case,' they told her and added softly, 'Be careful if she coughs.'" After their warning (which recalls the warnings of Ocampo's own family about her own girlhood friendships outside her social class), Ocampo returns to Elena's interpretation of meaning as color: "The color changed, the word turned black—the color of a horrible, fatal secret" (58).[109] The original Spanish reads, "*No sé qué* voluptuosidad dormía en es palabra de color de marfil," or "*I* don't know what was so sensual about that ivory-colored word" (emphasis added). I fought to keep the *I*, but we understandably ended up changing it to "What in the world," because the sudden shift in narrative voice—and tense (the rest of the story is written in the past tense)—is confusing and atypical. Who is speaking in the first person here? Is it Ocampo herself? A brief foray into Elena's adult perspective? Another unnamed narrator? It's left unanswered, but this moment shows Ocampo experimenting in a way that also appears in "Skylight." This narrative play coincides with Ocampo inhabiting the child's imagination. Both "Skylight" and "Siesta" include images that remind adult readers of childhood discoveries—hands

[109] "'No te acerques mucho a ella, por las dudas', le dijeron y agregaron despacito: 'Fíjate bien si tose': la palabra cambió de color, se puso negra, del color de un secreto horrible, que mata" (91).

seen through bathwater, red stains that flood Elena's vision after she stares at the sun, the white flesh inside an acorn that Cecilia brings her—and Ocampo's language befits these discoveries. What's more, all of these discoveries result from the treatment of the material world as vital, active, and affective.

The story's fantastic atmosphere springs from the simultaneous weight and uncertainty of Elena's experience of Cecilia's death (much like Leonor's experience of Celestina's death). "Siesta in the Cedar Tree" ends with an imagined yet unrealized retreat from the adult world that Elena and Cecilia create for themselves in a cedar tree:

> Elena stood up and peered through the shutters. The gardener dressed in black [Cecilia's father] was laughing. *No one knew that Cecilia had died.* And who was to say, if she waited at the window long enough, that one day she wouldn't reappear, gathering acorns. Elena would run down with a spoon and a bottle of cough syrup, and they would keep running until they reached the cedar tree, where they lived from then on, amid the branches, in a cave of their own making, at siesta hour. (60-1, emphasis added)[110]

Elena's imagined utopia away from adults echoes Alice's radical-at-the-time escape from the confines of Victorian girlhood into a world where she is able to develop her own agency. Ocampo focuses on the tensions between Elena's deeply-felt response to Cecilia's death and the practical or cynical responses of the adults around her. Ocampo scholar Fiona Mackintosh writes that "Ocampo never underestimates the emotional and intellectual resources of the child in the face of death; indeed, the maturity of her child protagonists sometimes deliberately subverts the patronizing assumptions of adults" (108). Marta

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[110] "Elena se levantó y se asomó por la persiana, el jardinero vestido de negro [el papá de Cecilia] se reía con el otro jardinero. Nadie sabía que Cecilia se había muerto, y al fin y al cabo, quién sabe si esperándola mucho en la persiana no llegaría un día juntando bellotas; entonces Elena bajaría corriendo con una cuchara de sopa y un frasco de jarabe para la tos, y se irían corriendo lejos, hasta el cedro donde vivían en una especie de cueva, entre las ramas, a la hora de la siesta" (96-7).

López-Luaces has noted that, "Silvina Ocampo privileges childhood over maturity as a way of subverting the social structures of the adult world—family, friendship, religion, education" (104).[111] The patronizing and controlling treatment of the young girls in the story, as well as their rebellion (for example, Elena and Cecilia avidly drink from the same glass of water, though they have been forbidden to do so by Elena's nanny and sister, another image that evokes Alice responding to the "drink me" label) appears in a similar story about a friendship across class lines.

"Saint's Day" contrasts the lavish birthday parties of Fulgencia with her best friend Celinita's uncelebrated ones. During Fulgencia's birthday, the seven-year-old girls' play is a performance that is closely monitored by adults. "Many visitors, cousins, and older women sat watching the little girls playing, as if in a theater," Ocampo writes. "The adults had conspired that day to make the girls cry if they didn't play with enough enthusiasm or if they felt ashamed" (89-90).[112] Ocampo studies the effect of this constant monitoring with a close eye. Fulgencia is the only daughter in her family, "and for that reason her parents were killing her with incessant reminders that she be careful."[113] These reminders, "transformed into involuntary penitence"[114] (a standout, piercing line about the predicament of daughterhood), cause Fulgencia to rebel (90). She hides from her mother

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[111] "Silvina Ocampo privilegia la infancia sobre la madurez como un modo de subvertir las estructuras sociales del mundo adulto—familia, amistad, religión, educación."

[112] "Había muchas visitas, muchas primas, muchas señoras sentadas en las sillas viendo jugar las chicas como en un teatro… Las personas grandes habían conspirado ese día para hacer llorar a las chicas si no jugaban con bastante entusiasmo o si estaban avergonzadas" ("Día de santo" 133).

[113] "sus padres la mataban de cuidados" (134).

[114] "transformados en penitencias involuntarias" (134).

behind a boat at their home in the Tigre Delta, where the tides soak the lawns, itself an image of liminality, of in-betweenness, of a threatening underwater world infringing on a domestic space. Fulgencia watches as her mother cries out for her repeatedly, which makes her doubt her plan, "[coming] back to life before the amazed eyes of her mother" (91).[115] Paralyzed, she doesn't emerge as she had planned, and night falls. In an *Alice*-inspired image, Fulgencia "cried so much that she was sure she was lost or even dead: she drowned in her tears until the gardener found her" (91).[116] Fulgencia's disappearance and reappearance, as well as her mother's bereaved reckoning with the temporary loss of her daughter, also recalls the Persephone myth. When Celinita tries the same experiment, her mother is busy ironing an apron, and no one comes to look for her except Fulgencia, who fetishizes her friend's poverty. The girls play underground in Fulgencia's basement, in an ordinary scene imbued with strangeness. The girls see remnants of the household objects central to "Skylight": "mysterious landscapes of elevator cables, trellises, feather dusters and broken bottles, trunks filled with huge hoop skirts and giant curtains,"[117] making more apparent the connecting threads of *Forgotten Journey*'s girlhood stories (92).

**Leonor and Elena: "A Strange Visit"**

[115] "resucitar ante los ojos asombrados de su madre" (135).

[116] "Fulgencia se creyó perdida y después muerta en sus lágrimas; hizo movimientos ahogados entre las ramas de bambú hasta que la descubrió el jardinero" (135).

[117] "paisajes misteriosos de cables de ascensor, enrejados, plumeros y botellas rotas, baúles llenos de grandes polleras, de cortinas gigantes" (138).

In “A Strange Visit,” we see Leonor in a period of transition: “Before, she ate her lunch at a small table in the room adjoining the dining room, and now she was allowed to have lunch at the big table” (75).[118] She was promised a trip to the outskirts of Buenos Aires to have a playdate with her father’s friend’s daughter, a little girl named Elena, but it looks like rain will make the trip impossible. She searches for a patch of blue sky and remembers their only past playdate. The description of Elena’s house matches the house in “Siesta,” with its far-reaching garden and the house next door surrounded by flowers, possibly the gardener’s home. During this playdate, like Fulgencia and Celinita in Fulgencia’s basement, Leonor and Elena explore Elena’s house “with all its nooks and crannies,”[119] hiding and growing bored when no one comes looking for them (76). The little girls end up peering into the study where “two men were talking, two men with the severe faces of their fathers, two gentlemen stifling in their serious stiff collars and the smell of cigars” (76).[120] Leonor watches her father wipe tears with a handkerchief that she has only seen him use to pat his forehead dry in the summer. At first she is confused (the room is cold, and her father is wearing an overcoat), and then afraid, when Elena’s father closes the blinds, a reaction to the taboo of adult masculine interiority, disallowed except in private. Elena holds Leonor’s hand, “and they walked as far as the playroom as if they

[118] “Antes almorzaba en una mesita chica en el antecomedor y ahora tenía permiso de almorzar en la mesa grande” (“Extraña visita” 113).

[119] “los recovecos” (114).

[120] “dos señores hablaban, dos señores con las caras severas de sus padres, dos señores ahogados en seriedad de cuello duro y olor a cigarro” (114).

had been ordered to play—but they didn't play" (76).[121] Instead, Elena gives Leonor a medallion as a parting gift, and they say goodbye "with a kiss that sought cheeks next to cheeks, a kiss in the air," a kiss that foreshadows their separation (76).[122]

On the car ride home, Leonor's dad scolds her, and she struggles to reconcile the two versions of her father from the day: the unexpectedly vulnerable man from the study and the stern man she knows well. It begins to rain, and Leonor knows she won't get to see Elena that day. "She felt a vast ocean," suggesting another *Alice*-inspired, watery image of tears, "like the one they taught her about on maps separating her from the face she wanted to reach, as it faded away before her: Elena's" (77).[123] Because Ocampo mentions that Leonor and Elena have only met each other once before, one explanation for their immediate and intimate closeness follows the events of "Skylight" and "Siesta in the Cedar Tree"—that is, they are both little girls who have lost their friends and are craving connection. When Elena's face fades away before Leonor, it recalls a moment in "Siesta" when Elena visits Cecilia's family after her friend's death. Her nanny Micaela sneaks her over to the gardener's house with the performative goal of taking pity on the family. When the family acts as if nothing had happened, Micaela asks if they saved any portraits of Cecilia. The family frantically searches and the only portrait they find is the photograph on the girl's identification card, "already fading, only the outline of her mouth was clear"

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[121] "y caminaron hasta el cuarto de juguetes como si tuviesen la orden de jugar; pero no jugaron" (115).

[122] "con un beso que buscaba mejillas al lado de las mejillas, sobre el aire" (116).

[123] "Sentía que un océano grande como el que le enseñaban en los mapas la tenía alejada del rostro que quería alcanzar, y que se la había borrado, de Elena" (116).

(60).[124] It is this moment—Cecilia's image fading away—that prompts Elena to fall on purpose in a desperate attempt to feel the pain of her loss in a less abstract way (the opposite of the adults' denial of Cecilia's death). The absence of a family album, which Dusinberre notes was popular in Victorian households, serves as a reminder of Elena and Cecilia's class differences, but also recalls Peter Fuller's argument in *Changing Childhood* about photography: "The camera has the capacity to reveal where childhood is being contradicted or denied" (Fuller in Dusinberre 20). Both stories document the divide between caregivers and children and represent young girls' friendships as a refuge from the alienation and pressures of the adult world.

**Girls and Women: "The Lost Passport" and "Nocturne"**

The double of the photograph, as well as the strangeness of an official identification document from the perspective of a child, is the focus of "The Lost Passport," the story of fourteen-year-old Claude Vildrac's transatlantic voyage from Buenos Aires to Liverpool to visit her aunt. The opening image is Claude reading her passport like a prayer book—her 4' 6" height, white skin, blond hair, April 15, 1922 birthday (exactly fourteen years before the publication of *Forgotten Journey,* it's worth noting), her profession left blank—while tracing the contours of her face in her photograph. She worries that if she loses her passport, she'll lose her identity, and no one will know who she is. She is terrified of shipwrecks but also looks forward to the days "running around freely on deck—alone,

[124] "ya estaba media borrada, solo se veía claramente el dibujo de la boca" ("La siesta en el cedro" 96).

alone, alone, without anyone looking after [her]" (32).[125] Ocampo affirms Simone de Beauvoir's comments in *The Second Sex* that distinguish the teenage girl from the young girl: "convinced that she is not understood, her relations with herself are then only the more impassioned: she is intoxicated with her isolation" (340). When other passengers ask her if she is sad to be separated from her family, she says no and reflects on an unsettling visit with her mother to the ship a week before disembarking.

She has her passport photo taken after being assigned a lifeboat, which terrifies her, and the two events are strongly linked in her mind:

> Terror gave Claude the face she is making in her passport, her eyes intensely widening, filling with the waves of storms that sink ships. Her mother had laughed, which to Claude seemed like a deadly omen. She remembered they had eaten lunch that day at a restaurant called *La Sonámbula.* On each plate was a little girl wearing her hair down with arms extended, sleepwalking across a bridge; that girl was actually a woman emerging from a shipwreck, who'd lost her passport when she was fourteen years old, along with her home and family. (33)[126]

Her mother dismissing her fears feels especially cruel, and while on board Claude spends time with another maternal figure, a prostitute named Elvia who Claude perceives as different from the other passengers. Claude overhears an older man call Elvia a *guaranga*, Argentine slang for a vulgar woman, but corrects himself when he notices Claude's scraped

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[125] "muchos días de fiesta corriendo por la cubierta, sola, sola, sola, sin que nadie me cuide" ("El pasaporte perdido" 51).

[126] "El terror le puso a Claude el rostro que tenía en el pasaporte, los ojos se le habían ensanchado profundamente con las olas de las tormentas que hacen naufragar los barcos. Su madre se había reído, y a Claude le pareció un presagio funesto. Recordó que ese día habían almorzado en un restaurant que se llama *La Sonámbula.* En cada plato había un sonámbula chiquita, de cabello suelto, con los brazos tendidos, cruzando un puente; esa sonámbula era más bien una mujer recién desembarcada de un naufragio, que perdió su pasaporte a los catorce años, su casa y su familia" (53-4).

knees and young age, saying Elvia is instead a "working girl" (translated from the Spanish "una mujer de la vida," an interesting shift from woman to girl in the euphemisms for sex worker across languages). Like Elena hearing the word tuberculosis for the first time, Claude has never heard this term before and is fascinated by Elvia, and Ocampo pairs the two as outsiders on the ship, with Elvia embodying certain features of girlhood.

Elvia is introduced as the person Claude would give her life vest to the day of the shipwreck. Claude's interpretation of her mother's laugh as a deadly omen ultimately comes true: the ship sinks, and Claude runs to the deck, repeating the number of her lifeboat like a litany. Claude notices that Elvia is the only passenger missing, and runs after her. The final scene, especially the very last line of the story, is haunting and ambiguous:

> Elvia, transformed into the sleepwalker on the plate, never arrived. Claude was running after her with a lifejacket in her arms. The ship would sink forever: carrying her name and irreplaceable face to the bottom of the sea. (35)[127]

Ocampo doesn't specify to whom the last line refers, though its invocation of Claude's greatest worry about the journey, as well as the details of her passport (the original Spanish is "cara sin copia," or "her face without a copy," recalling the motif of the double and superstitions surrounding photography popularized by Frazer in *The Golden Bough*), suggests that she sacrifices herself by trying to save Elvia. Elvia is simultaneously portrayed as maternal in the absence of Claude's own mother on the boat (in an earlier scene she sweeps up Claude, who has fallen, like a mother would) and a kind of perpetual teenage girl—a perpetual Alice, stuck in Wonderland—in her embodiment of the solitary

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[127] "Elvia, transformada en la sonámbula del plato, no llegaba nunca, nunca. Claude corría detrás de ella con el salvavidas en los brazos. El barco se hundía para siempre, llevándose su nombre y su rostro sin copia al fondo del mar" (58).

sleepwalker: "The five bottles of perfume she used on herself," Ocampo writes, "made a kind of garden around her, which she kept locked," also invoking *The Secret Garden* (34).[128] Claude's love for Elvia has prompted some reviewers of our translation of *Forgotten Journey* to read her as a teenage girl further marginalized by her queerness. Ocampo does not explicitly reference her adolescent protagonists' sexuality but she indeed opens up a space for their queerness in their disregard for or rejection of heterosexual romantic relationship, which also finds expression in *Forgotten Journey*'s portrayal of intensely intimate girlhood friendships.

Lucía, the protagonist of "Nocturne," shares the simultaneous thrill of being alone and the fear of being separated from an older feminine companion that Claude feels in her adolescence. Lucía's fear of marriage recalls Simone de Beauvoir's discussion of teenage girls developing neurotic conditions and reflects Ocampo's disruption of romantic love as the exclusive function "our culture uses [for women] to absorb all possible Bildung, success/failure, learning education, and transition to adulthood" (de Beauvoir 579; DuPlessis in Tolentino 119).[129] For Lucía, who we meet when she is engaged,

> weddings were something she had to endure, the same as with deaths: first it was her sisters, then her girlfriends, leaving their houses empty when they went away. She didn't believe she would ever wear a wedding gown, besides the one that the tulle of the mosquito net fashioned over her head in the mirror, so lovely to wake up to in the mornings. (72)[130]

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[128] "los cinco frascos de perfume con que se había perfumado hacían como un jardín alrededor de ella, que la guardaba encerrada" (57).

[129] It's interesting to note that in "The Enmity of Things" and elsewhere, Ocampo subverts this gendered narrative structure—love is what propels her male protagonist's coming of age.

[130] "había tenido que cruzar por casamientos como por muertes; primero fueron las hermanas, después las amigas, que dejaban las casas vacías al irse. No había creído nunca que llevaría otro

Lucía remembers the trauma of losing her sister Matilde to marriage, and mourns the era that they would sleep with their beds pushed together, holding hands. The surreal story centers on Lucía's eventual madness—expressed through her obsession with the image of a white wedding dress, which she begins to see everywhere, from the mosquito net in her childhood bedroom (which at that point is lovely as a costume or form of play) to her eventual tragicomic confusion of a tennis net with a white dress that is "laced with a honeycomb pattern on the hemline, cuffs and sleeves" (72).[131] The infringement of death on rituals like weddings, birthdays, and first voyages shows that for young girls and adolescents, Ocampo's fantastic techniques aren't all that fantastic: dissociation, dysmorphia, and doubling are all reflective of the actual experience of inhabiting the space in-between girlhood and womanhood, often much darker and more threatening than is typically acknowledged and accepted in coming-of-age literature (Ocampo was frequently accused of being too cruel and dark in her depiction of childhood).

**The Two "Two Houses of Olivos"**

While the majority of *Forgotten Journey* is written for adults, one story exists in two versions, and a side-by-side comparison shows the influence of children's literature on *all* of Ocampo's writing and how her work dismantles the binary distinction of stories "for adults" and "for children." "The Two Houses of Olivos" (Olivos is a barrio of Buenos

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traje de novia, a no ser el que le hacía el tul del mosquitero, tan lindo al levantarse por las mañanas, sobre su cabeza, en el espejo" ("Nocturno" 109).

[131] "con nidos de abeja en el ruedo, en los puños, en las mangas" (108).

Aires) is a modern fairy tale about two young girls—again, one rich and one poor—who forge an unexpected friendship when they meet at the fence that separates their very different houses, a space marked by liminality and in-betweenness. It's the most straightforward example of doubling in *Forgotten Journey*, and the story itself has a double. "The Two Angels," which opens the 1977 collection *The Magic Orange: Stories for Children Young and Old*, shows Ocampo's revisions of the tale forty years after the original appeared in her debut work. Both versions are twentieth-century retellings of the "Ugly Duckling" filtered through a girlhood lens, and at first glance they're almost identical except the endings, but certain additions to the later version evidence a noteworthy clarification of story's moral. "The Two Angels" (1977), despite being categorized as "for children," is just as dark and strange as "The Two Houses in Olivos" (1937) while also being funnier, more detailed in its exposition, and more precise in its images. In the story's version "for children," Ocampo chooses "profound simplicity,"[132] rather than ambiguity (one of the hallmarks of the fantastic short story "for adults"), and I argue that the children's version is more successful and coherent in its message. The children's version is valuable to any reader of Ocampo's work, and a comparative analysis not only shows her experimentation with narrative form across audiences, but also the progression of her narrative voice after she began publishing stories for children in the seventies.

While translating "The Two Houses of Olivos," I used "The Two Angels," which arguably has cleaner, more vivid sentences, to decode some of Ocampo's most difficult

[132] To use Weld's translation of a Russian phrase describing children's literature.

lines, a process that illuminates some of the sophisticated stylistic properties of children's literature prose. In the version for adults, the girls are unnamed and little is mentioned about their parents; in "The Two Angels," the girls are given names of flowers, Lila and Violeta, and their fathers are described in detail. The two opening paragraphs, in which the girls' houses and lives are contrasted, are almost the same in each tale, but in "The Two Angels" Ocampo adds "Había una vez" ("Once upon a time") at the beginning and one sentence in which she describes the wealthy little girl's (Lila's) house in a way that echoes Henry James's *What Maisie Knew*. James links Maisie's coming of age—her development of interiority, to use the idea put forth by Steedman (1995)—with the animation of her dolls:

> The stiff dolls on the dusky shelves began to move their arms and legs: old forms and phrases began to have a sense that frightened her. She had a new feeling, a feeling of danger; on which a new remedy rose to meet it, the idea of an inner self, or, in other words, of concealment. (James 13)

Lila and Violeta similarly discover concealment, and Ocampo writes of Lila's house that "The dolls were asleep in the corners of the rooms."[133] "Once upon a time" clarifies the story's fairy tale origins, and subtly animating the dolls in the story's first paragraph previews the story's events. Like Elena and Cecilia in "Siesta in the Cedar Tree," siesta time opens up a space for subversion as the girls have time alone, away from their sleeping parents and, in this magical tale, their guardian angels. The guardian angel as a figure adds a layer to the story's preoccupation with doubling: "From [the] shadow-superstition, some scholars believe, developed the belief in a guardian spirit, which in its turn is closely related to the double-motif," writes Otto Rank in his pivotal 1971 study *The Double* (50).

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[133] "Las muñecas dormían en los rincones" (*La naranja maravillosa* 13).

The girls' doubling, meanwhile, is rooted in the fluidity of their subjectivities, what Hey describes as the way girls embody different 'places' in their social sphere: "Not only were 'places' desired… the 'places' were *embodied* by 'other girls' and all they represented – looks, clothes, manners" (136, original emphasis). Ocampo constructs this notion of place quite literally, using the girls' houses and later their appearances. When they meet at the fence, Lila describes her house with all its rooms as ugly, and Violeta echoes her lament. "My house is ugly," Violeta says, describing its small tin structure and proximity to the river. In "The Two Angels," Ocampo adds an affectionate sentence about Violeta's father that's absent from *Forgotten Journey*: "[My house] doesn't have any windows, but my father painted them on the walls, to give us the illusion…" (14).[134] This statement about the function of art—providing windows where there are none—extends to Ocampo's project of offering readers a window into aspects of girlhood that were previously blocked. In both versions, each girl thinks the other's house is lovely, and both contain this sentence after their first meeting: "And each girl left dreaming of the other's house" (*Forgotten Journey* 50 and *The Magic Orange* 14).[135] What happens next is largely the same in both versions as well, but the language is distinct, a consequence of Ocampo's decision to leave the girls unnamed in "The Two Houses of Olivos" and to name them in "The Two Angels."

Like Andersen's tale, which he called his autobiography, Ocampo explores the consequences of birth, family, and class, and the moral of her tale for adults is well-intentioned but ambiguous, and as a result potentially problematic in the same way as

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[134] "[Mi casa] no tiene ventanas, pero mi padre las pintó en las paredes, para darnos la ilusión."

[135] "Y cada una se fue soñando con la casa de la otra" ("Las dos casas de Olivos" 78).

Andersen's. When the girls begin to physically resemble each other, Ocampo seems to suggest that birth into a certain family and class is entirely arbitrary and should be regarded as such. The girls have the same eye and hair color, and they're the same height. "There were just two things different about them: their hands and their feet," Ocampo writes in *Forgotten Journey*. "The girl from the big house removed her shoes and stockings; her feet were smaller and whiter than her friend's, her hands paler and smoother" (50). When the wealthy girl spends the next few days soaking her hands in bleach in a wash basin and walking barefoot on the river's rocky shore, "there was no way to tell them apart, even their respective wishes to switch houses were identical" (50).[136] And so they do. They switch houses and lives and no one notices, not even their adult guardian angels, who in this version are distracted and unaware. A pattern in *Forgotten Journey* is adults not noticing or hearing their children, that is when they're not intent on controlling their children's lives, and these guardian angels are no different.

> One girl gave the other her bare feet, and the other gave her shoes. One girl gave the other her chapped hands, and the other parted with her white gloves. But they forgot to exchange guardian angels! It was siesta time; the angels were asleep in the grass. Both girls jumped over the fence. The one who was in the garden crossed the street. The one who was in the street crossed the garden. (50)[137]

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[136] "había solamente dos cosas distintas en ellas: los pies y las manos. La chica de la casa grande se quitó las medias y los zapatos; tenía los pies más blancos y más chiquitos que su compañera; sus manos eran también más blancas y más lisas… ya nada las diferenciaba, ni siquiera el deseo que tenían de cambiar de casa" (79).

[137] "Una chica le dio a la otra sus pies descalzos, y la otra le dio los zapatos. Una chica le dio a la otra sus guantes de hilo blanco y la otra le dio sus manos paspadas… ¡Pero se olvidaron de cambiar de Ángeles Guardianes! Era la hora de la siesta; los Ángeles dormían en el pasto. Las dos chicas cruzaron por encima de la reja; la que estaba en el jardín grande cruzó a la calle, la que estaba en la calle cruzó al jardín" (79-80).

Both stories are filled with sentence pairs like these that create the doubling effect of an echo.

In the original, the blurring of the girls' identities is enhanced by their lack of names, but in "The Two Angels" the language is simpler, clearer, and moves at a slower pace.

> Violeta exchanged her bare feet for Lila's shoes, and Lila, her white gloves for Violeta's chapped hands. They resolved also to change houses.
>
> They neglected to change guardian angels.
>
> It was siesta time. The angels were asleep in the grass. A great friendship connected them and they spoke to each other even in their dreams. The two girls jumped over the fence. Lila, who was in the big garden, crossed the street. Violeta, who was in the street, crossed the garden. They said goodbye in secret, *so as to not wake the angels.* (14-15, emphasis added)[138]

Ultimately, as shown in this passage, it's not just the language that is clearer in the children's version. Dwelling on the girls' process in *The Magic Orange* allows Ocampo to repair an ambiguous aspect of the narration in *Forgotten Journey.*

Andersen in "The Ugly Duckling" and Ocampo in *Forgotten Journey* seem to say that the family you are born into is not as important as your character, but perhaps unwittingly suggest the opposite: that genetics or the circumstances of one's birth are what matters the most in determining your character. The divergent readings of the moral of "The Ugly Duckling" is the peak of this ambiguity: "It matters nothing if one is born in a duck-yard, if one has only lain a swan's egg" (196). On the surface, Andersen's moral

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[138] "Violeta cambió sus pies descalzos por los zapatos de Lila, y Lila, sus guantes de hilo blanco, por las manos paspadas de Violeta. Resolvieron cambiar también de casas. Se olvidaron de cambiar los ángeles de la guarda. Era la hora de la siesta. Los ángeles dormían en el pasto. Una gran amistad los unía y conversaban hasta en sueños. Las dos chicas cruzaron por encima de la reja; Lila, que estaba en el jardín grande, cruzó a la calle; Violeta, que estaba en la calle, cruzó al jardín. Se despidieron en secreto, para no despertar a los ángeles."

appears to reject class-based essentialism, but another reading emerges in which he reifies that which he intended to dismantle. In other words, did the duckling grow beautiful simply because it was predetermined from his birth as a regal species? The ending of "The Two Houses in Olivos" as written for adults is the peak of Ocampo's similarly ambiguous message. During an electrical storm, the guardian angels ironically protect the girls incorrectly, as though they hadn't switched lives, and the girls don't survive. Here is a side-by-side comparison of each girl's death:

> Filaments of electricity, like those in light bulbs found in only the richest houses, filled the sky. One thunderclap, then another, broke the silence of the afternoon. The guardian angel was awake, but, as he was used to the girl always making it through the storms without catching cold, he only took care to protect her from the lightning.
>
> In the garden another lightning bolt struck the other girl, while the angel was busy protecting her from the cold, thinking that the house had had lightning rods since time immemorial. (51)[139]

"The Two Houses of Olivos" concludes with the girls riding a white horse to heaven, which is a big blue room with no delineated or exclusive spaces, no big or small houses, and no tin or brick ones. That the guardian angels fail to protect the girls when they switch lives seems to affirm exactly that which Ocampo intends to invalidate in *Forgotten Journey*—that there is something fundamentally and unalterably different about the girls because they belong to different social classes. *The Magic Orange* repairs this implication in its affirmation of the girls' agency in the passage where Lila gives her shoes and gloves to

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[139] "Filamentos como los que había en las bombitas de luz eléctrica de la casa grande llenaban el cielo, y primero un trueno y después otro rompían la tarde. El Ángel de la Guarda estaba despierto, pero, acostumbrado a las tormentas que cruzaba siempre la chica sin resfriarse, tuvo cuidado solamente de preservarla de los rayos." • "En el jardín el otro rayo cayó sobre la otra chica, mientras el Ángel la protegía de los resfríos confiadamente, pensando que la casa tenía pararrayos desde tiempo inmemorial" (81-2).

Violeta—they *choose* not to wake their guardian angels—and in its significantly expanded ending. The girls' guardian angels are, charmingly enough, great friends who can communicate with each other in their dreams at siesta time (Ocampo also charmingly calls them dormilones, or sleepyheads, in the children's tale) previews what happens to Lila and Violeta after they arrive in heaven.

The title "The Two Angels" ultimately refers to Lila and Violeta themselves as they become guardian angels in heaven. Ocampo ends the children's tale with a sweet and funny conversation between the two girls.

> "We're guardian angels, but of whom?"
> "When we're on earth we'll know. For now we're each other's angels."
> "Where will we find the people we're meant to protect?"
> "Don't worry. There will always be someone to protect in the world," said Violeta's angel.
> "If we don't find anyone," said Lila's angel, "we'll be the guardian angels of our angels." (15)[140]

In the children's tale, Ocampo's messages about friendship that embraces difference and the cruel arbitrariness of class remain firmly intact. That she refers to Lila as "Violeta's angel" and Violeta as "Lila's angel" reinforces their intimacy, fundamental similarities, and their friendship as refuge. What's more, the last recursive line, in which the girls become the guardian angels of their guardian angels—who use male pronouns and behave like absent adults, and whom they deceived—shows a reversal of agency and power in which girls look after their hapless male caregivers. In both versions of the tale, before

[140] "—Somos ángeles de la guarda, pero ¿de quién? —Cuando estemos en la tierra sabremos. Por ahora somos nuestros propios ángeles. —¿Dónde encontraremos a nuestros protegidos? —No te preocupes. Siempre habrá alguien a quien proteger en el mundo—dijo el ángel de Violeta. —Si no encontramos a nadie —dijo el ángel de Lila— seremos los ángeles guardianes de nuestros ángeles."

shifting the story's setting to the "big blue room" of heaven, Ocampo begins with a recognizable, grounded description of the little girls' initial homes in their shared Buenos Aires neighborhood—the rooms and their occupants, the heating systems, the interior decorations or lack thereof. While the title "The Two Angels" in *The Magic Orange* suggests but doesn't confirm (since "angel" has many connotations) a supernatural component, the everyday domestic setting is highlighted in the title "The Two Houses of Olivos" in *Forgotten Journey*.

**Feminine Memory and the Double Within: "The Wide and Sunny Terrace," "Forgotten Journey," and "Sarandí Street"**

In "The Little Seamaid," like in "The Ugly Duckling," the reader comes to realize that Andersen's imagined world reflects our own, and the movement of his images follows: "Now you must not believe there is nothing down there but the naked sand; no,—the strangest plants and flowers grow there, so pliable in their stalks and leaves, that at the least motion of water they move just as if they had life," he writes, introducing us to the world of the sea people (60-1). Though Andersen describes the underwater plants as foreign, his description is actually quite ordinary and matches that of seaweed—or perhaps a child looking at the motion of her hands in the bath. Ocampo's images unfold in the opposite direction, defamiliarizing our ordinary surroundings. In "The Wide and Sunny Terrace," Ocampo echoes Andersen's floral image but in the Argentine countryside: "Plants with extraordinary aromas grew in the provinces: she recalled one plant that used to smell like something poisonous frying in a pan, another like a recently waxed floor, and yet another

like a *guaranga*" (67).[141] (Elvia from "The Lost Passport" is described as a *guaranga*, and Ocampo describes her overpowering garden-like scent, another moment of connection between *Forgotten Journey*'s stories.) The ordinary is extraordinary here, in the sensorial memory of an older woman who is convalescing after an operation.

In her state, memories of her youth return in unusually vivid detail, which recalls a statement by Spanish painter Joan Miró, whose artwork Ocampo used in her 1972 children's picturebook *The Winged Horse*: "The older I get and the more I master the medium, the more I return to my earliest experiences. I think that at the end of my life I will recover all the force of my childhood" (Fineberg 138). The sounds outside the character's window at the convalescent home make her nostalgically think of the days she once spent complaining, days that now seem the happiest of her life. She can't move her body—Ocampo writes that it is as if her body has drifted away from her, out of her control—but her senses and memories are heightened. It soothes her to remember "a very wide and sunny terrace where she had once stretched out on a white wicker lounge chair," the titular image (68).[142] Ocampo plays with prescience as the woman recalls predicting formative moments in her life, a kind of memory in reverse, including entering the house with the wide and sunny terrace for the first time.

> It was as if she had been born in that house, awash in silence, where she'd go out to the fields wearing a rough leather jacket and ride a stubborn horse that balked furiously, galloping along the twists and turns of the roads. She had been born in that house, even though they had only invited her there for the day. She knew the house by heart before entering it: she could have

[141] "En las provincias existían plantas de olores extraordinarios: recordaba una planta con olor a sartén venenosa, otra con olor a piso recién encerado, otra con olor a guaranga" (104).

[142] "un corredor muy ancho de sol, donde una vez se había estirado en un sillón de mimbre blanco" (105).

> sketched it with the same ease she had once portrayed her bridegroom's face, in a notebook, before she had even met him. (68)[143]

For Ocampo, memory is a form of travel, and the closing image of the story signals a loss of momentum and a halt of memory. The woman tries to grab a book on the table but she is physically unable to. She believes that the sun, which warmed the terrace that day in her memory, could cure her, but the wintry trees are bare against a gray sky outside the convalescent home. The story's darkening signals that the woman doesn't have much time left—that she may not recover from her operation. The final image of the story is one of a return to childhood rather than an explicit mention of the character's death, again pointing to the paradoxical entanglement of youth and old age, the puerile and the senile as the bookends of a life: "She could hear the sound of spoons clinking through the slightly opened door, which signaled the arrival of a tapioca rice soup *that tasted like childhood* on a tray decorated with tiny stars" (69, emphasis added).[144]

In the original Spanish, the opening sentence of "The Wide and Sunny Terrace" doesn't make sense at first glance, and its paradox makes the reader pause: "Se sintió enferma el día de su convalecencia." Literally translated, it means "She felt sick the day of her convalescence." Recovery periods after a serious illness or operation don't typically last one day, but as the story's conclusion suggests, this woman's may be that short; what

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[143] "Ella sentía que había nacido en esa casa repleta de silencio donde se andaba por el campo en una americana con un caballo empacado y enfurecido de galopes en las vueltas de los caminos. Había nacido en esa casa, aunque solamente la hubieran invitado por un día. Conocía la casa de memoria antes de haber entrado en ella, la hubiera podido dibujar con la misma facilidad con la cual había dibujado, un día, en un cuaderno la cara de su novio antes de conocerlo" (105).

[144] "Por la puerta entreabierta se oyeron cantos de cucharas y platos que anunciaban la llegada de una sopa de tapioca en una bandeja con estrellitas y con gusto a infancia" (106).

seems like a mistake and reads like a verbal rather than written utterance is actually form matching content. In her review of my co-translation of *Forgotten Journey* in *The Women's Review of Books*, "Dreams on the Rise," Ana Castillo invalidates the temptation to read such constructions or characterizations as mistakes: "Although they are usually not traditional stories, replete with conventions taught today to aspiring creatives… Ocampo's short fiction skills are showcased. Don't look for arcs, and reserve judgment of their absence. It is a choice made by the writer, not an oversight" (8). Ocampo similarly reflected:

> I didn't accept [when critics, specifically Victoria Ocampo, said *Forgotten Journey* had grammatical mistakes] because it always seemed to me that our language was a developing language, and it felt natural for it to have those inadequacies, for it to lack the perfection of other languages, because the relationship between oral and written language is what helps shape it. (*Encuentros* 32)[145]

The crux of the story, like its opening line, doesn't make traditional sense either. Instead it's steeped in dream logic: the protagonist is sure she remembers the house in which she was born (the house with the terrace), though she only visited the house once as a young woman. In a feeling akin to drawing her husband before meeting him, she has the sensation of remembering her birth in her final moments, which is the exact unreachable goal of the little girl at the center of "Forgotten Journey."

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[145] "No acepté eso porque me parecía que nuestro idioma era un idioma en formación, y era natural que tuviera esas incompetencias, que careciera de la perfección que tenían otros idiomas, porque la relación que hay entre el lenguaje oral y el escrito va formando el idioma, con el que uno se maneja."

In the collection's titular story, a precocious little girl struggles to remember the day she was born. At first, she blames the constant interruptions of adults on her frustrating inability to recover the memory:

> She was trying to remember the day she was born, and she frowned so much that every few minutes the grown-ups came over to make her smooth her brow. Which is why she could never reach back to the memory of her birth. (111)[146]

As in "Saint's Day," girls are expected to perform enthusiasm and are corrected when they show outward signs of shame, anger, or frustration. The protagonist feels angry when Germaine, the French chauffer's daughter, tells her that she is wrong about how babies are born, during another playdate across class lines. Her nursemaid told her that babies come from a department store in Paris, which she desperately wants to be true.

> Before they were born, children were stocked in a big department store, mothers ordered them, and sometimes went to buy them directly. She would have liked to see them unwrap the package and open the box that held the baby, but they never called her over in time in the houses with newborns. It was hot and they could barely breathe inside the box, and that's why they arrived so red and cried all the time, curling their toes. (111)[147]

The image of babies in wrapped packages, of course, recalls "Icera" and the dollification of children, especially girls. She then wonders if her first memory, making birds' nests in Palermo, a neighborhood of Buenos Aires— a surreal image to an adult but plausible and

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[146] "Quería acordarse del día en que había nacido y fruncía tanto las cejas que a cada instante las personas grandes la interrumpían para que desarrugara la frente. Por eso no podía nunca llegar hasta el recuerdo de su nacimiento" ("Viaje olvidado" 163).

[147] "Los chicos antes de nacer estaban almacenados en una gran tienda en París, las madres los encargaban, y a veces iban ellas mismas a comprarlos. Hubiera deseado ver desenvolver el paquete, y abrir la caja donde venían envueltos los bebés, pero nunca la habían llamado a tiempo en las casas de los recién nacidos. Llegaban todos achicharrados del viaje, no podían respirar bien dentro de la caja, y por eso estaban tan colorados y lloraban incesantemente, enrulando los dedos de los pies" (163-4).

perhaps even mundane to a child—is actually the memory of her birth, because she cannot remember anything before that, and she does not remember the journey to Palermo that day.

> But she was born one morning making birds' nests in Palermo. She didn't remember leaving the house that day but had the feeling that she'd made the trip without an automobile or a carriage. It was a journey filled with mysterious shadows, and she awoke on a road lined with casuarina pines, smelling their strong scent, and suddenly she was making birds' nests. (111)[148]

When her mother, who is largely absent from the story and leaves the little girl in the care of her nursemaid, tells her the truth, the world around her grows strange and dark. Ocampo writes an image of estrangement: "her mother's face had changed completely under her feathered hat: it was a lady who came to visit the family."[149] It's daytime, but the little girl, like the woman in "The Wide and Sunny Terrace," sees the black night sky, an eclipse that evokes the loss of both characters' girlhood imaginations, albeit at very different points in their life journeys.

In "Forgotten Journey," Ocampo represents growing up as a loss of innocence and access to a new kind of information—what Octavio Paz calls the "self-awareness [that] begins when we doubt the magical efficacy" of language as a creative act, whereas for

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[148] "Pero ella había nacido una mañana en Palermo haciendo nidos para los pájaros. No recordaba haber salido de su casa aquel día, tenía la sensación de haber hecho un viaje sin automóvil ni coche, un viaje lleno de sombras misteriosas y de haberse despertado en un camino de árboles con olor a casuarinas donde se encontró de repente haciendo nidos para los pájaros" (164).

[149] "El rostro de su madre había cambiado totalmente debajo del sombrero con plumas: era una señora que estaba de visita en su casa" (167-8)

children, "verbal representation equals representation of the object itself" (203).[150] The little girl is no longer (if she ever was) in command of her surroundings when she learns how babies are born. Ocampo incorporates an additional layer in her coming of age, though, that focuses on her interactions with other girls. The solitude of adolescence arrives in the little girl's gradual loss of intimate feminine friendships:

> Time had passed since that day, distancing her desperately from the day of her birth. In each memory she was a different little girl but always with the same face. With each birthday the circle of little girls surrounding her grew more stretched out, until finally they could no longer reach to hold hands. (112)[151]

The astonishing image of the circle of girls holding hands, repeated as a birthday ritual, but with fewer girls each year, is juxtaposed with another circular image, this time of a new friendship in "The Pavilion on the Lakes." Catalinita and Teresa "became friends through their laughter, which kept expanding in larger circumferences, like the ever-growing circles on the water made by the little stones they'd throw into the lake at Palermo Park," the city's largest park that in the thirties was home to a pavilion with toys and games where the girls go with their nannies to play (101).[152] It is Teresa's first time at the pavilion, and Ocampo writes an intimate image of doubling: "When Teresa, her new friend, got to know the Pavilion on the Lakes for the first time, Catalinita too got to know it, doubly, as if for the

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[150] "La representación equivale a una verdadera reproducción del objeto… La conciencia principia como desconfianza en la eficacia mágica de nuestros instrumentos" (Paz 350).

[151] "el tiempo había pasado desde aquel día alejándola desesperadamente de su nacimiento. Cada recuerdo era otra Chiquita distinta, pero que llevaba su mismo rostro. Cada año que cumplía estiraba la roda de chicas que no se alcanzaban las manos alrededor de ella" (165).

[152] "se habían hecho amigas a través de las risas que aumentaban en circunferencias cada vez mayores, como sobre el agua las circunferencias provocadas por las piedritas que tiraban en el lago de Palermo" ("El Pabellón de los Lagos" 148).

first time again. Her eyes filled with Teresa's amazement" (102).[153] The girls are so close that they embody one another and make sense of their surroundings together: it is Alice playing croquet against herself but in the form of a close and formative friendship.

In these stories, formative memories from girlhood (e.g. the house in "The Wide and Sunny Terrace," the nests in "Forgotten Journey") function as memories of birth or rebirth—a symbolic, ritual birth into the new existence of adolescence or womanhood. The impossibility of remembering one's birth recalls Rose's claim that it is impossible for an adult to remember the experience of childhood fully enough to write authentic child characters. For Ocampo, though, memories of girlhood persist in the adult woman's mind in the same way prophetic knowledge of womanhood already exists in the mind of the young girl. Ocampo invented a new narrative voice for the coming-of-age story to reflect this feminine temporality, seen most pointedly in those abrupt shifts between first and third person in "Skylight" and "Siesta in the Cedar Tree," to embody the space in-between girlhood and womanhood, in which the reader simultaneously inhabits the mind of the child and her prescient knowledge of the adult she will become. Ocampo's narrative voice, which occupies the space in-between childhood and adulthood, becomes an answer to Rose, and matches the painful and defining sensation of girlhood that Ocampo articulated in conversation with Noemí Ulla, another Argentine woman writer, at the end of her career: "At the same time I was a girl I had the sensation that I would no longer be a girl."

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[153] "Cuando Teresa, la nueva amiga, conoció por primera vez el Pabellón de los Lagos, Catalinita también lo conoció, doblemente, por primera vez; sus ojos se llenaron del asombro de Teresa" (149-50).

Some memories from girlhood, though, become as traumatic and inaccessible as the day of one's birth, as Ocampo continues her play with feminine temporality. In "Sarandí Street," memory works to block trauma as an older woman remembers the sexual abuse she suffered as a young girl at the hands of a strange man. In a review of a 2015 translation of Ocampo's selected stories into English by Daniel Balderston, Stephen Henighan laments that *Forgotten Journey*, and thus "Sarandí Street," was largely left out of the collection. As he perceptively sheds light on the ideology behind and limitations of the selected stories, he makes a telling mistake that follows Ocampo's views on childhood and aging.

> [*Viaje olvidado*] is both more female and more feminist than the work she produced after she had co-edited the anthology of fantastic literature [with Borges and Bioy Casares.] It includes, for example, "La calle Sarandí" ("Sarandí Street"), in which a little girl narrates, with icy objectivity and a brilliant selection of telling detail, the story of her sexual abuse. Balderston omits this story, including only two very brief pieces from *Viaje olvidado*. The result is to emphasize the writer that Ocampo became in her middle years: a woman defining herself within a literary enclave run by famous men. ("Bloomsbury in Buenos Aires")

Henighan tellingly mischaracterizes the narration here: the narrator is no longer a little girl. Instead, Ocampo constructs a hybrid child-adult subject—an older woman stunted by childhood trauma.

The opening lines of "Sarandí Street" describe a seaside vacation town like Mar del Plata where working-class families live all year round, but the end of summer, symbolic of loss of innocence, signals the departure of wealthy families. (This dynamic, certainly familiar to Ocampo, is represented in two other stories, "The Backwater," about the diverging paths of the children of an upper-class family and the ranch hand's daughters, and "Eladio Rada and the Sleeping House," about the caretaker of vacation property who

senses the change in seasons by the arrivals and departures of the owner's family.) In autumn, the town turns into an underworld for the Persephone-like protagonist, and the threat of sexual violation looms. "Sarandí Street" is the only story other than "Skylight" written in the first person, and Ocampo captures the narrator's dissociative memory in the transformation of objects and spaces that are beyond her control.

> I have no recollection of the evenings, save those autumn nights that have left their imprint, so much so that they block out all the rest. The gardens and houses looked as if a move were underway; invisible trunks seemed to float on the breeze, and white sheets had already begun to shroud the dark wood furniture inside. (79)[154]

The narrator's family is mysteriously described with fairy tale tropes. Her parents are absent, and for her older sisters, growing up is a violent process that leaves them injured, so she as a young girl is the only healthy family member.

She bears witness for her sisters much as the story itself shows Ocampo bearing witness for victims of girlhood sexual abuse—and for the violent underbelly of coming of age that is so often missing from classic girlhood texts or instead portrayed from the perspective of a male outsider.

> I had six sisters then. Some married and moved away, others were dying of strange diseases. After living bedridden for months on end they would emerge, their bodies withered away and covered in deep blue bruises, as if they had endured long journeys through thorny forests. My health filled me with obligations to them and to the house. (79)[155]

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[154] "No tengo el recuerdo de otras tardes más que de esas tardes de otoño que han quedado presas tapándome las otras. Los jardines y las casas adquirían aspectos de mudanza, había invisibles baúles flotando en el aire y presencias de forros blancos empezaban ya a nacer sobre los muebles obscuros de los cuartos" ("La calle Sarandí" 117).

[155] "Mis hermanas eran seis, algunas se fueron casando, otras se fueron muriendo de extrañas enfermedades. Después de vivir varios meses en cama se levantaban como si fuera de un largo viaje entre bosques de espinas; volvían demacradas y cubiertas de moretones muy azules. Mi salud me llenaba de obligaciones hacia ellas y hacia la casa" (118).

Despite her young age, she performs the role of caretaker and is sent to the market to buy food for her family. She fears her walk to the market because there is only one viable route, and a man always appears to harass her, hissing catcalls and swatting her bare legs with a tree branch. Ocampo suggests that she feels her girlhood slipping away in this unwanted sexual attention, and she clutches it like the leaves she picks on her walk to the market: "My hands were clenched tightly around the leaves I had pulled from the fences along the way, for fear of dropping something" (79). Despite her attempts to hold onto her childhood, she senses an imminent change, a prediction of danger: "After a while I came to believe I carried a mysterious message, a fortune in that crumpled leaf, which, in the warmth of my hand, smelled of summer grass" (79).[156] From its ominous start, the story is genuinely horrifying and heartbreaking, though its portrait of the protagonist, in deeply-felt prose, is ethically constructed and invites a compassionate, allied reading.

Like her sisters before her, the woman emerges from her girlhood wounded. Her rape doesn't take place on the page, but Ocampo writes the lead-up and the aftermath, and her terrifying, paradoxical language ("I smiled out of terror," "my paralyzed footsteps"[157]) makes for an unflinching, accurate depiction of the complicity and confusion survivors of childhood sexual trauma can feel. The woman remembers protecting herself by covering her eyes: "I didn't want to see anymore, so I shut myself up in the dark little room of my

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[156] "El miedo de perder algo me cerraba las manos herméticamente sobre las hojas que arrancaba de los cercos; al cabo de un rato creía llevar un mensaje misterioso, una fortuna en esa hoja arrugada y con olor a pasto dentro del calor de mi mano" (117-8).

[157] "me hacía sonreírle de miedo," "mis pasos inmóviles" (119).

hands" (80).[158] Despite the woman's inaccessible memories, in this scene Ocampo writes powerful images surrounding the event, including the little room of her hands and the man's shoes, that return to haunt her in her old age.

> Around the kerosene lamp fell slow drops of dead butterflies, and through the windows of my fingers I saw the stillness of the room and a wide, untied pair of shoes on the edge of the bed. I still had to face the horror of crossing the street. I took off running, letting my hands fall away from my face, knocking over a wicker chair the color of daybreak as I went. Nobody heard me. (80-1)[159]

The final sentence—*Nobody heard me*—reads like a Persephone-inspired refrain and echoes other moments in the collection when young girls are abandoned, alone, and vulnerable. In Ovid's take on the Persephone myth, when Persephone is raped while picking flowers, she focuses on the flowers falling out of her hands, an image Ocampo invokes when her protagonist grips foliage tightly. Ovid translator Stephanie McCarter comments that Persephone's concentration on the flowers indicates how she's coping in the moment: "those experiencing trauma often find other things to focus on," she states. Ocampo's protagonist does just that, and the devastatingly beautiful and floral image of dead butterflies falling in slow drops calls to mind Persephone's experience of rape and Ovid's examination of "how trauma multiplies" (McCarter).[160]

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[158] "No quise ver más nada y me encerré en el cuartito obscuro de mis dos manos" (119-20).

[159] "en torno de la lámpara de kerosene caían lentas gotas de mariposas muertas cuando por las ventanas de mis dedos vi la quietud del cuarto y los anchos zapatos desabrochados sobre el borde de la cama. Me quedaba el horror de la calle para atravesar. Salí corriendo desanudando mis manos; volteé una silla trenzada del color del alba. Nadie me oyó" (120).

[160] McCarter states, using the Callisto story as an example, "Very rarely do [Ovid's] stories stop at the moment of sexual violence. He continues to examine the implications."

The story then jumps forward in time. The girl's sisters continue to pass away or leave the house, and one leaves her infant son in the care of the protagonist. She no longer recognizes her girlhood self, evident when she narrates, "There was nothing left of [my family,] save a few stray socks and darned nightgowns and a photograph of my father surrounded by an unknown family in miniature" (81).[161] That *Alice*-like phrasing—"in miniature," as though the children were merely tiny adults—also suggests that despite being young girls in the photograph, childhood innocence was virtually absent from their home, replaced by gender-based trauma and violence. When her sister's boy is little, the woman experiences an emotional reprieve, but when he turns sixteen, his voice drops and her fear of men is reignited. The story reflects how victims of sexual trauma begin to see their attackers everywhere—how it infiltrates and takes over other aspects of their lives.

> This boy, who was almost my own, now has that unfamiliar voice that bellows from the radio. I'm trapped in the dark little room of my hands, and through the windows of my fingers I see a pair of men's shoes on the edge of the bed. That boy who was almost my son, that voice giving a speech on politics from a radio nearby, is surely that same man with his willow branch for swatting mosquitoes. (82)[162]

Ocampo repeats the images of the narrator's hands covering her face, forming a little room with her hands, and the pair of men's shoes. Like in "The Olive Green Dress" and "The Wide and Sunny Terrace," this woman retains her girlhood in her old age, but in a heartbreaking way.

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[161] "No quedaba nada de ellas, salvo algunas medias y camisones remendados y una fotografía de mi padre, rodeado de una familia enana y desconocida" (121).

[162] "Este hijo que fue casi mío, tiene la voz desconocida que brota de una radio. Estoy encerrada en el cuartito obscuro de mis manos y por la ventana de mis dedos veo los zapatos de un hombre en el borde de la cama. Ese hijo fue casi mío, esa voz recitando un discurso político debe de ser, en la radio vecina, el hombre con la rama de sauce de espantar mosquitos" (122-3).

Ocampo writes the effects of trauma in the woman's image of herself with braided hair, a style that is itself evocative of girlhood, in a cracked mirror, symbolic of her altered self-perception and the wounding of the self.

> Today I look in this cracked mirror and still recognize the braids I learned to do when I was little, thick at the top and tapered at the bottom like the bottle-shaped trunks of silk floss trees. I have always had the pale face of an old woman, but now my forehead is crossed with lines, like a road ridden over by many wheels—creases that were once grimaces caused by the sun. (81)[163]

As a young girl with too much adult responsibility and bearing the weight of unspeakable trauma, she narrates that she always had the face of an old woman, even in girlhood, and as an old woman, the events of her girlhood linger. The image of the braids that begin full and thin out at the end are a metaphor for stunted growth, echoing the course of her life which, like in "The Wide and Sunny Terrace," seems to be coming to an end. Overwhelmed with memories of her assault, the story concludes: "I close the windows, shut my eyes… Death will be like this, when it drags me from the little room of my hands" (82).[164] The story is brutal but not easily forgotten, and allows the reader to experience the far-reaching psychological effects of trauma on a young girl from her own point of view.

**Conclusion: The Two *Forgotten Journey*s**

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[163] "Ahora en este espejo roto reconozco todavía la forma de las trenzas que aprendí a hacerme de chica, gruesas arriba y finita abajo como los troncos de los palos borrachos. La cabeza de mi infancia fue siempre una cabeza blanca de viejita. Mi frente de ahora está cruzada por surcos, como un camino por donde han pasado muchas ruedas, tantas fueron las muecas que le hace al sol" (121).

[164] "Cierro las ventanas, aprieto mis ojos… Así será la muerte cuando me arranque del cuartito de mis manos" (123).

*Forgotten Journey*, originally published by *Sur* in 1937, was reissued by the Argentine publishing house Emecé in 1998. The first edition, however, is the only one that was approved by Ocampo during her lifetime, who died in 1993. When Emecé republished the book five years after her death, editors corrected her work—the elements they perceived as mistakes, like some critics before them—without consulting anyone or making use of her archive. The result is two different editions of the text, the latter of which has been used by Emecé in their later edition of the stand-alone book (2005), as well as Ocampo's *Complete Stories* and *Collected Works*, which have appeared in Argentina during periods of renewed interest in her work (2006 and 2016, respectively). These later editions are widely-available in the Spanish-speaking world, while the original 1937 edition is virtually impossible to find. What's more, because of how embedded Ocampo's fantastic practice is in her language and syntax, their corrections to Ocampo's style are not merely copyedits and often have dramatic consequences for the stories themselves. One particularly glaring example is the ending of "Siesta in the Cedar Tree," analyzed earlier in this chapter.

The story's conclusion is a beautiful imagined scene in Elena's mind in which Cecilia is still alive—the cedar tree represents a kind of utopia away from the adults that initially kept the two girls apart and now are in denial of Cecilia's death.

> Elena stood up and peered through the shutters. The gardener dressed in black [Cecilia's father] was laughing. *No one knew that Cecilia had died.* And who was to say, if she waited at the window long enough, that one day she wouldn't reappear, gathering acorns. Elena would run down with a spoon and a bottle of cough syrup, and they would keep running until they reached the cedar tree, where they lived from then on, amid the branches, in a cave of their own making, at siesta hour. (60-1, emphasis added)

The sentence *No one knew that Cecilia had died* is the crux of the story. It represents all of Elena's uncertainty surrounding the intensity of her grief and the impossibility of her friend's absence, which at first seems to be a traditional fantastic trope—has she imagined Cecilia's death?—but is in fact grounded in the politics of childhood and adulthood and adults' failure to understand the psychology of children, especially young girls, when confronting trauma. The fantastic touches in "Siesta in the Cedar Tree" dramatize and amplify the feeling of being a girl and being made to doubt your own traumatic experiences, showing a feminist and childhood-based innovation and advancing of the genre. Ocampo herself affirmed that her stories were not traditionally fantastic, and I have called her offshoot of the genre the childhood fantastic.

I made sure that our 2019 translation follows Ocampo's original 1937 text closely. The line reads: "Nadie sabía que Cecilia se había muerto," or "No one knew that Cecilia had died." The Emecé editors, however, added two words that could be translated in two different ways: "Nadie sabía que Cecilia, como ella, se había muerto." In English, this translates as "No one knew that Cecilia, *like her*, had died," or, "No one knew *like she did* that Cecilia had died" (emphases added). The edit, in addition to being clunky (one interpretation of the new sentence is that Elena has somehow died too, which may be a fantasy trope but doesn't make sense in the context of the story), attempts to clarify Ocampo's original sentence by confirming one possible reading of the line: that Cecilia did die and Elena is the only one who is in true mourning. By adding "como ella," though, the editors rob the line of its potency, the story of its fantastic atmosphere, and Ocampo of her authorial agency and innovative style. Without the clarification, Ocampo momentarily implicates the adult reader into doubting Elena's experience, like the adults in the story

who misunderstand her, while also reminding the reader of the immense emotional capacity of a young girl experiencing grief for the first time. The addition of that unexpected "I" in "Siesta" when Elena hears the word tuberculosis for the first time is, for me, a brief foray into Ocampo's own adult perspective, reframing the story as a memory of her girlhood. (Ocampo remarked to Ulla that the story has autobiographical roots.) These two original touches, which some have viewed as mistakes, make the story unlike other fantastic stories or other girlhood stories, and show a true innovator at work in-between genres.

I hope this chapter has shown Ocampo's original words to be innovations, *not* mistakes, as they animate the world of girlhood she depicts so acutely—in all of its darkness and magic. The critical mishandling of *Forgotten Journey* and the inability of critics, editors, and, until recently, translators, to let it exist on its own terms is evidence of the systemic sexism in the publishing industry that is only beginning to be acknowledged and repaired. *Forgotten Journey* argues for the agency of the young girl by exposing the ways in which it is so casually taken away, often with tragic consequences. That Ocampo's agency as an author was also taken away not only "in an enclave of famous men," but also in the shadow of her older sister Victoria, has also had real consequences on the reception of her work (Henighan). *Forgotten Journey*, as her debut, shows her at her most singular, certainly at her most feminist, and perhaps at her most activist. Mariana Enriquez, in her portrait of Ocampo entitled *La hermana menor*, or *The Little Sister*, whose opening image is young Ocampo climbing the cedar tree outside her house, writes of the author's love for the most marginalized members of society, but laments that "never in her life did this love

transform into any type of political consciousness or concrete social action" (11).[165] I argue that *Forgotten Journey* is itself a form of social action; its girl protagonists are activists, and Ocampo's influence on later women writers of fantastic and feminist stories, including but not limited to Clarice Lispector, is a powerful legacy. Ocampo gave herself permission to rewrite children's tales while being dark and queer and daring readers to look away from her at times chilling representations of the violence of girlhood, which contemporary Latin American and U.S. Latinx writers—Mariana Enriquez, Samanta Schweblin, Carmen Maria Machado—are now doing with more ease, and with a stronger activist spirit outside their literary works. What's more, Ocampo took back and repurposed the fantastic genre, in which feminine characters are so often reduced to narrative symbols, and used it to show the very real effects on girls and women of living under a patriarchal system.

The title *Forgotten Journey* refers to many things at once, but one of them may be the forgotten journey of childhood, which forms Jacqueline Rose's claim in "The Impossibility of Children's Fiction" that adult writers cannot write authentic child characters because of the impermeable space in-between adulthood and childhood. Ocampo accomplishes something singular in the collection by entering that liminal space—by simultaneously showing adult readers *why* it is so difficult to remember our experiences as children while also reminding us of what it was like and the ways it continues to shape our adult selves—and how important it is to articulate these experiences for later generations. Ocampo writes the trauma of coming of age, of adolescence, of initiation rituals like birthdays and weddings, and the ways memory works to both protect and

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[165] "Nunca, en toda su vida, ese amor se transformará en algún tipo de conciencia política o de acción social concreta."

deceive us after our reintegration into the adult community. But she also shows the numerous ways girlhood in particular can persist into womanhood, and the ways womanhood intrudes on girlhood. The absolute entanglement of childhood and adulthood, most pointedly encapsulated in her all-ages stories like “The Two Houses in Olivos,” consistently informs the originality of Ocampo’s narrative voice—and her innovations of the fantastic genre via the rewriting of children’s literature.

## Chapter Three

## The Mysteries of Girlhood in Clarice Lispector's Fictions: A Study of the Rite of Passage in *Family Ties*

Today at school I wrote an essay about Flag Day which was so beautiful, ever so beautiful—I even used words without knowing what they meant.[166]

– Clarice Lispector, "Flying The Flag," written at age ten and published as a *crônica* in the newspaper *Jornal do Brasil* in 1970[167]

### *Family Ties* and the Eleusinian Mysteries

The word *mistério* and its variants recur in *Laços de família*[168] or *Family Ties* (1960), the debut collection of stories by the Brazilian writer Clarice Lispector. Often placed prominently in titles ("Mistério en São Cristóvão) and final sentences (see my discussion of the last line of "Feliz aniversário" ("Happy Birthday") in Chapter One of this dissertation) or repeated many times within a single story ("Preciosidade"), Lispector employs the term to describe moments of personal and familial transformation. It appears most notably in two kinds of transformation explored in some of the collection's most memorable stories: the nonconsensual first sexual encounters of teenage girls, the subject matter of "Mistério en São Cristóvão" and "Preciosidade," and the deaths of matriarchs, a

[166] "Fiz hoje na escola uma composição sobre o Dia da Bandeira, tão bonita, mas tão bonita... pois até usei palavras que eu não sei bem o que querem dizer" (*A descoberta do mundo* 316).

[167] Translated by Giovanni Pontiero in *Selected Crônicas* (1996). It follows a *crônica* titled "Ten Years Old."

[168] *Mistério* as well as *misterioso* and *misteriosamente* occur fourteen times and in six out of the thirteen stories in the original Portuguese.

topic tackled in both "Os lacos de família," the collection's titular story, and "Feliz aniversário." Lispector's pronounced use of the word *mistério* in these stories that explore coming of age and feminine kinship invokes the Mysteries of Eleusis, the ancient Greek rites performed in honor of Demeter and Persephone. *Family Ties* reenacts, so to speak, feminine rites of passage as they are disrupted by masculine figures, mirroring Hades' abduction of Persephone and Demeter and Persephone's cyclical separation and reunion. What's more, Lispector's use of the motif of the Mysteries befits her engagement with childhood and children's literature, most notably *Alice in Wonderland,* an urtext for Ocampo and Lispector both that can, as we will see, be read through the lens of the rite of passage. Foley (1994: 71), translator of the *Homeric Hymn to Demeter* investigates "the special significance of the Demeter/Persephone myth in the religious lives of ancient women," including the Rites of Demeter, related to and illuminating the Eleusinian Mysteries, rites "in which women played the central or exclusive role" and in which children also played a special role (71).

Two contrasting stages, archaeological and textual evidence tells us, comprised the Eleusinian Mysteries: *myêsis*, in which the initiate's eyes were closed, and *epopteia,* in which they were open (Foley 66). The passage from *myêsis* to *epopteia*—from dark to light, from unseeing to seeing—was meant to re-enact the goddesses' journey into Hades and back (Norton 4). These contrasting stages have informed both literary and anthropological studies of transition and transformation. As Clinton (1994: 91) has argued, the Mysteries progressed in the manner of an epiphany, and as in van Gennep's (1909: 91) foundational use of them, the Mysteries are an important antecedent to *les rites de passage*, the ceremonies identified by twentieth-century structural anthropologists as universally

occurring across cultures. The collision of the literary and the anthropological as it pertains to the Mysteries marks *Family Ties.* As critics (Palls 1984; Peixoto 1994) have shown, its stories hinge on epiphanic moments that echo those found in the modernist writings of James Joyce and Virginia Woolf. Lispector's stories can themselves be read as initiation rituals, and the mother-daughter myth contains the central preoccupations of the collection. What's more, Persephone's passage into the underworld parallels Alice's journey underground in Carroll's famous children's text; both heroines' descents, as well as the shared symbolism of gardens, seasons, and passageways, inform *Family Ties* as Lispector questions the very notion of universal "coming of age," demonstrating that it only applies to what Peixoto (1994: 26) calls the traditional male model of development. As we will see, for girls in Lispector's text, which might be called an anti-coming-of-age narrative, growing up is a descent into the unseen and the unspoken—an undoing or unbecoming of age—rather than a coming to light.

Just as the children in *Family Ties* learn to speak the foreign language of adults, and as Alice masters the dialect and logic of Wonderland, readers of Lispector's first collection of stories, immersed in her idiosyncratic syntax and telling silences, emerge from the book as witnesses of the oft-hidden world of girlhood initiation. As the collection progresses, the dark shadow of trauma cast by the classic Lispector epiphany moments lengthen, showing Lispector's delineation between the public, celebrated, and sanctioned by van Gennep and his successors, rituals and the secret, suppressed, and unsanctioned encounters that both comprise feminine initiation. The organization of the Rites of Demeter seem to respond to this distinction, acknowledging the trauma of initiation for girls and

women. In Foley's characterization, the shadows of the public ritual of marriage are loss of both autonomy and feminine kinship:

> The ritual seems to compensate women for marriage. Just as Demeter used her powers over agriculture to bring back her daughter from marriage and the world below, Greek women celebrating the diving mother and daughter were permitted to reunite and ignore for the moment the marriages that had divided them from each other, and to exercise authority and control civic spaces in an unusual fashion. (75)

While the *Homeric Hymn to Demeter* idealizes the mother-daughter relationship and "tends to suppress myths and motifs of intrafamilial conflict," Lispector brings them out and explores the effect of gendered initiation on the fragile ecosystem of the family (Foley 134). What's more, though the Rites of Demeter were focused on women and children, the Mysteries were open to male and female initiates (Foley 66), and Lispector's stories show how girls and boys, men and women are implicated in and harmed by these unsanctioned encounters. In my analysis of *Family Ties* I will begin with the titular story, which can be read as the crux of and a clue to the entire collection.

**The Literary Epiphany and the Anthropological Rite of Passage**

When Silvina Ocampo described Clarice Lispector's writing as evanescent—soon passing out of light—her description encapsulates both Lispector's concern for childhood, children's literature, and the child's language, as well as the literary device she is most well-known for adapting. The epiphany critics identify as the center of "Family Ties," for example, occurs when an emotionally distant mother and daughter physically collide in the back of a taxi after the car suddenly brakes, a metaphor that foreshadows the mother's sudden and unexpected death. The adult daughter is suddenly and momentarily a child again, Lispector notes, wrapped in her mother's long-forgotten embrace; as we will see,

the epiphanies of *Family Ties* more often than not involve the characters experiencing a sudden change in age, like Alice changing size. In "The Miracle of the Ordinary: Literary Epiphany in Virginia Woolf and Clarice Lispector" (1984), Terry L. Palls quotes James Joyce, another master of early childhood writing, and his first definition of the epiphany in the autobiographical *Stephen Hero* (1944) to clarify Lispector's use of the device. Joyce employs the term Ocampo invokes to describe Lispector:

> By an epiphany he [Stephen] meant a sudden spiritual manifestation, whether in the vulgarity of speech or of gesture or in a memorable phase of the mind itself. He believed that it was for a man of letters to record these epiphanies with extreme care, seeing that they themselves are the most delicate and *evanescent* of moments. (Joyce in Palls 65, emphasis added)

Palls shows how Beja's canonical definition of epiphany (1971) draws on and adapts Joyce's emphasis on the mundane: "a sudden spiritual manifestation, whether from some object, scene, event, or memorable phase of the mind—the manifestation being out of proportion to the significance or strictly logical relevance of whatever produces it" (65). Beja's mention of the realization being "out of proportion" to the everyday circumstances that engendered it is of particular importance to *Family Ties*, which often places epiphanic moments alongside—though not necessarily contained within—the anthropological construct that is designed to prompt them: the rite of passage.

Coined by French structural anthropologist Arnold van Gennep in his 1909 work *Les rites de passage*, which was translated into English by Monika B. Vizedom and Gabrielle L. Caffee in 1960, van Gennep's concept is the foundation of two germinal studies on liminality: Victor Turner's theory of liminal space (1960) and Gloria Anzaldúa's theory of nepantla (1987). He marks three distinct phases that form a consistent pattern: rites of separation, rites of transition, and rites of incorporation. The initiation rite as

outlined by van Gennep is both verified and challenged by Lispector's narratives. Notably, van Gennep includes a distinction between biological and social maturation, objecting to the term "puberty rites" and stating a preference for the term "initiation rites," which came to define twentieth-century ritual theory (66).

> Physical puberty is, for either sex, a very difficult moment to date, and this difficulty explains why so few ethnographers and explorers have inquired into it. Therefore it is even less excusable that the expression "puberty rites" should have been accepted as designating all the rites, ceremonies, and practices which among different peoples mark the transition from childhood to adolescence. It is appropriate to distinguish between *physical puberty* and *social puberty*, just as we distinguish between *physical kinship* (consanguinity) and *social kinship*, between *physical maturity* and *social maturity* (majority). (67-8, original emphases)

As we will see, Lispector affirms van Gennep's fluid treatment of age and kinship in her portrayals of initiation rites; *Family Ties*, however, challenges van Gennep's treatment of gender, for instance his unnuanced statements that "physical puberty is even more complicated for boys than for girls" (67) or that "the purpose of the girls' operation is marriage" (86). Lispector's treatment of coming of age illuminates the patriarchal system underpinning initiation rites in a way that van Gennep does not question, challenge, or acknowledge and thus perpetuates, or perhaps imposes on, the communities he describes in his ethnographies.

Reading the stories of *Family Ties* as initiation rituals shows Lispector confirming the symbolic weight of transition and transformation highlighted by van Gennep, while also questioning the clean delineation of the three stages he defines for girls and women, who are often disempowered by and push back against their assigned passive role in the rites of passage they undergo. As a result, the phases are often blurred as the gendered trauma of the separation and transition stages bleeds into the reintegration stage, which is

in turn violent, mournful, and incomplete. Van Gennep's discussion of the Mysteries of Eleusis, and his emphasis on the "dramatization of the novice's death and rebirth," is also taken up by Lispector in Persephone-inspired stories like "Mystery in São Cristóvão," which complicates the progression reflected by the performance of the traditional rite, which in van Gennep's description is empowering and enlightening, involving the initiate passing through a dark hall, climbing a staircase, and arriving in a brightly lit room (91). As we will see, *Family Ties* confirms the structure of the rite of passage as defined in anthropological theories of liminality and as it persists in twentieth-century Brazil, but shows it to be unnecessarily pervasive and pushes readers to consider alternatives. Lispector complicates and disrupts the gendered foundations and consequences of initiation, thus exposing the need for a reevaluation of the systemic mechanisms of coming of age, which for her, unlike van Gennep, are not foregone conclusions, and are often quite traumatic and disempowering for girls.

In this chapter I will discuss a group of tales from *Family Ties* in which the classic Lispector epiphanic moment, around which each story in the collection unfolds, can be read as a moment of coming of age and coincides with a process of ritual transformation. If the epiphany is a coming to light, trauma is a dark shadow that haunts each story. This collision of the literary and the anthropological occurs in various ways in each of the stories, and at times we see the epiphanic aftereffects of a rite of passage or the epiphanic premonition of a rite of passage. Ten of the thirteen stories have feminine protagonists, and one, "Beginnings of a Fortune," as Peixoto (1994) shows, presents masculine coming of age as accumulative and empowering, offering a stark contrast to feminine coming of age. Lispector pushes us to ask, do girls, if fact, come of age, or is the chronology reversed?

These transitional moments represent a regression into a less empowered state of existence than that of the agential and untraumatized young girl. While Lispector's girl protagonists are largely older than Ocampo's, girlhood persists in the older characters that populate *Family Ties*: the grandmother in "Happy Birthday," as we have already seen; the young mothers in "Daydream and Drunkenness of a Young Lady," "Love," "The Smallest Woman in the World," and "Family Ties"; the young women who find themselves at a crossroads in "The Imitation of the Rose" and "The Buffalo," analyzed in Chapter One; the teenage girls in "Preciousness" and "Mystery in São Cristóvão"; and the lone young girl in "A Chicken." For Lispector, the mix of fantastic and Bildungsroman genres is also a mix of literary and anthropological disciplines; though the stories contain clear epiphanic moments, they are also dappled with smaller epiphanies, fleeting fantastic touches that often engage a character's age, gender, race, and class, and how they have been socialized through specific rites of passage within Brazilian society. In *Family Ties*, Lispector focuses on weddings, birthdays, pregnancy, parenthood, and puberty, but an insidious thread runs throughout the collection: the consequences of gendered socialization and the ritualization of sexual violence against girls and women.

Both Lispector and Ocampo before her force us to confront the language we use to describe the journey from childhood to adulthood: the rite of passage, coming of age, loss of innocence. The metaphor at the heart of both phrases is an arrival into or an accrual of power or agency; the journey from girlhood to womanhood, Ocampo and Lispector show, is instead a departure from or loss of security, one both authors liken to an illness. What's more, the characters don't recover from their threshold experiences within a traditional folk tale structure—there is no brightly lit room at the end of the dark hallway for these

protagonists. The descents of Persephone, Alice, and the little sea-maid prove significant spatially here: no forward movement defines their journeys. Rather than leaving home or gaining independence, the girl characters retreat into domestic, childhood spaces. At the macro level, Ocampo and Lispector's girls begin healthy and become women by sinking, by regressing, by departing but not arriving, by falling ill, and by experiencing a kind of death. Their arcs resist the metaphor of coming of age and show that it only applies to the dominant, masculine group. At the micro level, they illuminate the ways in which the older they get, consent is robbed of their feminine characters on a daily basis. The question of consent, for Lispector especially, is inextricably bound up with feminine coming of age or anti-coming of age—when it is repeatedly taken away, as it so often is, girls become women via the chipping away of their agency, bodily and otherwise.

While Ocampo shows stark examples in *Forgotten Journey*, as seen in "Sarandí Street," Lispector is concerned with the quotidian, the small, the micro, and the ways in which women are constantly under the threat of gendered violence, and how healthy aging is inhibited and replaced with something more sinister. As we saw in Chapter Two, the protagonist's older sisters in Ocampo's "Sarandí Street" provide important context for the sexual abuse she ultimately suffers. First, Ocampo tellingly reverses the traditional coming-of-age chronology. Still a young girl, the protagonist is the only healthy daughter and so she, despite being the youngest, performs the adult duties of buying food at the market, cleaning the house, and taking care of her older sisters who are, in contrast, "dying of strange diseases. After living bedridden for months on end they would emerge, their bodies withered away and covered in deep blue bruises, as if they had endured long journeys through thorny forests" (*Forgotten Journey* 80). This is a dark *Cinderella* tale in which the

protagonist, like her sisters, emerges from girlhood permanently wounded. When the story ends, she is still taking care of the same house and her trauma, unresolved, is replicating as she witnesses her nephew's healthy coming of age, represented vocally. While the sisters' stories are silenced, even within the story itself, the boy's voice deepens as he rehearses a speech that he will give at school. The comparison distinguishes masculine versus feminine coming of age: his life broadens as he enters the public sphere, gaining voice and agency publicly, while her life shrinks as she retreats into the private sphere.

While Ocampo highlights physical manifestations of feminine coming of age—gauntness and bruises—Lispector shows that mental illness can also originate in the passage from adolescence to early womanhood. In "Love," one of the most famous stories in *Family Ties* which will be discussed later in this chapter, the protagonist Ana reflects on her life and the passage of time: "Her former youth seemed as strange to her as one of life's illnesses. She gradually emerged from it to discover that one could also live without happiness" (Complete Stories 122).[169] Both writers use this word *emerge* for girls who leave adolescence, a verb that evokes the Mysteries and reads as less agential than *arrive*, as though they are going through the motions of a rite of passage but with little choice in the matter. Lispector asks the same question as Ocampo: what happens when aging is not a process of growth but of stunting? Lispector, however, is more concerned with the systems and power structures at work than Ocampo before her. Lispector, in "The Imitation of the Rose," similarly shows a coming of age in which the darkness of the threshold experience is unending, yet Lispector's plot, as opposed to *Forgotten Journey*'s dramatic

[169] "Sua juventude anterior parecia-lhe estranha como uma doença de vida. Dela havia aos poucos emergido para descobrir que também sem a felicidade se vivia" (*Todos os contos* 146).

losses, concerns the minutiae of the woman's experience. "How rich normal life was," Lispector's protagonist, a woman named Laura, comments (144). The plot of the story, following this remark, is restrained: Laura neurotically contemplates sending roses to a friend, revealing her struggles with aging and mental illness in the process.

In a nod to the flawed and fraught practice of ethnography and also seemingly to another children's classic, Antoine de Saint-Exupéry's *The Little Prince*, Laura wonders how an extra-terrestrial, whom Lispector tellingly defines as "uninitiated," might perceive human aging.

> If a perfect person from the planet Mars landed and discovered that Earthlings got tired and grew old, that person would feel pity and astonishment. Without ever understanding what was good about being human, in feeling tired, in giving out daily; only the uninitiated would comprehend this subtlety of defectiveness and this refinement of life. (*Complete Stories* 139)[170]

Again, form replicates content: *Family Ties* repeatedly shows readers the *subtleties* of feminine aging. Laura feels that she is "giving out daily," but Lispector doesn't include this as a foregone conclusion of aging. The story doesn't automatically equate growing old with either defectiveness or refinement. Instead, she states that only the uninitiated, someone who exists outside of the strictures of the rite of passage as defined by ethnographers like van Gennep and Turner, could truly perceive aging for what it was. She seems to implicate initiation rites in determining these bifurcating paths of coming of age (defectiveness or refinement) and thus clouding our attention to what is "good about being

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[170] "Se uma pessoa perfeita do planeta Marte descesse e soubesse que as pessoas da Terra se cansavam e envelheciam, teria pena e espanto. Sem entender jamais o que havia de bom em ser gente, em sentir-se cansada, em diariamente falir; só os iniciados compreenderiam essa nuance de vício e esse refinamento de vida" (*Todos os contos* 162).

human." The story, like the rest of *Family Ties*, pays attention to the way characters embody ages that don't necessarily coincide with their biological maturity. When Laura looks at the titular roses, Lispector invokes the child's relationship to viewing new objects for the first time, as articulated by Jentsch: "'Oh they're so lovely,' her heart exclaimed suddenly a bit childish" (144).[171] She embodies the enchantment of youthful perception, wants to be like the roses, and is described as "desabrochada" or "blossoming," another term often reserved for feminine adolescence (and used to describe the prepubescent girls in "Happy Birthday"). In this case, however, it is incongruent with the woman's state and used by Lispector when Laura tells her husband that her mental illness has returned (*Todos os contos* 178; *Complete Stories* 155). "It was because of the roses,"[172] she tells him at the story's close (154).

The roses come to represent Laura's internalized expectations of others, including her friend Carlota, to whom she imagines gifting the roses, and most pointedly, her husband Armando, of how to best perform the role of a woman in Brazilian society. Laura is medically unable to bear children, and thus unable to eventually play, in scholar Marta Peixoto's words, "the most powerful role traditional Brazilian society allows women, that of mother in a mother-dominated extended family" (Peixoto in Abel, Hirsch, and Langland, eds. 298). Lispector's feminine characters, however, enact elements of writing in their behavior as another such powerful endeavor; in this way, the stories give girls and women voice. Lispector includes a powerful moment in which Laura imagines the conversation

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[171] "–Ah como são lindas, exclamou seu coração de repente um pouco infantil" (*Todos os contos* 167).

[172] "Foi por causa das rosas, disse com modéstia" (*Todos os contos* 177).

she and Carlota would have if she gives away the roses. In it is a meta-fictional moment that, in addition to providing a window into Laura's shifting mindset, seems to simultaneously explain the Woolf-like roving narrative voice of *Family Ties* which, as mentioned in Chapter One's discussion of "Happy Birthday," permits Lispector to give readers an unusually full picture of a feminine character whose internalized misogyny must reflect an inner psychological state as it responds to external forces. When Lispector discusses Laura's use of the third person to refer to herself, she also seems to address the narrative voice of her own collection, which, like Ocampo's *Forgotten Journey*, experimentally shifts between third and first person:

> In this imaginary and agreeable scene that made her smile beatifically, she called herself "Laura," as if referring to a third person. A third person full of that gentle and crackling and grateful and tranquil faith. Laura, the one with the little real-lace collar, discreetly dressed, Armando's wife, finally an Armando who no longer needed to force himself to pay attention to all of her chattering about the maid and meat, who no longer needed to think about his wife, like a man who is happy, like a man who isn't married to a ballerina. (*Complete Stories* 146)[173]

It is the roles a woman plays in relation to others or as perceived by others that push her into this unorthodox mix of first and third person, and Lispector's attention to societal expectations, and the ways these performances are connected to larger systems, runs throughout *Family Ties.* Lispector remains attuned to the linguistic elements of these

[173] "Nesta cena imaginária e aprazível que a fazia sorrir beata, ela chamava a si mesma de 'Laura', como a uma terceira pessoa. Uma terceira pessoa cheia daquela fé suave e crepitante e grata e tranquila, Laura, a da golinha de renda verdadeira, vestida com discrição, esposa de Armando, enfim um Armando que não precisava mais se forçar a prestar atenção em todas as suas conversas sobre empregada e carne, que não precisava mais pensar na sua mulher, como um homem que é feliz, como um homem que não é casado com uma bailarina" (*Todos os contos* 169).

performances, and her narrative innovations spring from the language of actual children as much as from children's literature.

### *Family Ties* and the Poetry of the Child's Language

In the title story of Clarice Lispector's *Laços de família* or *Family Ties* (1960), a mother observes her young son in his bedroom. She considers the toddler's language acquisition in relation to other developmental milestones, such as the steadiness of his steps and the length of his attention span.

> Ever since he could walk he'd been steady on his feet; but nearing the age of four he still spoke as if he didn't know what verbs were: he'd confirm things coldly, not linking them… The woman felt a pleasant warmth and would have liked to capture the boy forever in that moment [but] the boy gazed indifferently into the air, communicating with himself. He was always distracted. No one had ever really managed to hold his attention. (*Complete Stories* 200-1)[174]

The same markers of the child's development—steady but roving movement, a slight but persistent indifference that instills curiosity and affection in observers, and most notably a syntax that reinvents the verb and redefines what constitutes a sentence—can be attributed to the narrative voice of *Family Ties*. Consider, as discussed in Chapter One, the series of fragments used by the narrator during the party in "Happy Birthday" to capture the elderly Dona Anita's own obstinately roaming and childlike attention, as well as the swelling sensation of her separateness from the family she is ashamed to have mothered: "Occasionally aware of the colorful napkins. Looking curiously when a passing car made

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[174] "Desde que se pusera de pé caminhara firme; mas quase aos quatro anos falava como se desconhecesse verbos: constatava as coisas com frieza, não as ligando entre si...A mulher sentia um calor bom e gostaria de prender o menino para sempre a este momento... Mas o menino olhava indiferente para o ar, comunicando-se consigo mesmo. Estava sempre distraído. Ninguém conseguira ainda chamar-lhe verdadeiramente a atenção" (*Todos os contos* 223).

the odd balloon tremble. And occasionally that mute anguish" (157-8).[175] Here and elsewhere, form replicates content as Lispector mimics the boy's sporadic, poetic speech, as if her narrator were speaking in line breaks, as if she "didn't know what verbs were." Because the narration in *Family Ties* is intimately related to the child's perspective and language, Lispector's inclusion of this scene in "Family Ties" seems to articulate her larger stylistic project in which linguistic links, or lack thereof, can signify relational bonds or breakdowns. As part of her debut collection of stories, she also seems to anticipate and respond to some readers' confusion or assessment of her prose as ungrammatical and thus difficult or hermetic, a gendered critique with which Lispector grew frustrated, as discussed in Chapter One of this dissertation, and one similarly wielded against Silvina Ocampo.

It is important to note that the boy's language acquisition acts as an impetus for several pivotal moments in the story, which is ultimately an exploration of intergenerational dynamics—and more specifically the generational shifts prompted by marriages, births, and deaths, and the language that accompanies these rites. The plot of "Family Ties" involves the effects of a visit from the boy's grandmother, Severina, on each of the members of the family: Catarina,[176] Severina's daughter, first and foremost, but also her husband Antônio and their son, an only child and the only character in the story who goes unnamed. Like during the Rites of Demeter, the effects on male members of the family is distant but present. Early in "Family Ties," Catarina rides in a taxi with her mother to

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[175] "De vez em quando consciente dos guardanapos coloridos. Olhando curiosa um ou outro balão estremecer aos carros que passavam. E de vez em quando aquela angústia muda" (*Todos os contos* 180).

[176] Pontiero, in a telling move, anglicizes Catarina's name in his 1972 translation of *Family Ties*, opting to call her Catherine.

the train station to see her off. Amidst the theme of departure, their early dialogue is a comment on the boy's condition, as well as the reader's introduction to his character. Severina describes the boy as skinny and anxious, and Catarina outwardly acquiesces while considering his particular response to his grandmother's affection.

> He was an anxious, distracted boy. During his grandmother's visit he'd become even more remote, slept poorly, was upset by the old woman's excessive affection and loving pinches. Antônio, who'd never been particularly worried about his son's sensitivity, had begun dropping hints to his mother-in-law, "to protect the child." (*Complete Stories* 196-7)[177]

Before we find out that the boy's language acquisition is possibly delayed, we learn that he is solitary, anxious, and sensitive to physical touch, and later in the story we learn that he is prone to tantrums. The possibility that the boy is on the autism spectrum lays the foundation for Lispector's heightened attention to language acquisition in the story—and for Catarina's responses to her son's speech acts.

When the boy says "Mama" with a declarative rather than demanding or inquiring inflection, Catarina spins around in shock and joy. She feels the urge to share his enigmatic, quite literally preverbal remark with someone, "but she couldn't think of anyone who'd understand what she couldn't explain" (201).[178] His utterance prompts Catarina to take him out for a walk on the beach, as her husband, excluded from the mother-son day trip, watches from the window. During this scene, in a moment that recalls Virginia Woolf's *To the Lighthouse*, the narrator briefly jumps forward in time to Catarina's death. We see her son's

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[177] "Era um menino nervoso, distraído. Durante a visita da avó tornara-se ainda mais distante, dormira mal, perturbado pelos carinhos excessivos e pelos beliscões de amor da velha. Antônio, que nunca se preocupara especialmente com a sensibilidade do filho, passara a dar indiretas à sogra, 'a proteger uma criança'" (*Todos os contos* 219).

[178] "mas não encontrou ninguém que entendesse o que ela não pudesse explicar" (*Todos os contos* 223).

reaction as he assumes his father's position at the window, embodying the generational shift prompted by his mother's death, and Lispector employs her oft-used word to describe the mother-son relationship: "mystery."[179]

> Later on her son, a man now, alone, would stand before this very window, drumming his fingers against this windowpane; trapped. Forced to answer to a dead person. Who could ever know just when a mother passes this legacy to her son. And with what somber pleasure. Mother and son now understanding each other inside the shared mystery. (202)[180]

That on the page all of this—the initial spontaneous day trip, the son's memory of it when he is a grown man—springs from the boy's one-word declaration of "Mama," and that his declaration takes place after an awkward and inexplicable visit from Catarina's own mother, is consequential, calling attention to a central tenet of *Family Ties*: the evolution of the language we use throughout our lives has the power to shape familial bonds.

During Catarina and Severina's goodbye, Catarina regrets never having a conversation that could have provided some affirmation or assurance of their relationship. She senses a role reversal while dropping her mother off at the train station, finding herself wanting to ask if her mother was happy in her marriage to her father (she hesitates, and sends warm wishes to her aunt instead) and advising her where to sit to stay warm during the ride, to which her mother retorts, "Come now, girl, I'm not a child," invoking both

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[179] That Lispector invokes the Eleusinian mysteries will be taken up in a later section of this chapter focused on the Severina-Catarina relationship and the Demeter-Persephone myth in *Family Ties.*

[180] "Mais tarde seu filho, já homem, sozinho, estaria de pé diante desta mesma janela, batendo dedos nesta vidraça; preso. Obrigado a responder a um morto. Quem saberia jamais em que momento a mãe transferia ao filho a herança. E com que sombrio prazer. Agora mãe e filho compreendendo-se dentro do mistério partilhado" (*Todos os contos* 225).

"girl" and "child" as indicative of a lack of power (199).[181] Catarina imagines a different kind of restorative dialogue that never came to pass: "'I am your mother, Catarina.' And she would have answered: 'And I am your daughter,'" daughter being a very different, more meaning-laden kinship term that Severina's use of the generic *girl* (199).[182] Instead, they share a sudden burst of dialogue when the train's departure bell sounds: "Mama! the woman said. Catarina! the old woman said" (198). It is in light of this exchange that Catarina endows her son's unprecedented and single-word utterance, which echoes her own rushed remark with many unsaid thoughts behind it, with existential meaning and considers rewriting the boy's simple line to convey its poetry and its potency. Her revision process to the single all-encompassing word, read in light of Kristeva's notion of the semiotic chora (1974), becomes, in part, a comment on avant-garde fiction writing: "Maybe she could explain, if she changed the way it happened," she ponders. "She'd explain that her son had said: 'Mama, who is God.' No, maybe: 'Mama, boy wants god.' Maybe" (201).[183] Catarina attempts primitivism, a creative endeavor that Ocampo classified as impossible for adult writers: the imitation of a young child's perfect, chaotic according to Kristeva and creative according to Chukovsky (1968),[184] and perhaps verbless or strangely verbed, phrasing. Yet the attempt at reconstructing a child's speech—and empathically

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[181] "Ora menina, sou lá criança" (*Todos os contos* 221).

[182] "sou tua mãe, Catarina. E ela deveria ter respondido: e eu sou tua filha" (*Todos os contos* 221).

[183] "Talvez pudesse contar, se mudasse a forma. Contaria que o filho dissera: mamãe quem é Deus. Não, talvez: mamãe, menino quer Deus. Talvez" (*Todos os contos* 221).

[184] In *From Two to Five*, Chukovsky identifies the years between two and five as the most creative and poetic period of a child's language acquisition.

entering the son's consciousness—can yield, as in Ocampo's *Forgotten Journey* and Lispector's *Family Ties*, both thematic and linguistic innovation.

In order to identify and begin to form constructions with verbs, Eve V. Clark (2003: 180) argues that children first "need to attend to the events adults talk about." Catarina's son isn't doing this, instead "communicating with himself,"[185] which prompts his mother's feelings of warmth and her *Peter Pan*-informed desire to "capture [him] forever in that moment." Lispector's prose reads like a warning against Catarina's temptation to impose adult standards on her son's wandering mind, still unaffected by "the events adults talk about" and thus unburdened by adult grammar. Because *Family Ties* unfolds around the unsaid and the unseen, the nooks and crannies of what goes on in a family from the vantage points of multiple characters, both young and old, it similarly requires new language. When Clark traces child language acquisition from babbling to first words to multi-word constructions, she highlights early verb use. "Children do not seem to make generalizations about a single construction and then plug in any and all possible candidate verbs right away," Clark clarifies. "They seem to work from each specific verb to the range of forms each occurs with, building up groups of constructions that are compatible in meaning with each verb" (185-6). It is in this experimental stage that what Clark calls "novel" or "innovative" verbs—those that are rooted in nouns and give objects agency, e.g. "to fire" to describe that act of lighting a candle, or those that overextend suffixes and other conjugational rules or that mix irregular and regular patterns—are likely to occur in a child's speech (285). "Curiouser and curiouser" verbs like *thoughted* or *wented* in English

[185] Here Lispector's phrasing invokes the very definition of autism, and again the possibility that the boy is neurodiverse.

are akin to what Clark calls "novel adjectives," including those that are the product of children's experimentation with the suffix *-er,* which Carroll undoubtedly had in mind when writing Alice's famous lines (Carroll 13; Clark 285). Through the lenses of language acquisition theory and the childhood fantastic, links emerge between children's speech, the agency of objects, and Alice's metaphysical—and unanswerable with adult experience—wonderings, such as "[trying] to fancy what the flame of a candle looks like after the candle is blown out" (Carroll 11).[186]

Throughout *Family Ties*, Lispector adopts the project, both childlike and Carrollesque of dwelling on a specific verb and rigorously expanding its range of possible forms, including "ungrammatical" ones. In the opening story, for example, "Devaneio e embriaguez duma rapariga," gauzily and girlishly translated by Katrina Dodson as "Daydream and Drunkenness of a Young Lady," the woman in question *fantasticizes* in the moments between waking and sleeping. "That night, until she fell asleep, she fantasticized, fantasticized" (*Complete Stories* 114).[187] Though the protagonist is a married mother, Lispector calls her a "rapariga," which most often means girl, young girl, or little

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[186] The last lines of "Love" evoke this image from *Alice*: "Before going to bed, as if putting out a candle, [Ana] blew out the little flame of the day" (*Complete Stories* 131). "Antes de se deitar, como se apagasse uma vela, soprou a pequena flama do dia" (*Todos os contos* 155).

[187] "Nessa noite, até dormir, fantasticou, fantasticou" (*Todos os contos* 137). Pontiero's translation once again glosses over Lispector's neologism and uses language that sounds suspiciously like accusations of hysteria: "That night, until she fell asleep, her mind became more and more delirious" (Pontiero 30). Pontiero's judgment of the woman, which does not appear in the original wording, is also reflected in his rendering of the title, "The Daydreams of a Drunk Woman," which stands in stark contrast to Dodson's dreamier, softer, and *Alice*-like title and which once again alters Lispector's choice not of "mulher" but of "rapariga." It also changes the noun "Drunkenness," which appears alongside "Daydream" as a characterization of *one* of this woman's experiences, to "Drunk," cruder as an adjective and employed by Pontiero as a kind of permanent or enduring marker of her identity.

girl, and less commonly refers to an adult woman. Lispector connects the protagonist's fantasticizing and her girlishness when in the same story she includes a dismissal of prosaic language. Contrasted with Catarina's son's affecting sentences, the moment echoes Lispector's Carrollesque complaints about certain boring adults in her children's book *The Woman Who Killed the Fish*: "Oh, words, words, bedroom objects lined up in word order, forming those muddled, bothersome sentences that whoever can read, shall. Tiresome, tiresome, oh what a bore" (*Complete Stories* 119).[188] Instead of upholding traditional notions of readability by writing "muddled, bothersome sentences" about mundane objects, Lispector employs a fantastic touch in the Jentschian sense, presenting them as animated and altered, as if seen from the child's perspective, even if the character in question is not in fact a child.

### *Alice in Wonderland* as Urtext: Representations of Feminine Growth in *Family Ties*

If in *Forgotten Journey* the social construction of girlhood is represented by the motif of feminine doubling, *Family Ties* presents a marked escalation: a further blurring of girl subjectivities that points to systemic patriarchy and indicates a stronger sociological or anthropological awareness and activist spirit in Lispector's work. Lispector's focus on embodied girlhood, which echoes Ocampo's, also engages *Alice in Wonderland,* seen in classic Carroll motifs, childlike language, and the perspective of the young girl. Lispector opens the collection, for instance, with an image of feminine splicing or multiplying. The image is prompted by the protagonist of "Daydream and Drunkenness of a Young Lady"

[188] "Ai, palavras, palavras, objetos do quarto alinhados em ordem de palavras, a formarem aquelas frases turvas e maçante que quem souber ler, lerá. Aborrecimento, aborrecimento, ai que chatura" (*Todos os contos* 142).

looking at herself in the mirror and dwelling momentarily on her own self-perception, an act in which many Ocampo and Lispector heroines engage.

> Throughout the room it seemed to her the trams were crossing, making her reflection tremble. She sat combing her hair languorously before the three-way vanity, her white strong arms bristling in the slight afternoon chill. Her eyes didn't leave themselves, the mirrors vibrated, now dark, now luminous. Outside, from an upper window, a heavy, soft thing fell to the street. Had the little ones and her husband been home, she'd have thought to blame their carelessness. Her eyes never pried themselves from her image, her comb working meditatively, her open robe revealing in the mirrors *the intersecting breasts of several young ladies.* (*Complete Stories* 111, emphasis added)[189]

First, the image in the mirror trembles and vibrates, unsteady and shifting, before we see that it also multiplies. The effect of the image of the young lady replicating is tantamount to Lispector's use of general, folktale-like language in other *Family Ties* stories, like "Mystery in São Cristóvão" in which the girl whose sexual assault is foretold is unnamed. It gives the impression that the story's events could happen to any young woman at any time—that it *is* happening to many girls and women at once, and that these experiences are not isolated but in fact interconnected.

The image of the feminine body multiplying gives way to a striking *Alice*-inspired image, opening up a critical dialogue between Carroll and Lispector that, as Lispector scholar Claire Williams (2005) illuminates, continues to the end of Lispector's oeuvre. Like in Ocampo's "The Wide and Sunny Terrace," the opening of the "Daydream and

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[189] "Pelo quarto parecia-lhe estarem a se cruzar os elétricos, a estremecerem-lhe a imagem refletida. Estava a se pentear vagarosamente diante da penteadeira de três espelhos, os braços brancos e fortes arrepiavam-se à frescurazita de tarde. Os olhos não se abandonavam, os espelhos vibravam ora escuros, ora luminosos. Cá fora, duma janela mais alta, caiu à rua uma cousa pesada e fofa. Se os miúdos e o marido estivessem à casa, já lhe viria à ideia que seria descuido deles. Os olhos não se despregavam da imagem, o pente trabalhava meditativo, o roupão aberto deixava aparecerem nos espelhos os seios entrecortados de várias raparigas" (*Todos os contos* 135).

Drunkenness of a Young Lady" highlights the interactions between the outside world and the domestic and interior domains of the protagonist: the sounds from outside the young woman's window filter in and prompt a series of reactions. As the young woman watches herself expand in the three-way mirror, the paperboy calls out the name of a newspaper, she begins singing a song, and then she abruptly stops:

> "*A Noite!"* called a paperboy into the gentle wind of Rua do Riachuelo, and something shivered in premonition. She tossed the comb onto the vanity, singing rapturously: "who saw the lit-tle spar-row … go flying past the win-dow … it flew so far past Mi-nho!" – but, wrathful, *shut herself tight as a fan.* (*Complete Stories* 111, emphasis added)[190]

Recalling Alice, who shuts up like a telescope, Lispector's heroine feels as revolutionary as Carroll's, whose foundational text gave license to center the story of a not always likable but tenacious and complex young girl protagonist who also occupies a liminal space between girlhood and womanhood. The story, like both *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* and Ocampo's "The Wide and Sunny Terrace," is a day in the life. In it we find an honest portrayal of a young wife and mother moving throughout her Sunday, the end of the weekend, with a hangover. Her children are at her sister's house, and the Saturday night before she attended a dinner with her husband and one of his company's investors. The aftermath of the evening is shown like refracted light, given in her morning-after reflections in which her past selves shimmer through sharp edges, illuminating the gendered power dynamics that infiltrate the lives of girls and women on a daily basis.

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[190] "'A Noite!', gritou o jornaleiro ao vento brando da Rua de Riachuelo, e alguma cousa arrepiou-se pressagiada. Jogou o pente à penteadeira, cantou absorta: 'quem viu o pardalzito...passou pela janela... voou pr'além do Minho!' –mas, colérica, fechou-se dura como um leque" (*Todos os contos* 135).

At the heart of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* and *Through the Looking Glass* is, in Williams' incisive summary, "a girl trying to make sense of a world she cannot understand" (21). While Williams does not establish a direct link between Carroll and Lispector, she finds numerous similarities, enough for a compelling argument: "Although the relationship between Lispector's work and that of Lewis Carroll, separated by a continent and almost a hundred years, may seem strange, I believe there are enough coincidences," she writes (Williams 21). While Williams focuses on *A Hora da Estrela* (1977), Lispector's last novel, I will focus on *Family Ties.* One powerful commonality that Williams does not mention and that emerges through a focus on *Family Ties* is, as we saw in the previous section, the question of the child's language and a psychoanalytical approach to language acquisition. I argue that Lispector's influential relationship to children's literature, as established in Chapter One of this dissertation, as well as her relationship to Silvina Ocampo, given Ocampo's expressed link to Carroll, as established in Chapter Two of this dissertation, are additional factors that strengthen the possibility that Lispector's use of Carroll is more than coincidental, to use Williams' phrasing. Like Williams, I find the connections to Carroll in Lispector's work to be incredibly compelling, and I also find that they show Lispector, like Ocampo, turning to classic children's literature tropes to experiment within the fantastic genre, creating a new genre in the process: the girlhood fantastic.

Like Alice, Lispector's protagonist is up against both rigid standards of femininity, struggling to fit certain gender norms, and the abuses of a dominant power group, the power-hungry adults and creatures of Wonderland in Alice's case and men who feel entitled to cross boundaries in the young lady's case. Like Alice telling herself "You ought

to be ashamed of yourself," for not acting like a good girl, the protagonist of "Daydream and Drunkenness of a Young Lady" chastises herself, saying "oh what a trollop you've turned out to be," and "How careless and lazy you've turned out," for not completing her Sunday chores like an ideal (in her mind) mother would, instead spending the day in bed recovering from the dinner the previous night (Carroll 14; *Complete Stories* 114 and 120).[191] We find out later that she is recovering not merely from drinking too much but from her husband's investor's unwelcome advances. Here we witness the cleaving of selves based on an internalization of others' perceptions and societal expectations; like Laura in "The Imitation of the Rose," the young lady not only employs self-directed speech, but she also rehearses conversations with others: "'Good day, do you know who came looking for me here at the house?' she thought as a possible and interesting topic of conversation" (*Complete Stories* 112).[192] As the titular young lady's identity shifts based on her surroundings, Lispector invokes Alice, especially when these shifts manifest physically or externally.

Williams mentions *Family Ties* once in her piece, showing the ways in which, in both Carroll and Lispector's texts, the struggle to fit in is embodied.

> In Wonderland the parameters are always changing. The inhabitants metamorphose from one thing into another, and food or drink can modify Alice's size dramatically. She is always the wrong size (too big to get through the door or too small to reach the key), just like Macabéa [in *A Hora da Estrela*] who finds it hard to feel comfortable anywhere. (28)

She then references Ingrid R. Muller's 1991 essay on the body in *Family Ties.*

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[191] "ai que até me faltei ao respeito," "ai que vagabunda que me saíste!" (*Todos os contos* 138).

[192] "'Bons dias, sabes quem veio a me procurar cá à casa?', pensou como assunto possível e interessante de palestra" (*Todos os contos* 135).

> Muller has argued that the family tie between all the characters (male and female) in Lispector's short story collection *Laços de família* is that they experience a problematic relationship to their bodies and are excessively conscious of themselves in interactions with others. The protagonist of "Devaneio e Embriaguez de uma Rapariga," for example, feels her body swell and deflate, reflecting her emotional state, and the diminutive Pequena Flor, "A Menor Mulher do Mundo," is a character who would not be out of place in Wonderland. (28)

The young woman in "Daydream and Drunkenness of a Young Lady" whose body "[swells] and [deflates]" as she describes the sensations of her drunkenness and then her subsequent hangover, embodies two states that seemingly divide the protagonist, like Alice before her, into two different women. Williams is referencing a passage that Peixoto (1994: 24) pinpoints as representative of all of the epiphanies in *Family Ties* in the protagonist's movement from a state of "expanded perception" to one of normalcy and mundanity. I add that this movement is evident of Lispector's incorporation of techniques from the fantastic literary tradition that, like the children's literature canon, dramatizing the collapsing of animate and inanimate worlds.

In this collapse we see the entanglement of interior and exterior worlds, and I want to note the Carrollesque language employed by Lispector, as well as her mimicking of Alice's movement in and out of Wonderland in the young lady's transition from drunk to sober, from epiphany to everyday. Returning home from dinner, the woman's eyes begin to close and in her drunkenness the boundaries of her body dissolve against the backdrop of her bedroom: as she grows "bigger and bigger, reeling, swollen, gigantic," "everything [becomes] flesh," "the foot of the bed made of flesh, the window made of flesh, the suit made of flesh her husband had tossed on the chair, and everything nearly aching"

(*Complete Stories* 118).[193] Like in Ocampo's *Forgotten Journey*, the role of everyday objects, perceived either by children themselves or by adults who briefly inhabit the uncanny consciousness of a child as put forth by Jentsch, is paramount. In "Daydream and Drunkenness of a Young Lady," the latter is true in Lispector's uncanny representation of shame and drunkenness. As the lady becomes sober, another shift in her size engages the household objects around her. Here, Lispector seems to directly reference both *Alice in Wonderland* and the Eleusinian Mysteries: "Things were happening to her that only later would really hurt and matter: *once she returned to her normal size*, her anaesthetized body would wake up throbbing and she'd pay for all that gorging and wine" (118, emphasis added).[194] Lispector's phrasing recalls Alice's triumphant moments when she stands up to the Queen: "'Who cares for you?' said Alice, *(she had grown to her full size by this time.)* 'You're nothing but a pack of cards!'" (Carroll 96, emphasis added). When the woman, like an initiate at Eleusis, opens her eyes (an image that bookends the sequence, which was initiated by her eyes closing), "everything [becomes] smaller and more distinct" (118). Like with Alice, the protagonist of Lispector's story possesses more agency and is freer the bigger she becomes and the more space she takes up, and even when the metamorphosis is over, its effect lingers.

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[193] "cada vez maior, vacilante, túmida, gigantesca," "tudo ficou de carne, o pé da cama de carne, a janela de carne, na cadeira o fato de carne que o marido jogara, e tudo quase doía" (*Todos os contos* 141).

[194] "Que nesse momento lhe estavam a acontecer cousas que só mais tarde iriam a doer mesmo e a valer: quando ela voltasse ao seu tamanho comum, o corpo anestesiado estaria a acordar latejando e ela iria a pagar pelas comilanças e vinhos" (*Todos os contos* 142).

Like an adult Alice, the young lady talks to herself in the third person as another splicing occurs: "You overstuff yourself and I end up paying the price, she said to herself melancholically, gazing at her little white toes" like Alice gazing at her growing feet and legs (*Complete Stories* 118).[195] Peixoto elucidates the temporary metamorphoses of Lispector's feminine characters: "But like the shrinking of swollen tissues, the power—or more precisely, the illusion of power—recedes and dissipates, and the protagonists complacently take up again their normal, undistinguished lives" (24). Williams reminds us that this is exactly what happens to Alice as she awakes to the reality of Victorian girlhood, though the connection between Alice's interior state and the physical world around her remains somewhat intact, via feminine kinship: "At the end of *Alice in Wonderland*, Alice's sister," who like readers finds herself compelled to the world of Alice's creation, "concludes that they must have been triggered by the rural noises which had infiltrated the sleeping child's consciousness: rustling grass, tinkling sheep-bells, the clamour of the busy farmyard" (Williams 27). When the other world is contained within the everyday world, as in Lispector and Ocampo's fictions, we see the dynamic between internal and external forces emerge and play out in real time as the stories unfold. "Love," the most famous story in *Family Ties,* can similarly be read through the lens of *Alice in Wonderland* as Ana, a young mother, gets locked in the Rio de Janeiro Botanical Garden after dark, fantastically described by Lispector as "a world to sink one's teeth into, a world of voluminous dahlias

[195] "'Empanturras-te e eu que pague o pato', disse-se melancólica, a olhar os deditos brancos do pé" (*Todos os contos* 142).

and tulips" and trees laden, like in the Garden of Eden, with sweet fruit (126-7).[196] Ana remarks that, "There was a secret labor underway in the Garden that she was starting to perceive," and later when she returns to her kitchen, the labor is underway there, in the leaking faucet, mosquitos circling a bright light, and a vase of wilting flowers (126).[197] The women of *Family Ties* belong to a world that, like Wonderland, is woven of objects that, though they may be at turns whimsical and sinister, are never silent.

Another key element of Lispector's defamiliarization of the everyday, established immediately in "Daydream and Drunkenness of a Young Lady," concerns consent. When the young lady feels her body swell in her drunkenness, Peixoto characterizes it as "[gaining] a power—exhilarating, threatening, and at times grotesque—normally inaccessible to [women]" (1994: 24). Like the women initiates celebrating their temporary autonomy during the Rites of Demeter, the woman relishes in the freedom of her expanding body, which is contrasted with two moments that occur in the story in which her own bodily agency is questioned or threatened, first by her husband and second by her husband's business partner. Both incidents pass by quickly, the narration distant and detached at first glance. The effect is eery as Lispector calls attention to how mundane such moments are in the lives of girls and women. The first takes place as the story opens, the morning after the business dinner, while the protagonist is waking up in bed. Her husband leans over to

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[196] "era um mundo de se comer com os dentes, um mundo de volumosas dálias e tulipas" (*Todos os contos* 151).

[197] "Fazia-se no Jardim um trabalho secreto do qual ela começava a se aperceber" (*Todos os contos* 150).

kiss her, and she replies, "Get away from me!" (*Complete Stories* 113).[198] Rather than respecting her command, he replies, "What's the matter with you?" and "immediately [attempts] a *more effective* caress" (113, emphasis added).[199] When she refuses again, he challenges her mental stability and claims her ability to consent: "he seemed to think better of it and declared: 'Come now, young lady, you're ill" (113).[200] The next line is: "She acquiesced, surprised, flattered," each verb escalating as the incident gets rewritten even in the protagonist's mind and the story continues (113).[201]

The second episode concerning consent that readers are privy to in "Daydream and Drunkenness of a Young Lady" occurs the evening before. The memory resurfaces suddenly, when she is recounting the events of the dinner:

> "And when at the restaurant …," she suddenly recalled. When she'd been at the restaurant her husband's benefactor had slid a foot up against hers under the table, and above the table that face of his. Because it happened to fit or on purpose? That devil. Someone, to be honest, who was really quite interesting. She shrugged. (*Complete Stories* 119)[202]

Like when she "acquiesces" in the incident with her husband, here she "shrugs" at the man, whom she characterizes as "really quite interesting," immediately after his transgression. The progression of these incidents, especially the one involving the woman's husband,

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[198] "'Larga-te daí'" (*Todos os contos* 136).

[199] "'E o que tens?' pergunta-lhe o homem atônito, a ensaiar imediatamente carinho mais eficaz" (*Todos os contos* 137).

[200] "'Ó rapariga, estás doente'" (*Todos os contos* 137).

[201] "Ela aceitou surpreendida, lisonjeada" (*Todos os contos* 137).

[202] "'E quando no restaurante...', lembrou-se de repente. Quando estivera no restaurante o protetor do marido encostara ao seu pé um pé embaixo da mesa, e por cima da mesa a cara dele. Porque calhara ou de propósito? O mafarico. Uma pessoa, a falar verdade, que era lá bem interessante. Alçou os ombros" (*Todos os contos* 143).

recalls a stunning moment in "Family Ties," a story I will return to in the following section. It is different in that the incident is told from the perspective of Catarina's husband. He recounts a way that he repeatedly violates his wife's privacy and bodily agency. Stunningly, he bookends the reflection by calling their marriage "peaceful," creating a jarring juxtaposition.

> Their relationship was so peaceful. Sometimes he tried to humiliate her, he'd barge into their bedroom while she was changing because he knew she detested being seen naked. Why did he need to humiliate her? yet he was well aware that she would only ever belong to a man as long as she had her pride. *But he had grown used to this way of making her feminine: he'd humiliate her with tenderness, and soon enough she'd smile*—without resentment? Maybe this had given rise to the peaceful nature of their relationship. (203, emphasis added)[203]

Her husband's male gaze aims to humiliate but ultimately to possess, just like the husband in "Daydream and Drunkenness of a Young Lady." That both violations are ultimately and shockingly reframed as evidence of tenderness and affection makes painstakingly clear the effect of quotidian patriarchal violence on both men and women.

If we are to read the husband's dangerously unaware narration as evidence of his candid and thus reliable narration of Catarina's humiliation eventually turning to a smile, I'm interested in how quickly and fully both women deny what has occurred and rewrite the injuries to their bodies—during the husbands' violations, because Lispector indicates they are repeated events, this act of rewriting actually happens as the incidents are

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[203] "As relações entre ambos eram tão tranquilas. Às vezes ele procurava humilhá-la, entrava no quarto enquanto ela mudava de roupa porque sabia que ela detestava ser vista nua. Por que precisava humilhá-la? no entanto ele bem sabia que ela só seria de um homem enquanto fosse orgulhosa. Mas tinha se habituado a torná-la feminina deste modo: humilhava-a com ternura, e já agora ela sorria sem rancor? Talvez de tudo isso tivessem nascido suas relações pacíficas" (*Todos os contos* 225-6).

unfolding, before the telling has even concluded—and also how quickly these brief episodes pass by from the reader's perspective, not taken up again in the stories explicitly but instead decontextualized, repressed, and dissociated into the text itself. For many reasons these kinds of incidents demand a light touch, however, and Lispector's quick-moving narration is, despite the temptation to misread her approach as uninvested, in fact very much the opposite: clever, meaning-laden, and representative of the reality of disembodiment and repressed memory—of her characters' processing, re-processing, and ultimately censoring of their own experiences in order to survive them. In her detached narration, Lispector is, counterintuitively or unexpectedly, calling attention to a lack of attention paid by 1950s and 60s Brazilian society to women's lived experiences, and to the dominating narrative from the male point of view, which, when internalized, infiltrates even women's own conceptualization of their own traumas. While two later stories in *Family Ties* take up the issue of sexual violence more dramatically and with sustained examination, the progression of these micro episodes, in which a woman's ability to assert control over her own body is subtly manipulated and taken away by her husband and her husband's colleague, lays an important foundation for what's to come in the collection and most importantly shows Lispector's sharp attention to—and early address, in 1960, of—the unseen accumulation of quotidian transgressions as she examines the scope of gendered violence.

**Demeter and Persephone, Mothers and Daughters, and Migration Between Worlds**

In *Family Ties*' intergenerational explorations of rites of passage—of sexuality and trauma, of loss and mourning, of migration and belonging—Lispector often invokes the

Demeter-Persephone myth. As mentioned in Chapter One, "Mystery in São Cristóvão," which will be discussed in the following section, is set in a garden and contains direct references to Persephone's tale, while other stories, specifically the ones that concern mothers and daughters, are in implicit dialogue with the myth. "Happy Birthday," also discussed in Chapter One, is one such story; "Family Ties," the collection's title piece, is another such story. In this section I will focus on Lispector's portrayal of Catarina and Severina, the mother-daughter characters whose goodbye provides a window into their fraught relationship that includes periods of togetherness and periods of separation. I will also focus on a moment in the story in which Lispector mentions questions of birthplace and belonging, a moment that strikes a chord with Lispector's own life as an immigrant to Brazil. Both of these themes, rooted in the story of Demeter-Persephone, engage aging and the life cycle, feminine rites of passage, and the dark shadow of trauma cast by the classic Lispector epiphany moment.

In the story's opening, Catarina ponders her husband's relationship to his mother-in-law, which we find out is tense in part because of Antônio's protective response to Severina's views on her grandson's condition, which, as her name suggests, is quite severe and judgmental; in English, Severina's name recalls the verb *to sever,* as Demeter and Persephone's family tie is severed by Hades. After two weeks of awkwardness, decorum and politeness mark their goodbye and prompts Severina to utter an aphorism that offers a glimpse into the difference between the consequences of the marriage rite for men and women in matrifocal Brazilian society.

> For the entire two weeks of the old woman's visit, the two could barely stand each other; their good-mornings and good-afternoons constantly struck a note of cautious tact that made [Catarina] want to laugh. But right when saying goodbye, before getting into the taxi, her mother had

> transformed into a model mother-in-law and her husband had become the good son-in-law. "Forgive any misspoken words," the old lady had said… "Whoever marries off a son loses a son, whoever marries off a daughter gains a son," her mother had added, and Antonio took advantage of having the flu to cough. (*Complete Stories* 196-7)[204]

This nod to the daughter's intergenerational responsibility, which readers already witnessed in "Happy Birthday," when Dona Anita's daughter arranges the party while her sons are largely absent and disengaged, informs the climax of the story, which Palls (1984) defines as an epiphany. This epiphanic moment, like the others in *Family Ties*, produces a moment of sudden aging, and gives way to a reflection on the role of parenthood in rites of passage.

In the taxi on the way to the train station, Severina is plagued by the feeling that she has forgotten some object, but ultimately, as we have seen, it is ultimately forgotten words that haunt the interaction—the lack of acknowledgment of the mother-daughter relationship. As adults, Catarina and Severina are not particularly close, and the taxi's sudden braking forces their bodies into one another. It is only when they are confronted with physical closeness that they remember the primacy of their relationship.

> "I haven't forgotten anything …" [Catarina's] mother started up again, when the car suddenly braked, launching them into each other and sending their suitcases flying. Oh! Oh!, shouted her mother as if faced with some irremediable disaster, "oh!" she said shaking her head in surprise, *suddenly older and pitiable*. (*Complete Stories* 197, emphasis added)[205]

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[204] "Durante as duas semanas da visita da velha, os dois males se haviam suportado; os bons-dias e as boas-tardes soavam a cada momento com uma delicadeza cautelosa que a fazia querer rir. Mas eis que na hora da despedida, antes de entrarem no táxi, a mãe se transformara em sogra exemplar e o marido se tornara o bom genro. 'Perdoe alguma palavra mal dita', dissera a velha senhora... 'Quem casa um filho perde um filho, quem casa uma filha ganha mais um', acrescentara a mãe, e Antônio aproveitara sua gripe para tossir" (*Todos os contos* 218).

[205] "'Não esqueci de nada…, recomeçou a mãe, quando uma freada súbita do carro lançou-as uma contra a outra e fez despencarem as malas. 'Ah! Ah!', exclamou a mãe como a um desastre

Lispector shows the reactions of both women to the incident, which initially appears to have an irrevocable, "irremediable" effect, but lingers on Catarina's perception of her mother, who appears "suddenly older" and thus worthy of her daughter's pity. Again, we see the ways that old age, like childhood, is marked and marginalized as a powerless state. After their accidental embrace, the two women look at each other, and Catarina describes the rearranging effects of initiation rituals on families.

> Catarina looked at her mother, and mother looked at daughter… Because something had indeed happened, there was no point in hiding it: Catarina had been launched into Severina, into a long forgotten bodily intimacy, going back to the age when one has a father and mother. Though they'd never really hugged or kissed. (197)[206]

While Severina ages, Catarina regresses to childhood. Instead of verbalizing the epiphany, however, the return to normalcy that Peixoto (1994) identifies as typical of *Family Ties*, settles in: "But after colliding in the taxi and after regaining their composure, they had nothing to talk about—why weren't they at the station already?" (197).[207] The failure of the moment of the goodbye to find apt conventional language shows the difficulty or impossibility of marking and articulating rites of passage as isolated events.

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irremediável, 'ah!', dizia balançando a cabeça em surpresa, de repente envelhecida e pobre" (*Todos os contos* 219).

[206] "Catarina olhava a mãe, e a mãe olhava a filha...Porque de fato sucedera alguma coisa, seria inútil esconder: Catarina fora lançada contra Severina, numa intimidade de corpo há muito esquecida, vinda do tempo em que se tem pai e mãe. Apesar de nunca se haviam realmente abraçado ou beijado" (*Todos os contos* 221).

[207] "Mas depois do choque no táxi e depois de se ajeitarem, não tinham o que falar – por que não chegavam logo à Estação" (*Todos os contos* 220).

In *The Demeter-Persephone Myth as Writing Ritual in the Lives of Literary Women* (2016), Jane Rivers Norton's description of the Demeter-Persephone motif echoes these cycles of ritual transformation:

> The Demeter and Persephone myth as retold in *The Homeric Hymn to Demeter,* called on the muses to reveal the cycle of death and rebirth, the primal relationship between mother and daughter, and the rejuvenating properties of emotional and psychological renewal. The Demeter-Persephone myth chronicled experiences of human loss and recovery. (1)

The epiphany of "Family Ties" hinges on Catarina and Severina's rediscovery of their primal relationship, and on Catarina's acknowledgment of her mother's aging. When Catarina looks at her mother in the train window, Lispector repeats the image of a suddenly aged Severina who, like her grandson, is unable to communicate with Catarina: "Catarina then saw that her mother had aged and that her eyes were glistening" (*Complete Stories* 198).[208] In response, Catarina returns home and takes her son out for the day, showing an intergenerational cycle at work; though she is separated from her mother, she can attempt intimacy with her son and engender a renewal. Lispector reminds readers that loss will follow when she foreshadows Catarina's death and her son's mourning and memory of his day out with his mother. The story repeatedly invokes the duality of loss and recovery, to use Norton's terms, and of separation and reunion, to use van Gennep's.

Within this cycle, goodbyes take on a ritual quality, and Lispector seems to suggest that familial estrangement is never permanent—that family ties do not disappear when parents and children are separated by distance, physical or emotional, or death. This is no clearer than when Catarina thinks of her mother, "No one but me can love you," and she

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[208] "Catarina viu então que sua mãe estava envelhecida e tinha os olhos brilhantes" (*Todos os contos* 220).

experiences a stunning moment of synaesthesia: "and the weight of that responsibility left the taste of blood in her mouth" (*Complete Stories* 198).[209] During Severina's goodbye, though she resists it, the old woman assumes the role of the child and her goodbye, interestingly enough, mimics Claude's departure in Ocampo's "The Lost Passport," though Claude is a teenager. For Ocampo, goodbyes are as ritualistic as a choreographed dance—a dance of seeing and not seeing, Claude reflects.

> The many embraces pushed my hat so far down that all I could see were feet dancing the steps of a goodbye. My father removed my hat so he could see my eyes, and only then could I see just how many pairs of eyes were surrounding me, crying. I understood that this was a moment in life when you had to cry. (*Forgotten Journey* 32)[210]

The goodbye between Severina and Catarina plays out similarly. Severina wears a new hat from her daughter's milliner, a reversal of the parent picking out the child's clothing, and the garment falls down her face, covering her eyes, when the train departs. Like Claude, Severina's vision is briefly impaired by her hat before the goodbye is complete. Lispector illustrates the difference between seeing and being seen, and the space in-between both states within the mother-daughter relationship:

> Her mother's face disappeared for an instant and immediately reappeared hatless, her loosened bun spilling in white locks over her shoulders like the hair of a maiden—her face was downcast and unsmiling, perhaps no longer even seeing her daughter in the distance. Amid the smoke Catarina began heading back, frowning. (*Complete Stories* 199)[211]

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[209] "Ninguém mais pode te amar senão eu," "e o peso da responsabilidade deu-lhe à boca um gosto de sangue" (*Todos os contos* 220).

[210] "los abrazos me hundieron tanto el sombrero que no veía más que los pies despedirse con pasos de baile. Mi padre me quitó el sombrero para verme los ojos, y en ese momento vi que había montones de ojos a mi alrededor que lloraban. Sentí que ése era un momento de la vida en que había que llorar" (*Viaje olvidado* 51).

[211] "O rosto da mãe desapareceu um instante e reapareceu já sem o chapéu, o coque dos cabelos desmanchado caindo em mechas brancas sobre os ombros como as de uma donzela – o rosto

When Severina is finally alone, she reassumes her true age, with "the hair of a maiden," and Catarina reassumes her direction.

Catarina's first moments without her mother show Lispector examining the generational framework of parents and children from the standpoint of an immigrant writer. "Without her mother's company, she had regained her firm stride: it was easier alone," she writes first, before including a passing reminder of the quotidian presence of the male gaze: "A few men looked at her" (*Complete Stories* 199).[212] As Catarina continues walking, Lispector includes a loving portrayal of the city and Catarina's harmony with her surroundings and the objects in her view: "everything around her was so alive and tender, the dirty street, the old trams, orange peels—strength flowed back and forth through her heart in weighty abundance. She was very pretty just then, so elegant; in step with her time and the city where she'd been born *as if she had chosen*" (200, emphasis added).[213] The inclusion of that last phrase—"as if she had chosen"—shows that Lispector's examination of the indelible marks left on children by their parents does not exist in a vacuum but engages questions of geography and migration. Catarina considers her own belonging to a city, and to a gender as the men around her stare at her body, after contemplating her

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estava inclinado sem sorrir, talvez mesmo sem enxergar mais a filha distante" (*Todos os contos* 222).

[212] "Sem a companhia da mãe recuperara o modo firme de caminhar: sozinha era mais fácil. Alguns homens a olhavam" (*Todos os contos* 222).

[213] "tudo estava tão vivo e tenro ao redor, a rua suja, os velhos bondes, casas de laranja – a força fluía e refluía no seu coração com pesada riqueza. Estava muito bonito neste momento, tão elegante; integrada na sua época e na cidade onde nascera como se a tivesse escolhido" (*Todos os contos* 222).

belonging to a mother, and her interior reflections are spurred by and evolve via contact with the outside world.

Villares (2011) insightfully reads Lispector's work through anthropologist Valentina Napolitano's concept of *prisms of belonging* (9). Villares (2011) argues that:

> Lispector's protagonists engage in introspective explorations—and therefore disconnect from the outside world, disrupting action and the linearity of the plot—because they need constantly to rebuild their subjectivities at the *interface between a multitude of external factors with which they have to negotiate in their continued attempt to survive and belong.* One could argue that since Lispector came to Brazil when she was very young she therefore always belonged. But the fact of coming from an immigrant family leaves its long-term marks even on the children born after arrival in the host country. (9, emphasis added)

What's more, Lispector's concern for the mysteries of parenthood engages the external factors Villares mentions. When the story shifts to Antônio's point of view, he wonders about his son with Catarina: "What had this vibrant little creature been born from, if not from all that he and his wife had cut from their everyday life" (*Complete Stories* 203).[214] Lispector's heightened attention to everyday details unfolds in this context and is very much related to her acute awareness of her characters' bodies in the world. What's more, how they are perceived and how they engage with their surroundings shows her consideration of the Demeter-Persephone myth from through the lens of migration's impact on families. In addition to examining Persephone's sexual trauma, Lispector also examines Persephone's migration between worlds, the lasting effects of both worlds on her character, and her fundamental in-betweenness and shifting place in a natural recurring cycle. *Family Ties* also examines the relationship of mother and daughter in the myth—the brutality of

[214] "De onde nascera esta criaturinha vibrante, senão do que sua mulher e ele haviam cortado da vida diária" (*Todos os contos* 226).

male figures disrupting this relationship, the severing of the maternal tie, and the reconciliation with the earthly mother.

**The Violence of Feminine Coming of Age: "Mystery in São Cristóvão"**

There are three tales in *Family Ties*, which arrive toward the end of the collection (almost in succession, with only "Family Ties" interrupting), of what Peixoto (1994: 26) calls *adolescent initiation*. As Peixoto notes, when interpreted as a set, powerful contrasts emerge across gender lines: all three have teenagers at the center of the narrative, but "Mystery in São Cristóvão" and "Preciousness" have feminine protagonists and "Beginnings of a Fortune" has a male protagonist. Peixoto's reading highlights the empowerment of masculine coming of age—in "Beginnings of a Fortune," a boy is fixated on amassing wealth, and in the plot something is gained—as contrasted with the disempowerment of feminine coming of age—in both "Mystery in São Cristóvão" and "Preciousness," the bodily autonomy of young girls is violated, and in the plot something is taken away. As Peixoto writes, the teenage girls are "initiated into the vulnerability to which their female sexuality exposes them" while the teenage boy is initiated into the world of "acquiring money and financial information" (Peixoto 27). "Preciousness" and "Beginnings of a Fortune" will be discussed in the following section as a pair within the set of initiation tales, and I will be discussing "Mystery in São Cristóvão" here, continuing my examination of the Demeter-Persephone myth, this time with special attention to Persephone's sexual trauma, as portrayed in the *Homeric Hymn to Demeter* and Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, and as alluded to in *Family Ties.*

By the time you reach "Mystery in São Cristóvão" in *Family Ties*, there is an inevitability to sexual violence in girlhood and womanhood—almost all the stories have referenced it, even if obliquely or passingly, as discussed in the previous section. "Mystery in São Cristóvão" addresses and tackles this inevitability head on. It is a natural pairing with "Preciousness" in their direct and extended treatment of sexuality, gendered violence, and sexual violation, but moments appear in other stories that underscore the quotidian nature of the threats to which girls and women are constantly subject. Both stories, however, show that sexual violation absolutely has a ritualistic nature, and is the result of feminine and masculine socialization; the boys and men who violate teenage girls in "Mystery in São Cristóvão" and "Preciousness" are scared by their encounters with the protagonists, despite being the perpetrators, Lispector shows. She is unveiling a system that affects girls and boys, women and men. In "Preciousness," as we will see, she calls the ubiquity and inevitability of nonconsensual sexual encounters "the monotonous geometry of great public ceremonies," linking it inextricably to initiation rituals and rites of passage—and likely to the Mysteries of Eleusis.

In Homer's "Hymn to Demeter," which exists unto itself and which Foley calls a short epic in its own right (xii), when Persephone is picking flowers, they are identified as hyacinths and violets, and she is described as "the girl with eyes like buds" (Cashford, trans., lines 4-6). The opening image of "Mystery in São Cristóvão" is hyacinths in a garden on a May evening, standing tall against a windowpane. These flowers have thing-power, to use Bennett's term, and violence against them, within Lispector's ecology of objects and affects, is allowed to stand in for violence against the girl protagonist. The garden belongs to a family who has just finished eating dinner, and who, at that particular moment, are

experiencing a period of calm: the children are in school full time, the father's business is doing well, the mother is no longer working through the births of her children, the grandmother has reached a revered status like Dona Anita in "Happy Birthday," and the daughter, most importantly, "is finding a balance in the delicateness of her age" (213).[215] The narrator describes each family member's face as "blooming," a description most apt for the daughter, a skinny girl of nineteen (*Complete Stories* 213).[216]

> The girl, in her cotton nightgown, opened her bedroom window and breathed in the whole garden with dissatisfaction and happiness. Unsettled by the fragrant humidity, she lay down promising herself a brand new outlook for the next day that would shake up the hyacinths and make the fruits tremble on the branches—in the midst of her meditation she fell asleep. (214)[217]

That night, while "the girl [was] asleep in the midst of her meditation," her plans for a new outlook are disturbed. (Lispector uses the same liminal description for the unnamed girl in "Preciousness" when she relishes the first onset of freedom before being forcibly grabbed by two men on the street: "But inside her scrawniness, the nearly majestic vastness in which she moved as within a *meditation*" [188]). A group of three figures—their exact ages are never revealed, but they read as adolescents too—leave a neighboring house in the middle of the night on the way to a Carnival celebration; their innocent eyes, the narrator states, show through masks—they are dressed as a rooster, a bull, and a devil (214). They decide

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[215] "a mocinha está se equilibrando na delicadeza de sua idade" (*Todos os contos* 235).

[216] "desabrochado o rosto de cada pessoa" (*Todos os contos* 235).

[217] "A mocinha, na sua camisola de algodão, abriu a janela do quarto e respirou todo o jardim com insatisfação e felicidade. Perturbada pela umidade cheirosa, deitou-se prometendo-se para o dia seguinte uma atitude inteiramente nova que abalasse os jacintos e fizesse as frutas estremecerem nos ramos – no meio da sua meditação adormeceu" (*Todos os contos* 235-6).

to pick one the hyacinths for their costumes and enter the garden. As the rooster approaches the hyacinth stalks that opened the story, the boys realize they are no longer alone, and all three of them freeze.

"From behind the dark glass of the window a white face was staring at them," the girl's whiteness matching the hyacinths' (*Complete Stories* 215).[218] The rooster—it is telling that the boy wearing the mask with a classic male symbol takes the primary role in the event—freezes "in the act of breaking off the hyacinth," and the devil "[regresses] back to childhood and its terror" as the girl stares (215).[219] Lispector creates a moment of frozen time. Though the girl is undoubtedly Lispector's protagonist—the remainder of the story focuses on the aftermath of the incident in her life, and the story opens and closes with her character—the symbolic weight of the incident materializes immediately not only for her, but for the masked boys as well. What's more, what transpires is a mystery to all four participants: the rooster, who cuts the flower, the girl, who watches in terror, and the two witnesses: "None of the four would ever know who was punishing whom. The hyacinths ever whiter in the darkness. Paralyzed, they peered at each other… four masks on that May evening" (216).[220] When the moon appears, Lispector momentarily halts the use of human pronouns to refer to the characters: "the constellation broke apart in terror: three shadowy forms sprang like cats over the garden railing, and another, bristling and enlarged, backed

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[218] "Atrás do vidro escuro da janela estava um rosto branco olhando-os" (*Todos os contos* 235).

[219] "O galo imobilizara-se no gesto de quebrar o jacinto... O cavalheiro... rejuvenescera até encontrar a infância e o seu horror" (*Todos os contos* 236).

[220] "Nenhum dos quatro saberia quem era o castigo do outro. Os jacintos cada vez mais brancos na escuridão. Paralisados, eles se espiavam" (*Todos os contos* 236).

up to the threshold of a doorway, from which, with a scream, *it* broke into a run" (216, emphasis added).[221] Like all systems, the one at work here seems primordial, erasing all participants' individuality and agency. As Peixoto notes, the symbolic violation of the girl's garden, emblematic of a girl's innocence and virginity in children's literature like *Alice in Wonderland*, foreshadows an inevitable "real" violation of the girl's body, one that will mirror the cutting of the hyacinth stalk:

> The four characters act in the grip of an impersonal force... In a convergence of culture and nature, masks and inner forces work together to determine the actions of the uncomprehending and frightened subjects. The characters come to no rational understanding of the encounter; the violation remains unacknowledged, unspoken. The young woman soon forgets or represses whatever the confrontation led her to intuit (the better to proceed with the "real" violations it foreshadows?) (Peixoto 1994: 84)

Peixoto's incisive reading calls to mind the tale of Persephone, especially in the girl's unacknowledged scream and the incomprehensible nature of her traumatic abduction and rape.

Norton's discussion of the aftereffects of Persephone's trauma—her branding—echoes the young girl's experience in "Mystery in São Cristóvão."

> The story, however, also tells of Persephone's need to transcend passivity and to clarify a woman's understanding of herself. This essential lesson is contained within the myth since the story acknowledges that abandonment, as well as emotional loss and betrayal, *leaves an existential as well as visceral mark.* Unsettling experiences can restrict mental, emotional and bodily processes, yet therapeutic disclosure as adaptive action, liberates and extends thoughts and memories by processing painful experiences anew. At its worse, Persephone's abduction and resultant mental debility, *banishes awareness and diminishes her ability to remember, to think, and to speak.* (emphases added 3)

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[221] "a constelação se desfez com terror: três vultos pularam como gatos as grades do jardim, e um outro, arrepiado e engrandecido, afastou-se de costas até o limiar de uma porta, de onde, num grito, se pôs a correr" (*Todos os contos* 238).

After the three boys take off running, their masks are "a big hit at the [Carnival] party," but they, like the girl, "lurk" in the doorway, "breathless" and "speechless" (217).[222] That this incident remains in the realm of the symbolic reinforces the liminality of adolescence: all four characters are pausing in a doorway and on a threshold that traumatizes all of them. Notably, while at the party, the boys stick close to one another and are together reintegrated into the community, while the girl must unravel her trauma alone. She, like Persephone, is marked by the incident in a way the boys are not; in this marking, Lispector veers into supernatural territory.

Persephone's trauma in Norton's characterization "diminishes her ability to remember, to think, and to speak." Lispector dramatizes this dissociation—this dark shadow of an epiphanic loss of innocence—with a seemingly fantastic mark on the girl's body. It is a moment not of growing up, but of growing down.

> The girl couldn't explain a thing: she seemed to have said it all in her scream. Her face had come undone, she was a little girl once more. But in her visage rejuvenated by more than one phase, there had appeared, to the family's horror, a white hair among those framing her face. Since she kept looking toward the window, they left her sitting there to rest, and, candlesticks in hand, shivering with cold in their nightgowns, set off on an expedition through the garden. (*Complete Stories* 217)[223]

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[222] "foram um triunfo no meio da festa," "três mascarados ofegantes parar como indigentes à porta... sem palavras" (*Todos os contos* 239).

[223] "A mocinha nada sabia explicar: parecia ter dito tudo no grito. Seu rosto apequenara-se claro – toda a construção laboriosa de sua idade se desfizera, ela era de novo uma menina. Mas na imagem rejuvenescida de mais de uma época, para o horror da família, um fio branco aparecera entre os cabelos da fronte. Como persistisse em olhar em direção de janela, deixaram-na sentada a repousar, e, com castiçais na mão, estremecendo de frio nas camisolas, saíram em expedição pelo jardim" (*Todos os contos* 239).

First, the girl quite literally reverts back to a preverbal state in her return to girlhood, like the boy in "Family Ties," as Lispector calls attention to the meaning in silences, in fragments, in nontraditional—childlike—forms of language. Then a white hair, perceptible to her surrounding family, sprouts on her head, and Lispector creates the collection's perhaps sole moment of Todorovian hesitation for the reader: was it a trick of the light or did the existential and visceral mark of the trauma, to use Norton's terms, leave a seemingly impossible physical trace? Beyond Todorov, however, Lispector invokes a Proppian function of folk tales, when the hero is marked or branded. In this moment the girl embodies liminality and defies temporal possibility: like the protagonist of Ocampo's "Sarandí Street" who has an old woman's wrinkled face and the braids of a young girl, Lispector's protagonist is at once a girl and an old woman, simultaneously rejuvenated and aged, and, ultimately, ageless.

That it is the grandmother, whom the narrator calls an expert of flower beds, and of, Lispector suggests in her phrasing, gendered trauma, who finds evidence of the event, reminds readers that this is a generational occurrence—that this happened to the girl's mother, grandmother, and so on (*Complete Stories* 217). Invoking the verticality of gender in the ancient world, the responsibility of generations of women to the work of mourning, the old woman "pointed out the only visible sign in the elusive garden: the hyacinth still alive on its broken stalk…So it was true: something had happened" (218).[224] Lispector includes the very likely possibility that the violation would go unnoticed, or that the girl would not be believed. The three children in the home sleep through the event, the only

[224] "apontou o único sinal visível no jardim que se esquivava: o jacinto ainda vivo quebrado no talo... Então era verdade: alguma coisa sucedera" (*Todos os contos* 239).

ones unaffected by the event, while the girl becomes the hyacinth, still alive but permanently wounded. "The girl gradually recovered her true age," but with knowledge of what is to come (218).[225] The family's calm unravels and must be "remade almost from scratch," and the last line of the story foreshadows the girl's impending sexual trauma and also recovery as the family hopes for a return of their progress: "Which just might happen some other May evening" (218).[226] Rape, tragically, becomes the rite of passage in Lispector's text.

Lispector closes the story with the rhythm and seasonal recurrence of the Persephone myth, as described by Norton:

> Once at Eleusis, participants entered a subterranean chamber and witnessed sacred rites of atonement, the veneration of plant life, and the symbolic resurrection of the human spirit. As such, the Demeter-Persephone myth, as ancient story, contains an essential motif, the endless "heuristic," or "finding again," of Persephone by Demeter to acknowledge seasonal rhythms of life. Thus, the myth, is an emblem for what Mircea Eliade identifies as the myth of the eternal return—a cycle of knowing and becoming repeated in the pattern of perpetual decay and regeneration in nature. (Norton 1-2)

What's more, these cycles of death and rebirth echo Arnold van Gennep's description of the many threshold stages of life in L*es rites de passage* (1909), not just during adolescence, which serves as an epigraph for this dissertation. Van Gennep writes:

> For groups, as well as for individuals, life itself means to separate and to be reunited, to change form and condition, to die and to be reborn. It is to act and to cease, to wait and rest, and then to begin acting again, but in a different way. And there are always new thresholds to cross: the thresholds of summer and winter, of a season or a year, of a month or a night; the

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[225] "A mocinha aos poucos recuperou sua verdadeira idade" (*Todos os contos* 239).

[226] "tudo se desfez e teve que se refazer quase do princípio," "O que sucederia talvez noutra noite de maio" (*Todos os contos* 239).

> thresholds of birth, adolescence, maturity, and old age; the threshold of death and that of the afterlife—for those who believe in it. (189-90)

Lispector affirms these cycles in the epiphanies and recoveries that define *Family Ties*, but with an important addendum. Lispector makes a telling revision to the Persephone myth that points to the possibility of change, at least to the ever-presence of gendered trauma in initiation rites. Like in Homer's telling of Persephone's tale, it is picking a hyacinth—in delight, no less—that coincides with her abduction, and when she screams, no one hears her (Cashford, trans., lines 429-430). In Lispector's tale, however, it is the masked boys who pick the hyacinth; they too are implicated in and traumatize by the initiation rite that occurs on the threshold of adulthood. She points to a system that harms people of all genders—a system that can, and should, be dismantled. This point emerges when Lispector connects "Mystery in São Cristóvão" to the portrayals of unhealthy sexuality that precede and follow it, both in stories that offer a sustained examination of sexual trauma and initiation, like "Preciousness," and those that don't focus on the urgent topic but include it in passing, like "Family Ties" and "Daydream and Drunkenness of a Young Woman." "Mystery in São Cristóvão" in many ways feels like the key that unlocks the collection's focus on trauma as the dark shadow of coming-of-age epiphanies—and on how rites of passage are gendered in a troubling way under patriarchy.

### The Rhythms of Feminine and Masculine Initiation in "Preciousness" and "Beginnings of a Fortune"

"Beginnings of a Fortune" opens with an image that feels uncannily similar to the image that opens Silvina Ocampo's "Sarandí Street." In "Sarandí Street," "invisible trunks seemed to float on the breeze" (*Forgotten Journey* 79). In "Beginnings of a Fortune," "It

was one of those mornings that seem to hang in the air. And that are most akin to the idea we have of time" (*Complete Stories* 205).[227] Both images evoke coming of age and the proximity of change, but like Lispector's "Mysteries of São Cristóvão" and "Preciousness," "Sarandí Street" exposes the disempowerment that accompanies feminine coming of age, while "Beginnings of a Fortune" focuses on the empowerment of masculine coming age in the character of Artur, a boy who is obsessed with becoming wealthy. Readers meet Artur alongside his mother and father, and Lispector outlines the journeys that make up each of their days, distinct as they are across lines of gender and age.

> Every night, sleep seemed to answer all [Artur's] needs. And in the morning, unlike the adults who awake dark and unshaven, he got up ever more fresh-faced. Tousled, but different from his father's disarray, which suggested that things had befallen him in the night. His mother would also emerge from their bedroom a little disheveled and still dreamy, as if the bitterness of sleep had given her satisfaction. (205-6).[228]

Like the young mother in "Daydream and Drunkenness of a Young Lady," Artur's mother spends the night fantasticizing, and something shifts when she, further from sleep, relinquishes her role as an individual and more fully embodies her maternal role: "The kind of individuality with which she's awoken had dissipated and Artur now could count on her" (206).[229] Dreaming becomes a refuge—a time to be individuals, like during the Rites

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[227] "Era uma daquelas manhãs que parecem suspensas no ar" (*Todos os contos* 227).

[228] "Cada noite o sono parecia responder a todas as suas necessidades. E de manhã, ao contrário dos adultos que acordam escuros e barbados, ele despertava cada vez mais imberbe. Despenteado, mas diferente da desordem do pai, a quem parecia terem acontecido coisas durante a noite. Também sua mãe saía do quarto um pouco desfeita e ainda sonhadora, como se a amargura do sono tivesse lhe dado satisfação" (*Todos os contos* 227-8).

[229] "Dissipara-se a espécie de individualidade com que acordava e Artur já podia contar com ela" (*Todos os contos* 228).

of Demeter—for the mothers in *Family Ties*, while Artur wakes up seemingly younger, more fresh-faced.

Like many of Lispector's characters, as Artur moves throughout his day, his age appears to shift; certain events—for example, when his mother gives him a command, when he leaves the house to walk to school, when he worries about a recent date he went on—prompt varying moments of boyishness and old age. When his mother cares for him, he recedes further into boyishness: "Eat up, Artur," his mother concluded and now once more he could count on her. *Just like that he grew younger and more misbehaved*" (*Complete Stories* 207, emphasis added).[230] When he leaves the house to go to school—a particularly distinct experience for boys and girls, as we will see—he passes through the gate and pauses on a threshold, and his age is liminal, at once more and less childish.

> Life outside the house was something else entirely. Besides the difference in light—as if only by leaving he could tell what the weather was really like and what course things had taken in the night—besides the difference in light, there was the difference in his manner. When he was little his mother would say: "out of the house he's a darling, at home he's a devil." Even now, passing through the little gate, he'd become visibly younger and at the same time less childish, more sensitive and above all with not much to say. (207-8)[231]

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[230] "Coma, Artur, concluiu a mãe e de novo ele já podia contar com ela. Assim imediatamente tornou-se menor e mais malcriado" (*Todos os contos* 229).

[231] "A vida fora de casa era completamente outra. Além da diferença de luz – como se somente saindo ele visse que tempo realmente fazia e que disposições haviam tomado as circunstâncias durante a noite – além da diferença de luz, havia a diferença do modo de ser. Quando era pequeno a mãe dizia: 'fora de casa ele é uma doçura, em casa um demônio'. Mesmo agora, atravessando o pequeno portão, ele se tornara visivelmente mais moço e ao mesmo tempo menos criança, mais sensível e sobretudo sem assunto" (*Todos os contos* 229-30).

On the street Artur exudes control as he gives an old woman directions: "He watched intently as the old lady turned the corner in the direction of the church, patiently responsible for her route" (208).[232] When his mother is worried about her son always returning home at lunchtime looking pale and weary, he looks at himself in the hallway mirror, "he really did look just like one of those working fellows, tired and boyish" (209-10).[233] Just as sleep affected each member of the family differently, Lispector shows "how the day wears on people" differently (209).[234] For Artur, the day mostly makes him younger, with one notable exception.

During a moment of intense worry over whether a girl Glorinha, had used him when he borrowed money from a friend to pay for her movie ticket on a double date, his breathing is strained like an old man's (*Complete Stories* 211). He contemplates the connection between money and romantic relationships, both alone and with a male friend whose girlfriend is Glorinha's friend. When the four teenagers go to the movies, first Artur is suspicious that Glorinha is a gold digger, in Dodson's translation (210). When he sees that she is concentrating intently on the screen, apparently enjoying the movie, he is momentarily relieved but then his suspicions return. Within this window into Artur's thoughts, sinister gendered power dynamics emerge in which Glorinha can't win:

> "Apparently, I've been had," he concluded and couldn't quite superimpose his rage over Glorinha's blameless profile. The girl's very innocence gradually became her worst fault: "So she was using me, using me, and then

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[232] "Ficou atento olhando a senhora dobrar a esquina em caminho da igreja, pacientemente responsável pelo seu itinerário" (*Todos os contos* 230).

[233] "realmente era a cara de um desses rapazes que trabalham, cansados e moços" (*Todos os contos* 230).

[234] "o desgaste natural do dia" (*Todos os contos* 230).

> she just sat there all smug watching the movie?" His eyes filled with tears. "Ingrate," he thought in a poorly chosen word of accusation… she should have paid for her own ticket. (211)[235]

His last thought before having dinner with his family is another passing reference to consent. In this case Lispector focuses on the colloquial language used by teenage boys to describe sexual encounters with teenage girls: "He hadn't even tried to see whether Carlinhos had 'taken advantage' of [Glorinha's friend]" (211).[236] That sex becomes synonymous with "taking advantage" of a girl, whether the encounter between Artur and Glorinha's friends was consensual or not, is indicative of the power imbalance between girls and boys, men and women, and the ubiquity of encounters in which consent is not given explicitly or fully.

Comparing "Beginnings of a Fortune" to "Preciousness" sees Lispector illuminating the treatment of girls and women as crudely objects of wealth, to be had and possessed. The closing scene of "Beginnings of a Fortune" brings the story's title to fruition, and sets up a clear contrast with the earlier story "Preciousness." Artur gets advice from his father on finances, and he asks specifically about promissory notes, which function as a symbol for rape. For girls developing into women, being "taken advantage of" refers to being robbed of bodily agency in the form of nonconsensual sexual

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[235] "'Pelo visto, fui', concluiu e não conseguira sobrepor sua cólera ao perfil sem culpa de Glorinha. Aos poucos a própria inocência da menina tornou-se a sua culpa maior: 'Então ela explorava, explorava, e depois ficava toda satisfeita vendo o filme?' Seus olhos encheram de lágrimas. 'Ingrata', pensou ele escolhendo mal uma palavra de acusação. Como a palavra era um símbolo de queixa mais do que de raiva, ele se confundiu um pouco e sua raiva acalmou-se. Parecia-lhe agora, de fora para dentro e sem nenhuma vontade, que ela deveria ter pago daquele modo a entrada do cinema" (*Todos os contos* 232-3).

[236] "Nem tinha procurado reparar se Carlinhos 'aproveitara' ou não da outra" (*Todos os contos* 233).

encounters; for boys developing into men, it refers to the fear of being robbed of power or economic agency. Peixoto's reading elucidates this crucial and consequential difference in feminine and masculine coming of age.

> The male and female initiation tales offer, then, a number of contrasts: activity versus passivity; a young boy who seeks wealth and power versus young girls who are "precious" themselves, metaphorically identified with jewels and flowers; preoccupation with acquisition versus concern with self-protection; entrance into the world of economic and social exchange versus fearful retreat into one self. Development, for the young girls, clearly will not proceed according to the male model. (26)

Lispector includes a number of parallel moments in the story "Preciousness," in which an unnamed girl, like Artur, leaves her house for school in the morning—to drastically different results.

"Preciousness" opens with an image of liminality, of girlhood containing womanhood. The first description of Lispector's unnamed teenage girl protagonist references the title:

> She was fifteen years old and not pretty. But inside her scrawniness, the nearly majestic vastness in which she moved as within a meditation. And inside the haziness something precious. That never sprawled, never got involved, never contaminated. That was intense as a jewel. Her. (*Complete Stories* 183)[237]

The image of scrawniness evokes young girlhood; contained in this stage of life is something intense—her burgeoning sexuality, which is described enigmatically here and which, when she is no longer alone, eventually becomes something to fear. Like Artur in "Beginnings of a Fortune," she moves about her day, waking up and leaving the house for

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[237] "Tinha quinze anos e não era bonita. Mas por dentro da magreza, a vastidão quase majestosa em que se movia como dentro de uma meditação. E dentro da nebulosidade algo precioso. Que não se espreguiçava, não se comprometia, não se contaminava. Que era intenso como uma joia. Ela" (*Todos os contos* 206).

school, but what the threshold between the public and private spheres represents for the boy is markedly different than for the girl. Societal expectations of a certain appearance are enacted through the family, so she hurries through her morning routine alone, eventually lingering on the same threshold of the doorway as Artur does.

> When she awoke at dawn – gone that instant of vastness in which she fully unwound – she'd dress in a hurry, trick herself into thinking there wasn't time for a shower, and her sleeping family had never guessed how few she actually took… she'd finally open the door, cross the threshold of the house's insipid warmth, dashing into the frosty fruition of the morning. Then she'd no longer hurry. (183)[238]

The house's warmth, albeit uninteresting to her, and the street's frost, albeit teasing the possibility of freedom, once again evokes Persephone and the changing of the seasons. Her freedom on the street, however, is immediately complicated, unlike Artur's ease outside of his house.

Lispector characterizes the girl's commute to school, unlike the boy's breezy walk in "Fortune," using the language of war: "Then, marching like a soldier, she'd cross—unscathed—the Largo da Lapa, where it was day. By now the battle was nearly won" (185).[239] Lispector is referencing the daily decisions girls and women have to make to stay safe, invisible to others. For example, when the girl boards the bus she is careful to hold a solemn expression, afraid of "those men who were no longer young. But she was afraid of

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[238] "Quando de madrugada se levantava – passado o instante de vastidão em que se desenrolava toda – vestia-se correndo, mentia para si mesma que não havia tempo de tomar banho, e a família adormecida jamais adivinhara quão poucos ela tomava...abria enfim a porta, transpunha a mornidão insossa da casa, galgando-se para a gélida fruição da manhã. Então já não se apressava mais" (*Todos os contos* 206-7).

[239] "Depois, com andar de soldado, atravessava – incólume – o Largo da Lapa, onde era dia. A essa altura a batalha estava quase ganha" (*Todos os contos* 208).

young men too, afraid of boys too" (184).[240] When she boards the tram, she is careful to choose an empty seat or a seat next to "some reassuring woman" (185).[241] "Until, at last, the classroom," where she is "treated like a boy" (186). [242] When she is at home, she no longer needs to be careful and "with relief she could become a daughter" again (187).[243] That Lispector's protagonist feels relief as a daughter, as a boy, and in the company of a strange woman invokes the Mysteries and Persephone's dilemma. And yet, she feels bittersweetly about being out in public, because it at once represents fear and independence, "the melancholy of freedom" which she knows will come at a cost (187).[244] Something is contained in the girl of fifteen—something she is socialized to protect and that men are socialized to take, Lispector demonstrates. Lispector compares the process of socialization to an anointing—to men being "tapped on the shoulder," and she writes an image of the dark shadow of the initiation rite for the unnamed girl who is approaching sixteen.

> What spared her was that the men didn't see her. Though something inside her, as the age of sixteen was approaching amid fumes and heat, something was intensely surprised—and this surprised a few men. As if someone had tapped them on the shoulder. A shadow perhaps. On the ground the looming shadow of a girl without a man, an indeterminate, crystallizable element that took part in *the monotonous geometry of great public ceremonies. As if*

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[240] "Aqueles homens que não eram mais rapazes. Mas também rapazes tinha medo, medo também de meninos" (*Todos os contos* 207).

[241] "alguma asseguradora mulher" (*Todos os contos* 208).

[242] "Até que, enfim, a classe de aula... onde ela era tratada como um rapaz" (*Todos os contos* 209).

[243] "ela poder se tornar com alivio uma filha" (*Todos os contos* 210).

[244] "Melancolia da liberdade" (*Todos os contos* 210).

> *they'd been tapped on the shoulder. They looked and never saw her. She cast more of a shadow than she existed.* (184-6, emphasis added)[245]

In public, going unseen as a girl is accompanied by the fear of eventually being seen as a woman by men, represented by the girl's "looming shadow." Lispector shows that for girls in adolescence, societal messages indicate that sexuality is something to fear, to mourn, and to protect, and "Preciousness" exposes how unhealthy this can be.

Lispector writes two parallel images that show the effect of a patriarchal system on an individual girl. In response to the "monotonous geometry" of public life and of initiation rituals, the girl internalizes her path, which has been structured without her choice or consent. Lispector details two of her neuroses, and they both mirror a system under which she must stay a very limited course. The first is a symmetry compulsion:

> Sometimes, while the teacher was talking, she, intense, hazy, would make symmetrical lines in her notebook. If a line, which had to be both strong and delicate, strayed outside the imaginary circle it was supposed to fit inside, everything would collapse" (186).[246]

The second is obsessive counting, and Lispector shows that it was spurred by an early exposure to gendered violence:

> When she was ten, she recalled, a boy with a crush on her had thrown a dead rat at her. Disgusting! she'd yelled pale with indignation. It had been an experience. She'd never told anyone. With her head in her hands, sitting.

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[245] "O que a poupava é que os homens não a viam. Embora alguma coisa nela, à medida que dezesseis anos se aproximava em fumaça e calor, alguma coisa estivesse intensamente surpreendida – e isso surpreendesse alguns homens. Como se alguém lhes tivesse tocado no ombro. Uma sombra talvez. No chão a enorme sombra de moça sem homem, cristalizável elemento incerto que fazia parte da monótona geometria das grandes cerimônias públicas. Como se lhes tivessem tocado no ombro. Eles olhavam e não a viam. Ela fazia mais sombra do que existia" (*Todos os contos* 207-8).

[246] "Às vezes, enquanto o professor falava, ela, intensa, nebulosa, fazia riscos simétricos no caderno. Se um risco, que tinha que ser ao mesmo tempo forte e delicado, saía fora do círculo imaginário em que deveria caber, tudo desabaria" (*Todos os contos* 209).

> She'd say fifteen times over: I am vigorous, I am vigorous, I am vigorous—then realize that she was only paying attention to the count. Making up for it with quantity, she'd say one more time: I am vigorous, sixteen. (187)[247]

This early example foreshadows the girl's assault, and how she attempts to stave off attacks like these—and how that burden lies with girls and women rather than boys and men, a dangerous element of gendered socialization.

Lispector uses the public sphere—especially the street—to track her characters' places in the social worlds of Rio de Janeiro and its neighborhoods. When Catarina feels strong and independent in "Family Ties," she belongs staunchly to the city surrounding her. When the girl in "Preciousness" sees two men in the street, she feels displaced, looking around as if she were in the wrong city (188). Her first thought is to blame herself for deviating from her routine and leaving home a few minutes earlier than normal. Like in "Sarandí Street" and "Mystery in São Cristóvão," there is a sense of inevitability to the encounter: "But how could she turn back and flee, if she had been born for adversity. Since all her slow preparation had an unknown destiny that she, out of devotion, must obey… She kept on, suffering in obedience" (189).[248] That the girl believes that all girls are "born for adversity," and that they must participate obediently in a system designed to harm them, informs this eerie foreshadowing of what's to come in the following scene. Before the

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[247] "Quando tinha dez anos, relembrou, um menino que a amava jogara-lhe um rato morto. Porcaria! Berrara branca com a ofensa. Fora uma experiência. Jamais contara a ninguém. Com a cabeça entre as mãos, sentada. Dizia quinze vezes: sou vigorosa, sou vigorosa, sou vigorosa – depois percebia que apenas prestara atenção à contagem. Suprindo com a quantidade, disse mais uma vez: sou vigorosa, dezesseis." (*Todos os contos* 210).

[248] "Mas como voltar e fugir, se nascera para a dificuldade. Se toda a sua lenta preparação tinha o destino ignorado a que ela, por culto, tinha que aderir... Ela avançava, sofrendo em obedecer" (*Todos os contos* 212).

assault, Lispector once again uses the word "mystery." If death is Dona Anita's mystery as a grandmother in "Happy Birthday," virginity is this young girl's mystery, and prior to the assault she tracks it to make sure it stays "intact": "She awoke to the same intact mystery, opening her eyes she was the princess of the intact mystery" (188).[249] Also like "Sarandí Street," footsteps and shoes are focused on in the scene as the girl fixates on the sound her wooden heels make against the pavement, and the young girl reacts by feeling paralyzed by the attack, unable to move. Even before it happens, she blames herself and her individuality: the facelessness of the system, like the effect of the boys' Carnival masks in "Mystery in São Cristóvão," helps reinforce the girl's self-blame. "She shouldn't have seen. Because, by seeing, she for an instant risked becoming an individual, and so did they," Lispector's narrator writes (190).[250]

The narration of the assault, which happens on the girl's way to school, is fragmented, presented from the girl's traumatized and partial point of view, as though the attackers' hands are detached from their bodies. Lispector presents the hands as unknowing, as participating in a ritual without much agency or deliberate choice:

> What happened next were four difficult hands, four hands *that didn't know what they wanted*… four hands that touched her so unexpectedly that she did the best thing she could have in the realm of movement: she got paralyzed. (*Complete Stories* 191, emphasis added)[251]

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[249] "Acordou no mesmo mistério intacto, abrindo os olhos ela era a princesa do mistério intacto" (*Todos os contos* 211).

[250] "Não deveria ter visto. Porque, vendo, ela por um instante arriscava-se a tornar-se individual, e também eles" (*Todos os contos* 212).

[251] "O que se seguiu foram quatro mãos difíceis, foram quatro mãos que não sabiam o que queriam, quatro mãos erradas de quem não tinha a vocação, quatro mãos que a tocaram tão inesperadamente que ela fez a coisa mais certa que poderia ter feito no mundo dos movimentos: ficou paralisada." (*Todos os contos* 214).

Like Persephone picking flowers, and like the girl in "Sarandí Street" who does not want to see anymore, she doesn't look at them and instead turns her face toward nothing (191). While the rest of the story is dedicated to her wounding and trauma, Lispector tellingly includes the men's own hapless fright at the incident: "But from the haste with which they hurt her she could tell they were more scared than she was" (191).[252] The inexplicability, the inevitability, of the encounter echoes "Mystery in São Cristóvão," and shows a system at work that enables and perpetuates patriarchal violence that begins at a young age, often in adolescence, and that traumatizes all genders.

Lispector details the aftermath of the assault in precise detail: dissociation, the loneliness of shame, the physical and psychological wounds of assault, and the girl's self-blame and attempt to prevent another assault from happening to her. Lispector likens the wound, which curtails her movement, to her arm being broken: "Then she retreated slowly over to a wall, hunched, very slowly, as if her arm were broken, until all her weight slumped against the wall, where she became inscribed. And then she stayed still. The important thing is not to move" (192).[253] For the unnamed girl, coming of age is injury, paralysis, stillness, and regression, and above all, dissociation, which van der Kolk, M.D. calls "the essence of trauma [because] the overwhelming experience is split off and fragmented," disrupting the usual chronology (66). The protagonist is branded, "inscribed," and once

[252] "Mas pela pressa com que a magoaram soube que eles tinham mais medo do que ela" (*Todos os contos* 214).

[253] "Depois recuou devagar até um muro, corcunda, bem devagar, como se tivesse um braço quebrado, até que se encostou toda no muro, onde ficou inscrita. E então manteve-se parada. Não se mover é o que importa, pensou de longe, não se mover" (*Todos os contos* 215).

again Lispector parallels the interior and the exterior. The girl looks at her own handwriting and experiences estrangement, no longer recognizing it. When she looks, crouching, at her school notebook, "she saw the large, curved handwriting that until this morning had been hers" (193).[254] She is irrevocably changed by this assault, to the point that she no longer recognizes herself. What's more, she feels utterly alone in her shame, and tragically believes herself to be damaged beyond repair. "I'm alone in the world! Nobody's ever going to help me, nobody's ever going to love me!" she exclaims (193).[255]

The girl experiences flashbacks, the beginnings of post-traumatic stress disorder, when she arrives at school three periods late. Lispector accurately shows how victims process their own trauma: "A traumatic event has a beginning and an end—at some point it is over. But for people with PTSD a flashback can occur at any time… People who suffer flashbacks often organize their lives around trying to protect against them" (van der Kolk 66-7). The girl hears the sound of her attackers' footsteps against the street and is suddenly in the moment of the assault again. The flashback occurs when she goes to the bathroom to check her reflection and make herself appear normal, unwounded: "The sound of those four shoes suddenly started up again like a light swift rain. A blind sound, nothing bouncing off the gleaming tiles… When she went to the mirror to wet her hair, she was so ugly. She possessed so little, and they had touched it" (194).[256] When her classmates comment that

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[254] "viu a letra redonda e graúda que até esta manhã fora sua" (*Todos os contos* 215).

[255] "Estou sozinha no mundo! Nunca ninguém vai me ajudar, nunca ninguém vai me amar!" (*Todos os contos* 215).

[256] "O ruído dos quatro sapatos de repente começou como uma chuva miúda e rápida. Ruído cego, nada se refletiu nos ladrilhos brilhantes...Quando foi molhar os cabelos diante do espelho, ela era tão feia. Ela possuía tão pouco, e eles haviam tocado" (*Todos os contos* 216).

she looks pale and ill, she doesn't say anything. She has no recourse for the assault, and she blames herself and she, the victim, is left to pick up the pieces, alone: "'I need to take better care of myself,' she thought. She didn't know how. The truth is that more and more she knew how even less" (194).[257] For girls, coming of age means needing to protect yourself from something that is completely out of your control, and trying to control it anyway, and then being responsible for covering up the aftermath. She decides to get new shoes, ones that don't attract attention, for example. Like in "Mystery in São Cristóvão," the girl is branded, and her age has become delicate: "She was pale, her features grown delicate. Her hands, dampening her hair, still stained with yesterday's ink" (194).[258]

Lispector uses the metaphor of sound throughout the story, for example in the silence that shrouds the assault, but also in repeating the term "rhythm" to refer to initiation models. At one point, Lispector extends her sound metaphors and comments that "All was echo," suggesting that, like in "Mystery in São Cristóvão," this unnamed girl is the every girl; that neither teenage girl who experiences sexual assault in *Family Ties* is given a name is also revealing as it evokes the cycle of inevitability and erasure of trauma that follows "a crude rhythm of a ritual," a phrase Lispector also uses at one point in "Preciousness" (188). Here and elsewhere in *Family Ties,* by showing the unspoken, hidden, and suppressed initiations undergone by young girls, Lispector pushes readers to ask if the

[257] "'Preciso cuidar mais de mim', pensou. Não sabia como. A verdade é que cada vez sabia menos como" (*Todos os contos* 216).

[258] "Estava pálida, os traços afinados. As mãos, umedecendo os cabelos, sujas de tina ainda do dia anterior" (*Todos os contos* 216).

masculine model of initiation—formal, culturally proscribed, visible, celebrated—applies to all genders.

**Deconstructing the Male Anthropological Gaze in "The Smallest Woman in the World"**

In "A menor mulher do mundo," or "The Smallest Woman in the World," Clarice Lispector satirizes the anthropologist figure fascinated by the smallest member of an African Indigenous community, an adult woman whom he calls Pequena Flor, or Little Flower.[259] Most critics surmise that Claude Lévi-Strauss's work in Brazil inspired the story (cf. Hart 2012), and Lispector sharply criticizes the white male colonial gaze that infantilizes, sexualizes, dehumanizes, fetishizes, and consumes. Like the arrival of the photographer in Ocampo's "Icera," which also concerns a pygmy woman, this documentation of the feminine body is an act of conquest. The story's opening sets the satirical tone:

> In the depths of Equatorial Africa the French explorer Marcel Pretre, hunter and man of the world, came upon a pygmy tribe of surprising smallness. He was all the more surprised, then, when informed that an even smaller people existed beyond forests and distances. So deeper still he plunged… Marcel Pretre came face-to-face with a woman who stoon eighteen inches tall, full-grown, black, silent. "Dark as a monkey," he would inform the press… In the tepid, wild mists, which swell the fruits early and make them taste almost intolerably sweet, she was pregnant. (*Complete Stories* 170)[260]

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[259] The name given to her by the anthropologist echoes the boys stealing the hyacinth flower in "Mystery in São Cristóvão."

[260] "Nas profundezas da África Equatorial o explorador francês Marcel Pretre, caçador e homem do mundo, topou com uma tribo de pigmeus de uma pequenez surpreendente. Mais surpreso, pois, ficou ao ser informado de que menor povo ainda existia além de florestas e distâncias. Então mais fundo ele foi... Marcel Pretre defrontou-se com uma mulher de quarenta e cinco centímetros, madura, negra, calada. "Escura como um macaco", informaria ele à imprensa... Nos tépidos

Lispector's narration is, as in previous stories, distant, but this time with a clear satirical underpinning that reinforces that detachment does not necessarily signify approval. The story proceeds with a record of Pretre's ethnography, which mimics with precision the works of twentieth-century structural anthropology. Lispector writes, "Sensing an immediate need for order, and to give a name to whatever exists, he dubbed her Little Flower. And, in order to classify her among the recognizable realities, he quickly set about collecting data on her" (171).[261] Pretre comments on the community: gender roles, child language acquisition, and spiritual practices, but his real focus is Little Flower. As in "Preciousness," Lispector invokes a cliché symbol of feminine worth and sexuality when Pretre's "heart beat becase no emerald is as rare" (172).[262] For much of the story, the woman's perspective and voice is conspicuously absent; her resistance to classification, however, defines the story's conclusion.

It is her pregnancy—the woman's expanding body, her multiplicity of selves—that serves as the impetus for Pretre's extreme discomfort and her resistance to his attempt to classify her: her laughter.

> The rare thing herself harbored in her heart something rarer still, like the secret of the secret itself: a tiny child. Methodically the explorer peered closely at the little belly of the smallest full-grown being. In that instant the explorer, for the first time since he'd met her, instead of feeling curiosity or exaltation or triump or the scientific apirit, the explorer felt distress.

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humores silvestres, que arredondam cedo as frutas e ilhes dão uma quase intolerável doçura ao paladar, ela estava grávida" (*Todos os contos* 192).

[261] "Sentindo necessidade imediata de ordem, e de dar nome ao que existe, apelidou-a de Pequena Flor. E, para conseguir classificá-la entre as realidades reconhecíveis, logo passou a colher dados a seu respeito" (*Todos os contos* 194).

[262] "Seu coração bateu porque esmeralda nenhuma é tão rara" (*Todos os contos* 194).

> Because the smallest woman in the world was laughing… That laugh, the embarrassed explorer couldn't manage to classify. (175)[263]

Lispector classifies the woman's laughter as soft and delicate, and her joy as "having the ineffable sensation of not yet having been eaten,"[264] and then Lispector includes a line that could apply to all of the feminine protagonists whose bodily agency is threatened in *Family Ties*: "Not being devoured is the secret goal of an entire life" (176).[265] Pretre, meanwhile, Lispector shows, enacts and upholds an Orientalist system, "[keeping] busy by taking lots of notes. Those who didn't take notes had to deal with themselves as best they could" (177).[266] She compares his actions to parents who possess and control their children, who succumb to "a susceptibility that demands you be mine, mine!" (176).[267] The story ends with the words of an old woman reading about Pretre and Little Flower in the paper and, like the grandmother in "Mystery in São Cristóvão" who perceptibly finds evidence of her

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[263] "a própria coisa rara tinha no coração algo mais raro ainda, assim como o segredo do próprio segredo: um filho mínimo. Metodicamente o explorador examinou com o olhar a barriguinha do menor ser humano maduro. Foi neste instante que o explorador, pela primeira vez desde que a conhecera, em vez de sentir curiosidade ou exaltação ou vitória ou espírito científico, o explorador sentiu mal-estar. É que a menor mulher do mundo estava rindo." (*Todos os contos* 198-9).

[264] "ela que não estava sendo devorada" (*Todos os contos* 199).

[265] "Não ser devorado é o objetivo secreto de toda uma vida" (*Todos os contos* 199).

[266] "Mas pelo menos ocupou-se em tomar notas e notas. Quem não tomou notas é que teve de se arranjar como pôde" (*Todos os contos* 200).

[267] "uma suscetibilidade que exige que seja de mim, de mim!" (*Todos os contos* 199).

granddaughter's violation, sees through the news story: "because look, all I'll say is this: God knows what He's doing" (177).[268]

**Conclusion: "Nostalgia for the present"**

In "Preciousness," Lispector includes a phrase that echoes Silvina Ocampo's comments about pre-mourning, as a young girl, the loss—of agency, of independence, of personhood—she senses will accompany coming of age. "At the same time I was a girl I had the sensation that I would no longer be a girl, and it pained me," Ocampo stated (*Encuentros* 72-3). The girl at the center of "Preciousness" reckons with being forcibly touched by two men on the street, and she senses both freedom and danger beyond her family home: "She'd given herself to the horizon. But this nostalgia for the present… from which she might never manage to free herself… she sat with her head in her hands, hopeless" (*Complete Stories* 187).[269] The oxymoron at the heart of the phrase "nostalgia for the present" follows Lispector's liberal use of age-related terms – childish, boyish, girl, boy, young lady, younger, older, fresh-faced, maiden, aged, old lady, old man – to describe characters of all ages throughout the collection. In the liminality of girlhood, in Lispector's work as in Ocampo's, we find an innovative use of the fantastic genre that has to do with temporality and transformation; both authors show the ways the rite of passage as a social

[268] "'pois olhe, eu só lhe digo uma coisa: Deus sabe o que faz'" (*Todos os contos* 200). Dodson capitalizes He to reduce the ambiguity of the line in English; in Portuguese He refers to God, but in translation, interestingly enough, it could refer both to God and Pretre.

[269] "Dera-se ao horizonte. Mas a nostalgia do presente... Do qual talvez não soubesse jamais se livrar... sentava-se com a cabeça entre as mãos, desesperada" (*Todos os contos* 210).

construct is damaging for girls who already feel fear of their sexuality and of the inevitability of a loss of agency rather than a loss of innocence.

It is telling that the only young girl character in *Family Ties* is in "A Chicken," and she wants to spare a hen who has just laid an egg from slaughter.

> The little girl was the only one nearby and watched everything [the laying of the egg] in terror. Yet as soon as she managed to tear herself away, she pried herself off the floor and ran shouting:
>
> "Mama! Mama, don't kill the chicken anymore, she laid an egg! she cares about us!" (*Complete Stories* 133-4).[270]

It is even more telling that at the end of "Preciousness," after the girl's assault, her family, terribly and significantly, tells her at dinner that she is not a woman yet. The penultimate lines of the story echo the plot of "A Chicken." "Until, just as a person gets fat, she stopped, without knowing how it happened, being precious. There's an obscure law that makes one protect the egg until the chick is born, a firebird," writes Lispector, invoking the Russian fairy tale bird and the questions Andersen poses about birth, origins, and vulnerability in "The Ugly Duckling" (194).[271] Lispector reflects that pinpointing a moment of coming of age is impossible, but that the onset is sudden. Ironically and yet ordinarily, becoming "precious" opens girls up to the threat of violence. That the characters in *Family Ties* strive to protect their girlhoods illuminates the fear of what awaits them at the end of the threshold stage. Ultimately, Lispector questions the very notion of "coming of age," demonstrating

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[270] "Só a menina estava perto e assistiu a tudo estarrecida. Mal porém conseguiu desvencilhar-se do acontecimento, despregou-se do chão e saiu aos gritos: –Mamãe, mamãe, não mate mais a galinha, ela pôs um ovo! ela quer o nosso bem!" (*Todos os contos* 157).

[271] "Até que, assim como uma pessoa engorda, ela deixou, sem saber por que processo, de ser preciosa. Há uma obscura lei que faz com que se proteja o ovo até que nasça o pinto, pássaro de fogo" (*Todos os contos* 217).

that it only applies to what Peixoto calls the male model of development. Initiation, for women, is a coming of age in reverse, an unbecoming of age, an anti-coming of age. In this contrast, she exposes the need for a new model that doesn't "devour" its participants, to use the phrasing from "The Smallest Woman in the World."

In many stories Lispector invokes a cliché to represent feminine sexuality and loss-of-innocence epiphanies—a flower, a jewel, a chicken egg—but then turns it on its head, exposing the trite image as part of a social tapestry that ritualizes and conceals sexual violence against girls and women. Her language, which evokes the unspoken and the unspeakable, indicates what needs to be spoken for healing to begin, and points to the need for public acknowledgment of girlhood trauma. The subtle ways Lispector nods to the universal in the in many ways hyper-local stories that make up *Family Ties* creates a tension that forces readers to confront their own participation in an all-too-often invisible patriarchal system that harms all genders.

## Conclusion:

## Translating Girlhoods

> The question of a work's translatability is ambiguous. It can mean: will it ever find, among the totality of its readers, an adequate translator? Or, more pertinently, whether by its very essence it allows itself to be translated, [and] also calls for translation… The more distinctive a work, the more it remains translatable.
>
> – Walter Benjamin, "The Translator's Task" (1923: 76-83)

In "The Translator's Task," Walter Benjamin identifies two forms of translatability. The first appears simple—whether a work finds the right translator amongst its readerships—but, as we have seen in the translations of Ocampo and Lispector's work, which demand an intimate understanding of the unspoken world of girlhood initiation on the translator's part, is not always such. The second form of translatability is the way in which a work's distinctiveness and singularity can, somewhat paradoxically, demand that it be translated. Both of these forms figure into the legacies of *Forgotten Journey* and *Family Ties,* texts that gain new potency in our current moment of profound and global reckoning with gendered violence. Analyzing them now opens yet another liminal space: the space between their time and ours. Translations—and re-readings, for that matter—always exist in this dream space, this temporal liminality that encompasses both the author's and the translator's moment in time. It is between the early to mid-twentieth-century context that shaped the fictional and pseudoautobiographical worlds contained in Ocampo and Lispector's stories, and our own our post #MeToo and #NiUnaMenos

moment, in which not nearly enough has changed, that we begin to see the role of literature in grappling with girlhood violence. Collective movements would not be possible without a large scale voicing of stories like those represented in *Forgotten Journey* and *Family Ties.*

Throughout this dissertation I have reflected on the sizeable role translators play in speaking into being Ocampo and Lispector's activist depictions of girlhood. In these reflections I am inspired by translator-translation theorists like Ana Castillo and Emily Wilson who consider their own identities as integral to their translation projects, and who themselves are inspired by Benjamin's ethical consideration of translation. The stories that make up *Forgotten Journey* and *Family Ties* are layered narratives; in some stories, there exists an encoded narrative for the elect or the initiated, to use the language of the Eleusinian Mysteries. Translation and criticism can give voice to the unspoken initiation stories that are written between the lines—those that tackle issues of gendered violence that are deeply relevant today, when we find ourselves in a moment of global reckoning with girlhood trauma. Ocampo and Lispector's authorial project of a distinctly girlhood fantastic—of codeswitching between children's and adult languages, consciousnesses, and literatures; of disrupting linear chronologies of aging and aetonormativity, to use Nikolajeva's term; of melding genres and creating new modes of engagement with both the material and social worlds—necessitates an openness of categories that benefits literary studies and ultimately social change.

In Chapter One, "'Stories for Children Young and Old': The All-Ages Literature of Silvina Ocampo and Clarice Lispector," I put forth pairings of Ocampo-Lispector stories in order to illuminate their various forms of engagement with children's literature:

literature co-written by children, literature written about children, literature written for children, and literature written through children but addressed primarily to adults. Throughout these registers, Ocampo and Lispector maintain the duality of childhood and adulthood, a lens that unfreezes certain difficult and distinct aspects of their fiction that have not been previously acknowledged. The following chapters hone in on each author's debut short story collection. Chapter Two, *"*Silvina Ocampo's Feminine Doubles: A Study of *Forgotten Journey*'s Girlhood Stories," detailed how Ocampo repurposed the fantastic genre, using it to exhibit the very real effects of living under a patriarchal system in twentieth-century Argentina. That Ocampo wrote herself into a lineage populated by male writers of children's literature accentuates her narrative innovations of the coming-of-age genre and the motif of the double. Chapter Three, "The Mysteries of Girlhood in Clarice Lispector's Fictions: A Study of the Rite of Passage in *Family Ties*" showed Lispector similarly writing against anthropological constructs theorized by male scholars, questioning the very notion of "coming of age" as she witnessed it unfolding in Brazil. Initiation for women as depicted by Lispector, I argued, is a growing *down* rather than a growing *up*, a coming of age in reverse, an unbecoming of age, or an anti-coming of age.

The question that Jacqueline Rose asks in "The Impossibility of Children's Fiction," the work that opens this dissertation is: can adult authors enter a space to which they no longer belong? What would be the effect of this creative venture, if undertaken ethically, to bridge childhood and adulthood? Ocampo and Lispector accomplish something singular in *Forgotten Journey* and *Family Ties* by entering that liminal space—and by turning to a feminine temporality that shows the persistence of girlhood knowledge for women writers living under patriarchal conditions—and by dispelling readerly illusions

about girlhood in particular to offer a very different version than the one traditionally offered in literary and historical texts. By speaking into being the all-too-common and all-too-often-unspoken experience of girlhood trauma, Ocampo and Lispector force readers to confront unequal comings of age across gender lines. When readers are implicated in their own experiences of or complicity with anti-coming of age, or in allied and compassionate readings, the activist authorial project of Ocampo and Lispector is realized.

This dissertation has argued that Ocampo and Lispector's common authorial effort to rewrite a global constellation of canonical girlhood stories that were often written by men exposes the oft-neglected underbelly of girlhood initiation, the acknowledgment of which is a prerequisite to social change. Ultimately, societal expectations of girls and women are reflected and affirmed in the texts that Ocampo and Lispector reread, rewrite, and translate, in a manner of speaking, beginning with the Demeter-Persephone myth in Homer and Ovid's versions, moving toward folk and fairy tales with special attention to Hans Christian Andersen's heroines, and concluding with the works of nineteenth-century Anglophone children's literature, with a focus on Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* and J. M. Barrie's *Peter Pan; or, The Boy Who Would Not Grow Up*. That Ocampo and Lispector succeed in subverting traditional literary portrayals of girlhood, a canon made up of Greek and Roman poetry, folk and fairy tales, and children's literature classics, shows them writing feminine subjectivities into a male-dominated lineage and bearing witness to stories that have led to our current moment of global reckoning with gendered violence. Their rewritings, most powerfully, act in the manner of translations in a Benjaminian sense, and reinscribe a fuller representation of girlhood into these source texts, forever altering the canon.

Girlhood "initiation" is scrutinized by Ocampo and Lispector in the strongest and most memorable stories included in *Forgotten Journey* and *Family Ties*, collections that were ahead of their time in reckoning with the silencing of abuses against young and adolescent girls, bodily and otherwise, especially as reified in previous literary texts, offering a very different version of girlhood and demanding a social and political acknowledgment of it. Thought at first it may seem that children's literature has no place in discussions of topics like sexual trauma, I have also aimed to uncover Ocampo and Lispector's shared adoption of an all-ages approach that relies on subversive feminine temporalities that point to the absolute entanglement of childhood and adulthood. By shedding light on pairings of Ocampo-Lispector stories that remarkably resemble one another on both thematic and linguistic levels, I have collapsed the space in-between these two authors who have been subject to comparisons that miss a key element of their fictions: the dismantling of the audience-based binary of writing "for adults" and writing "for children." In this study they are not frozen in time or isolated, but are instead partners in writerly innovation. Their innovations of the fantastic genre via the figure of the child show the very real effects on girls and women living in patriarchal societies. What's more, Ocampo and Lispector's retellings in particular of Persephone and Alice's tales offer new readings of those classical texts, translating them and thus forever changing the originals; for example Lispector shows that *Alice in Wonderland* can be read through the lens of the rite of passage. Ocampo and Lispector's interventions represent a movement toward a more ethical, aware, and expanded global literature of girlhood. I hope that future scholars of both Ocampo and Lispector incorporate this expanded picture of each author that is

indebted to childhood and children's literature studies, and that this project can serve as model for crosstextual approaches to other bodies of work.

That ultimately the very language we use to describe adolescent initiation—coming of age—fails to take into account the experiences of young girls shows the need for new, healthier modes of engagement with gender and sexuality. I hope that future scholars In conclusion, this dissertation has sought to illuminate both the intertexuality and crosstextuality of the all-ages fictions of Silvina Ocampo and Clarice Lispector. Applying the lenses of intersectionality studies, childhood studies, and world literature to the mid-century Latin American context, reveals a fuller picture of two avant-garde women writers who have been, in a manner of speaking, frozen in time and within certain genres. This study has aimed to break them free of this confinement, opening them out into other dimensions and a dynamic interplay. My aims have been to open a critical and translational space in-between, one in which Ocampo and Lispector are interlocutors who attend to the muteness and silencing of their characters, speaking the unspeakable experiences of girlhood into being, for the sake of silenced others. *Forgotten Journey* and *Family Ties* powerfully bring into being a sympathetic all-ages community that transcends divisions by age and gender, and pulls back the veil on the timely matters of girlhood and coming of age, vulnerability and trauma, and literature and social change, which merit continual revisiting.

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