Unbecoming-of-Age Tales: the *niña fatal* and the De(con)struction of the Paterfamilias in Latin America and Spain

By

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Abstract

Girls are usually not the first people to come to mind at the mention of power. In fact, the traditional discursive construction of girls marks them as powerless. Nevertheless, this investigation has reached different conclusions about the power of girls in the representational realm and beyond. By centering my study on a figure whom I call the *niña fatal*, this dissertation claims that it is precisely the girlhood of this figure that makes her powerful because she is positioned at the intersection of age and gender. As her name suggests, she bears some resemblance to her archetypal ancestor, the *femme fatale*. Yet, the move into Spanish is deliberate since Spanish-language cultural production is central to her emergence, although the limited criticism that explores the *niña fatal* overlooks this fact. Moreover, in feminist criticism, girls tend to be eclipsed by the adult female subject. Thus, central to this dissertation is the act of bringing particular margins into focus. The picture that is rendered by this focal adjustment is an uncomfortable one because the *niña fatal* takes aim at the symbolic authority of the father through her girlhood sexuality. In her seduction of the stand-in father, monstrosity and vulnerability collide, generating a discursive trap: her femaleness dictates that she is to be blamed for his downfall, but as a child, she is to be held blameless. This trap is apparent in the three close readings I conduct of the *niñas fatales* of Rosa Chacel's novel, *Memorias de Leticia Valle* (1945), Isabel Allende's short story, "Niña perversa" (1989) and Lucrecia Martel's film, *La niña santa* (2004). Yet, more than challenging our internalization of patriarchal discourses, these creators also respond to the socio-political and ideological crises of their time and space by employing the *niña fatal* to explore the constitution of deviating female subjectivities. Operating on the micro level within the family, the *niña fatal* initiates a decadence in patriarchy's underlying power in/over society through her undermining of the symbolic order. Additionally, she showcases how unbecoming girls can

“unbecome” the girls who remain powerless under the patriarchy’s rigid discursive practices. The final chapter of this study explores this further, moving from the representational realm to the real to examine the ways that girls and their image are being used to resist patriarchal violence in the fight against femi(ni)cide.

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Dedication

To Lenore Carr, who raised a gaggle of girls, who raised a gaggle of girls, who are raising girls.

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Introduction

A young girl sits before you. Her hair is unruly. Her eyes are wandering, and her mouth is outlined in the blue of a popsicle that drips down the length of her hand onto her unexposed knee. That knee swings back and forth causing small azure rivers to run the length of her peach-fuzz-covered legs. She is bronzed from the summer sun, with splotchy freckles on her nose which is in its perennial state of shedding. Lurking beneath the surface of this child, you sense a woman in bloom. The layering of a musty yet sweet scent wafts through the air and your mind turns to thoughts of mischievous pixies and playful naiads. While you stare at this liminal being, she senses the outside glance. Her head turns and her eyes meet yours in a duel that seems to last a lifetime, but only a second. You are locked onto two pools of scrutiny that regard you with curiosity and disdain. There is a glimmer in those eyes that, following the budding smirk on her mouth, draws you in while simultaneously repelling you. Her childhood innocence tells you that all is well here, but that subterranean womanhood screams warnings of danger, or is it the reverse? In the pit of your gut, desire and disgust coalesce, and disgusted by your desire, your revulsion grows, for yourself, and for her. It dawns on you that the virtuous, pure, harmless picture of a child that initially sat before you has transformed before your eyes into an image of perverse corruption. Fear begins to set on your skin as you realize that she is dangerous, a bad girl…and she *is* a bad girl. She is treachery in a costume of vulnerability, alluring in her innocence. Her blossoming body, which feigns incorruptibility, chooses sexuality and rejects the teachings of the father and the trappings of traditional femininity. She is the beast that needs to be tamed, the fruit of temptation, and the original temptress. She is the danger that threatens the wholesomeness of family, the virtue of all girls. Critics are undecided on what to name her. This investigation calls her the *niña fatal*.

Her name should ring somewhat familiar to readers acquainted with her older counterpart, the *femme fatale*. As a sexually evocative literary and cinematic trope, the *femme fatale* emerged in response to the threat of women's emancipatory potential amidst the changing social paradigms of the late 19th century. Traditionally, she is a figure of intense unease due to her sexual and spatial unrestraint. Nevertheless, the anxiety she produces is ultimately quelled through her death and/or containment. Revisions to these social paradigms have resulted in revisions to the tropic blueprint delimiting her characteristics and function. Correspondingly, in contemporary portrayals, instead of the symbolic correction achieved through her death/containment, she is breaking from her archetypal determinacy to reject this correction. She is, in essence, more fatal than before. Her intensifying fatality exacerbates the fear that she elicits given that the pathway back to "order" is thwarted. Absent her death, the disruptive potential of the *femme fatale* reigns unchecked. The foundation of traditional frameworks crumbles, meeting an end originally reserved for her.

Yet, despite the appeal of this metamorphosis, it was the *niña fatal* whom I continued to turn to throughout my investigation: she h(a)unted me. She shares an obvious genealogy of fatality with the *femme fatale*, but there is also something less obvious and more disturbing about her than her predecessor. Something horrific, and monstrous, but vulnerable and exposed as well. This enmeshment of monstrosity and vulnerability first caught my attention after viewing Lucretia Martel's film *La niña santa* (2004), which is the focus of chapter 4. Amalia, the movie's *niña fatal* turns the tables on perversion by engaging in a disturbing pursuit of a man who has molested her. Despite the highly problematic nature of this pursuit, owing to her age and surfacing sexuality, it is precisely the conflict that is produced between her age and sexuality that makes her alluring. Because she is showcased as a girl who has not yet exited the confines of childhood, the appeal of

the *niña fatal* is taboo, unlike the *femme fatale* whom we can sexualize freely without the charge of perversity. In other words, the *niña fatal* brings us into the fold of the perverse.

We are sometimes led there unwillingly as is the case with Isabel Allende's short story, "Niña perversa" (1989), examined in chapter 3. Here, the young protagonist Elena awakens a dormant perversity in her mother's partner, Bernal, after having sex with him during his afternoon siesta. Despite the charge he lays on her of being a "niña perversa," he is the one corrupted at the story's close. Other times, the *niña fatal* acts with a conscious awareness of this monstrosity as is the case with Leticia in Rosa Chacel's novel *Memorias de Leticia Valle* (1945), which I analyze in chapter 2. By commandeering narrative authority, Leticia details her seduction of don Daniel, her tutor, and the consequences thereof. Her rejection of the traditional discourses of childhood and femininity moves her into the monstrous. Nevertheless, she remains an 11-year-old girl.

Leticia, Elena, and Amalia weaken the victim/victimizer divide. The discursive frameworks that construct the ideality of childhood reinforce their victimhood, while their actions, which are rooted in their burgeoning sexualities, position them as victimizers. This is the discursive trap laid by the *niña fatal* which separates her from her older counterpart. Put differently, we can freely sexualize and blame the *femme fatale* without the conflict which arises from the overlap of the protectionist discourses that are linked to childhood and discourses of blame that are associated with femininity. This is a central tension that is introduced by this archetype and teased out in this project: the *niña fatal* calls upon readers/viewers to wrangle with their internalization of patriarchal discourses which position women as to be blamed while holding the child as blameless.

My examination of fatal girl children is not new, although the claims that I make and the type of girls that I examine shed new light on this figure and the consequences of her deployment. Both Barbara Churchill and Ana Clavel investigate fatal girl children in cultural production.

Churchill's exploration into the literary and visual articulations of what she terms the child "femme" fatale, is the first commentary investigating this girlhood iteration of the 19th-century trope.[1] Using Vladimir Nabokov's *Lolita* (1958) as her primary focus, she demonstrates culture's fascination with disobedient and desiring girls.[2] She connects the close of the 19th century to the nearing end of the 20th century, signaling an increase in representations of "nymphets" in Northern Europe and the U.S. For Churchill, the child "femme" fatale induces anxiety while responding to sociocultural anxieties about the future. My analysis of the *niña fatal* is indebted to Churchill's theorization, especially where it concerns this figure's conflation of the discourses of childhood and femininity. Nevertheless, I move away from the exclusive focus on androcentric, Northern-European, and Anglo-American literary and visual products. My turn to the Spanish and Latin American contexts as well as female creators is deliberate and responds to the critical tendency to privilege Lolita and her cultural reverberations as the *niña fatal's* maximum expression.

Like Churchill, Clavel focuses on Nabokov's literary creation and claims that *Lolita* birthed the "enfant fatale" myth (25). She explores the real and literary antecedents to *Lolita* seen in Alice Liddell and Little Red Riding Hood. Her analysis of the latter is an important contribution to the examination of fatal girl children as she observes in Little Red Riding Hood one of the earliest iterations of girlhood fatality. By assessing modifications to her character over the years, especially in Perrault, Clavel observes a reduction in girlhood agency, and a move towards victimhood more aligned with our current idealities of childhood. This reading has informed the analysis I carry out

[1] Russell Trainer's *The Lolita Complex* (1966) predates Churchill's publication. However, Trainer attempts to pathologize what he calls "Lolitism" as a phenomenon which "has already become a part of our language, a dark corner shared with the shadows of many sexual deviations" (12). He identifies anecdotal accounts of historical Lolitas: Cleopatra, Cloelia, Marie Antoinette, Catherine Grand de Talleyrand, citing the widespread practice of the "sexual union between the young and the mature" as a staple feature of human sexual history (17).

[2] Churchill's investigation centers around literary and visual sources, including Stanley Kubrick and Adrian Lyne's cinematographic adaptations of *Lolita*, the photography of Lewis Carroll, David Hamilton, and Sally Mann and paintings by Philip Wilson Steer, Die Brticke, and Balthus.

in chapter 3 which analyzes girlhood agency and the mutations of the fairy tale into the horror story, "Niña perversa." Clavel brings us closer to the Spanish and Latin American literary traditions through the criticism she references. Still, her primary sources, like Churchill's, do not engage these traditions directly.[3]

Churchill and Clavel point to the concretization of the "child (femme) fatale," or the "enfant fatale" with the publication of *Lolita*. On the theoretical front, Lily Litvak, Erika Bornay, and Bram Dijkstra investigate the path paved by 19th-century creators who cultivated a cult to the child where "la frontera entre la inocencia y un perverso erotismo se diluyen por completo" (Litvak 151).[4] Litvak and Dijkstra situate their scope of analysis at the intersection of ideology, and visual and literary production. Dijkstra evaluates "the call of the child" which he sees as a gradual, but noticeable turn whereby adult fantasies were projected onto the minds and the bodies of children. He states, "in the fantasies of the painters . . . Minds filled with the lustful shapes of worldly women soon discovered in children the lineaments of sin" (195). Bornay also speaks to the boundary between conceptions of childhood innocence and perversity in her exploration of the cult of childhood at the close of the 19th century in Spanish literature. These critics, while not dealing explicitly with the fatal-girl archetype, showcase the *fin-de-siècle* conditions that see her materialize fully in the 20th century. Their investigations reveal the changing ideologies concerning childhood whereby the perverse child surfaces in art and literature as fascinating, contesting the child-as-innocent discourse.

[3] Concerning her analysis of *Lolita,* Clavel cites the criticism of scholars/writers such as Enrique Tejedor, Alberto Chimal, R. H. Moreno Durán, and Mauricio Molina. She also alludes to her own publication, *Las Violetas son flores del deseo (2007),* which dialogues with many of the themes present in Nabokov's creation.

[4] Litvak and Bornay refer directly to Lolita in their respective chapters on girls with Litvak claiming that Lolita and her earlier iterations are apprentices of the fatal woman (156). Bornay also uses the term Lolita to describe girls who become targets of morbid veneration in the later decades of the 19th century: "en aquella época la veneración de la inmadurez se disfrazó de respetabilidad, prefiriéndose ignorar lo morboso que escondía esta adoración las "Lolitas" (138).

Critical attention has turned its eye towards Lolita as the representational heiress of the *femme fatale's* legacy. Yet, the fact remains that Lolita is presented to us through a dual male gaze: Nabokov writes Humbert's reading of her. She is eclipsed by Humbert's desire which molds her into the image that readers receive, mirroring the processes of subjectivation for girls within patriarchal culture. So, while Churchill and Clavel both associate Lolita with the notion of girlhood fatality derivative of the 19th-century turn to the child-as-perverse, her fatality does not take us anywhere new because of the lens through which it is presented. This is not the case with the *niña fatal* and is one of the innovative contributions of this investigation. Under the pen of female authorship, the *niñas fatales* herein are a radical and uncomfortable experimentation in the creative realm of the weakening of patriarchal mandates. Radical because they defy the traditional processes of subjectivation reserved for girls and their coming of age into womanhood. Uncomfortable because they are, after all, still girls. This same discomfort is present in Nabokov's novel because man/girl relationships are uncomfortable, a side effect of the legal efforts to prohibit such relationships traceable to our evolving definitions and understanding of girlhood. Yet, given my turn to the girl, her centering within the narrative, and her deliberate sexual conquest of the male figure that enters her life, the *niña fatal* is far more disturbing, not just to readers but to the general (patriarchal) order that organizes our social landscape. My foray into her origins, her deployment, and the consequences thereof is a radically feminist reading that shifts power back to the seemingly "powerless."

The merger of childhood and sexuality that are amplified in the *niña fatal's* representation makes for an uncomfortable trope. I want to be clear that this project is not calling nor advocating for the abuse of girls codified under the name of sexual liberation. In other words, I am not concluding or suggesting that girls should sexually target men to take down the patriarchy. I am,

however, examining works of fiction under the claim that girls (minors) can be and are sexual agents. While their sexual expression is distinct from the sexual maturation exhibited in adults, to say that girls are not sexual belies an important aspect of their development. This investigation acknowledges that the burgeoning sexuality in girls is complicated, but it exists and any attempt to erase it is arguably more harmful than this acknowledgment. I also hold that the discourse established within popular culture that posits girls as non-sexual, while taking no issue with their sexualization is more dangerous than the admission that girls are sexual agents.[5] Though it is an uncomfortable admission, this investigation alleges that our discomfort is part of the power conveyed by the girls in each of these fictions which ultimately serve as contestatory responses of female creators to the regimes of control and surveillance that police the limits of discourse that are reproduced onto girls (and women).

Differing from the work that has been done on fatal girl children, I situate my study within the works of three women creators from the Spanish-language tradition who share the cultural legacy of interrogating, explicitly and subtly, the dictatorial regimes of Francisco Franco (1939-1975) in Spain, Augusto Pinochet (1973-1990) in Chile, and the military junta heading the "Proceso" in Argentina (1976-1983).[6] While I explore this connection in greater depth in chapter 1, the return of these regimes to the gendered discourses of "authentic" womanhood, rooted in the cult of domesticity provides the sociopolitical backdrop for the *niña fatal's* emergence. To this end, she is both a response to and a product of crises traceable to the 19th century which come to a head in the 20th century and are handled by the violent overhauling of the social order. She

[5] This project does not explore the relationship between the sexualization of girls in popular culture and the sexual expression exhibited by girls. For this, see Walkerdine (1997), and Durham, Meenakshi Gigi. *The Lolita Effect : the Media Sexualization of Young Girls and What We Can Do About It*. Woodstock, NY: Overlook Press, 2008.

[6] While both Chacel and Allende publish while in exile from these respective regimes, Martel does not create from the same condition. Nevertheless, Martel lived her adolescent years through the "Proceso." So, while the release of *La niña santa* is removed in time from the regime's active years, the film is nonetheless inflected by the dictatorship.

participates in a similar overhauling of order by subverting the very discourses that are meant to keep her in order.

My choice to call her the *niña fatal* as opposed to using the terminology developed by Clavel or Churchill is rooted in my assertion that Spanish-language literatures and cultures and the othering that befalls them, are central to her emergence.[7] The ambiguity of the term *niña*, or girl, alludes to the ambivalence between child/woman and synthesizes her destabilizing power.[8] Leticia, Elena, and Amalia revel in the ambivalence that is tied to their age/gender by problematizing the discourses that are expected of their age/gender. This and other characteristics they share – developing sexuality, broken families – as well as related tactics of unbecoming that they employ against the male stand-in fathers who complete the oedipal triad in their respective families, position them as *niñas fatales*. Thus, they display analogous frameworks of fatality while possessing specific methods of its enactment. It is this consideration which led me to exclude certain girl children with fatal tendencies —Carmen of Ana María del Río's *Óxido de Carmen* (1999) and "las nenas terribles" of Silvina Ocampo— from this investigation.[9] While these girls engage subversive femininities, they do not target the *paterfamilias* directly, which is a central concern herein. I consider this targeting and the symbolic overthrow of the *paterfamilias* one of the most potent articulations of the *niña fatal's* power which destabilizes the patriarchal symbolic order responsible for the ideological conventions that she is subverting. Along with these characteristics, each of these girls hails from women creators.

[7] That is not to say that I do not embrace other terminology proposed by these authors. For example, Churchill uses the term girl-child at length in her publication, which I similarly employ herein.

[8] Something similar happens in the case of the *chicas raras* identified by Carmen Martín Gaite in her own novels and those of Carmen Laforet, Ana María Matute, and Dolores Medio in post-Civil War Spain. These chicas "pone en cuestión la 'normalidad' de la conducta amorosa y doméstica que la sociedad mandaba acatar" (Martín Gaite 99). They do not act "right," although they do not weaponize their sexuality in the same fashion as the *niña fatal*. Nonetheless, they reside on the periphery of acceptable femininity and are products of female minds responding to conservative frameworks making them close cousins of the *niña fatal*.

[9] This expression come from the analysis of Blas Matamoro who links the condition of terrible children to that of terrible parents in the work of Silvina Ocampo.

Litvak, Bornay, and Dijkstra each emphasize that masculine anxieties were responsible for the fatal women's emergence in the 19th century as well as the early stirrings of what would become the *niña fatal*, while Churchill and Clavel cite *Lolita* as her materialized debut. I contend that her coming out happens earlier with the publication of Chacel's *Memorias* and continues in Latin America and Spain throughout the 20th and 21st centuries in the work of women creators. This is not to say that male authors and artists have not produced iterations of fatal girl children. As we will see in chapter 1, male creation arguably planted the seed for what would become the *niña fatal*. Yet, I am unconcerned with how her representation continued under male authorship. Dale Spender claims that "in a society predicated on male primacy it is a subversive act to promote female imagery at the expense of males" (159). I engage this subversion on multiple layers, beginning with the centering of female authorship. Additionally, the creators I examine, and their use of the *niña fatal* are subversive because they challenge male supremacy in the realm of cultural production and the symbolic world. Within this world of representation, these *niñas fatales* unveil the discursive mechanisms by which this supremacy is maintained while taking down the figure responsible on the base level for its maintenance: the father.

My turn to women that create is deliberate and is one of the biases of this project that is worth mentioning before we continue. I build my analysis off several essentialist assumptions, one of which being that literature written by women, and more concretely, literature written by women featuring *niñas fatales*, does something specific concerning gender. It is precisely the *thing that it does* that sheds light on how essentialism can be a tool of its own unmaking. Diana Fuss asks an important question when considering essentialism within a text: "what motivates its deployment?" (xii). This question and its answer relate to the function of the *niña fatal* as a tool of unbecoming. Her ability to collapse the rigid binary inherent in the hierarchies that structure patriarchal

discourse extends to the essentialist/constructionist binary as well. In other words, while the *niña fatal* is discursively constructed as essentially girl, her foray into the antigirl ways of existing champions difference. She takes us from the fixed to the fluid and lays the groundwork for essentialism's critique (1). This critique is not as obvious in chapter 5 where we move from the literary to local iterations of essentialism which are assisting in uniting the masses under the banner of femi(ni)cide resistance. While it remains problematic in its generalizing tendency, essentialism provides a network of collectivity for girls and women to identify the endemic violence that is carried out on their bodies due to their sex/gender. In turn, this is allowing them to effect change in the social and political realms.

My simultaneous embrace and rejection of essentialism and my centering of the peripheries: peripheric geographies, gender, age, and subjectivities, hints at the poststructuralist undercurrents which inform my readings. Not surprisingly, discourse, subjectivity, power, and knowledge are protagonist concerns in this investigation which I consistently relate to gender and age. Michel Foucault's conception of discourse and his theories on the imbrication of power/knowledge are central to my analysis. Concerning gender, the power of discourse determines what a girl is and what she can be as well as the type of woman she can become. Leticia, Elena, and Amalia are on their way to womanhood while simultaneously interrogating the ideal of woman by defying the expectations of girlhood that are demanded of them. And while the method of interrogation is different in the case of each, they harness the power of discourse to undermine the traditional discourses of childhood and femininity. They engage contradictions and destabilize the construction of meaning codified in these discourses by asserting their right to construct meaning in relation to and for themselves. This task has historically belonged to the male and, in the case of the nuclear patriarchal family, the father. By subverting his power and his law, she can

self-construct while the traditional meaning maker and the source of prohibition are deconstructed. The father is moved into the realm of the perverse where his supremacy is interrogated and his legitimacy as the foundation of the symbolic order is questioned.

Unbecoming Subject: Childhood, Femininity, and Sexuality

The *niña fatal* is caught up in the process of becoming while simultaneously acting as a tool of unbecoming. This recalls Simone de Beauvoir's famous statement opening her chapter on childhood: "[o]ne is not born, but rather becomes, a woman" (267). Beauvoir signals the cultural framework that structures the construction of woman, creating a mold of sanctioned femininity that begins shaping her in her youth. The discourses of femininity and childhood, which are problematized by her deployment, undergird the *niña fatal's* development. They are not, however, static social absolutes but rather culturally and temporally specific yet varied conceptions that have been largely elaborated by members exterior to the groups – adults and males.

Concerning childhood, Philippe Ariès localizes a shift in Europe regarding the elaboration of discourses on childhood, and childhood sexuality occurring at the end of the 16th century and the beginning of the 17th century (57-58). This shift extends into the Enlightenment with its moralizing preoccupation with the social contract which moves towards the conception of the child as a *tabula rasa* responsible for the rise in emphasis on early childhood (male) education. The 19th century initiated another period of radical restructuring of these discourses triggered by rapid industrialization and modernization. Previously, the transition from feudalism to capitalism saw children removed from parental proximity as the profile of their labor changed with them entering directly into the industrial framework. More specifically, poor, and working-class families relied on child labor to bolster the family income, while bourgeoisie families were memorialized as the hegemonic ideality through which childhood could reach its most "civilized" expression.

The preoccupation with Child labor laws began to take hold in the second half of the 19th century and with the advent of obligatory public schooling, children were removed from total parental supervision and entered under the supervision of the state. In the case of Spain, the *Ley Moyano* (1857), was the precedent for state-driven education reform. Argentina followed suit with the *Ley 1420* (1884), which provided primary instruction that was "obligatoria, gratuita, gradual" (*Ley de educación*). Chile is later on the scene than Spain and Argentina in the establishment of obligatory public education which occurred in August of 1920 with the *Ley de Educación Primaria Obligatoria*. The *Ley General de Instrucción Primaria* (1860) laid the groundwork for the 1920 law, however, it did not impose the obligation that the later law did resulting in lower attendance rates that reduced its efficacy. Several additional factors contributed to new formulations on the nature of childhood which advanced in tandem with modernity's development: the elaboration of psychological theories of childhood, the creation of new terminology to delineate phases of juvenile development and transition to adulthood, the decline in infant mortality, and the advent and/or revision of age of consent laws.

Age of consent laws are useful to the theorization of the *niña fatal* because they situate us within an early intersection of childhood, femininity, and sexuality given that they targeted sexual crimes committed against "women" under the age of 12. Similar to legislation in the West in the 19th century that focused on child labor laws and early education reform, the category of child and sexual consent becomes more pronounced in legal reform. This is true of Spain, Chile, and Argentina whose end-of-the-century Penal Codes located a specific type of victimhood in the under-12-year-old female, establishing a threshold for "woman" and the gravity of the sexual crimes committed against her.[10] The language outlining these crimes —*rapto*, *violación*, and

[10] The Penal Codes consulted are the *Código Penal español (1870), Código Penal chileno (1874), Código penal argentino (1887).*

estupro— always identify the victim as female. In the case of victims under 12, these crimes are considered more punishable than if the victim were older than 12 years old.[11] This suggests that while not fully differentiated from the category of woman, females under 12 were distinguishable in their victimhood because of their age.

Julia Grace Ogden comments on the move from morality to age in the Argentine Penal Code. The reputation of a woman – "honrada;" "de buena fama," – which suggests distinct categories of womanhood, gives way in later legal reforms to the primacy of age ("Between Protection and Punishment" 117). The protectionist discourses that previously targeted the moral woman are moved onto the child, although she is not yet named as such. With the shift in focus to age, the discourses of sexual purity are transferred onto the girl. The cultural foundation of women's reputation as relational to the punishability of the crimes committed against her is tied to notions of purity/perversion derivative of the 13th-century omnibus book of laws, the *Siete Partidas*, whose influence in the Spanish-speaking world lasted until the 19th century and cannot be underestimated.[12] Composed during the reign of Alfonso X, this text outlined the criminality of sexual acts whereby the corruption of the chaste woman's innocence was a crime.[13] The woman must be honorable, then, to merit protection. Or rather, the corruption of an unchaste woman was not seen as corruption and thus, not a crime. Also, the *Siete Partidas* provides us with the age of 12 as the limit for the absolution of the crime of incest which indicates the early legal

[11] Julia Grace Ogden points out the discrepancy between protectionist discourses which were highly gendered and applied only to the female. She states, "[t]he treatment of young male victims in the law potentially exposed them to unpunished sexual assault, given that the law clearly defined the protection of innocent girls while leaving boys exposed. This juxtaposition exposes underlying cultural assumptions of gender and reveals an implicit lack of concern about male youth" ("Protecting Argentina" 57). It also implies the excessive concern for girls and an over signification assigned to their characterization as innocent.

[12] For more on this influence see Bravo Lira, B. "Vigencia de las Siete Partidas en Chile," Jurídica de Chile, 1989, pp. 89-142; Zorraquín Becú, R. "Las fuentes del derecho argentino, (siglos XVI a XX)," Revista de Historia del Derecho, 1973, pp. 311; Guzmán Brito, A. *Historia de la codificación civil en Iberoamérica*. Garrigues Cátedra, Universidad de Navarra, 2006.

[13] Note the language in Title 19 of the 7th *Partida*: "*Castidad* es una virtud que ama Dios y deben amar los hombres y según dijeron los sabios antiguos tan noble y tan poderosa en su bondad, que ella sola cumple para presentar las almas de los hombres y de las mujeres *castas* a Dios; y por ello yerran muy gravemente aquellos que *corrompen* las mujeres que viven de esta manera en religión o en sus casas, teniendo viudedad o siendo vírgenes" (198; emphasis added).

acknowledgment that a "woman" under 12 could not be held responsible for her sexual actions because of her age. 12 becomes the age standard representing the uppermost bound of childhood and entry into adulthood, remaining largely the same throughout the 20th and 21st centuries.[14] Relevant to this investigation, Leticia and Elena are both approaching 12 years old, marking them as on the cusps of legal womanhood. And while Amalia's age is never clarified, it is implied that she hovers in that same obscure liminality between girl and woman.

As such, 12 years has been historically used to signal the transition from child to woman as a sexual subject. This unveils the complexity of the term "girl" because girlhood and the precedent that is set forth by these laws mark the change from girl to woman without necessarily reaching the age of majority or "adulthood". So, a girl becomes a woman while remaining a child with regards to matters of citizen rights (if they have them), or rather she becomes a sexual subject without the rights of a legal subject. The resulting ambivalence makes evident culture's imbrication of childhood and femininity especially as these relate to sexuality. This imbrication is steeped in the discursive overlay of woman/child as pure and indicates the elaboration of a specific type of femininity that was institutionally protected and valued.

With the 19th-century updates to the Penal Codes in Spain, Chile, and Argentina, the discourses of femininity and childhood combine with the presumed innocence of girls under 12, drawing from the culturally, and legally elaborated innocence of the chaste woman. The *niñas fatales* herein complicate the innocence that is attached to their age by engaging in disruptive desire that is characteristic of the unchaste woman. The discursive trap that they lay for us demands our interrogation of the legal and social discourses that attach themselves to gender and age. Neither

[14] The age of consent in Spain remained at 12 until 1999 when it was raised to 13. In 2015, the age was raised again to 16. Chile raised its age of consent from 12 to 14 in 1999, but only regarding heterosexual activity and lesbian relations. Where it concerns male homosexual relations, the age of consent is 18. Argentina's age of consent (13) is more complicated than Spain's and Chile's because it criminalizes sexual activity with adolescents (13-16) under specific circumstances. Additionally, the Argentine law, "Corrupción de menores" allows charges to be made against individuals who sexually manipulate those under the age of 18.

of these discourses adequately represents or responds to the gradation or the "inbetweenness" of girlhood to womanhood experienced by girls. The *niña fatal* exploits this discursive deficiency given that she is on the cusp of becoming a (legal) woman, yet engages in behavior antithetical to the conception of the innocent child/chaste woman. This produces a conflict between discourses: either she is to blame because she is a female who does not behave as she should, or she is innocent because she is a child and cannot be held responsible for her behavior. In this way, her meaning-making extends beyond herself and into the very ambiguity which characterizes her and the discourses that she brings into uncomfortable contact. Nevertheless, given our conditioning within patriarchal logic and its power to polarize, we cannot rest easy in this in-between, although the *niña fatal* consistently brings us back there.

Beyond their legal conflation, Shulamith Firestone details the historic connections between childhood and femininity which she claims share idealities. Alongside their overlapping codification, women and children are relegated to a subordinate position in the social hierarchy:

> The myth of childhood has an even greater parallel to the myth of femininity. Both women and children were considered asexual and thus 'purer' than man. Their inferior status was ill-concealed under an elaborate 'respect'. One didn't discuss serious matters nor did one curse in front of women and children; one didn't openly degrade them. . . Both were set apart by fancy and nonfunctional clothing and were given special tasks . . . both were considered mentally deficient. (87-88)

These parallels highlight the commonalities between restrictions to access, the regulation of dress, specialized roles in the social matrix, as well as the culturally maintained opinion of inferior intellectual capacities. Targeting the bodies of women and children, these idealities showcase the

preoccupation with the regulation of conduct especially where it concerns sexuality. To this end, conduct is easily identified as normal or deviant becoming easily praised or punished.

The historic conflation between children and women plays out in the 19th century in a way that both reaffirms and agitates this enmeshment. The rise in the preoccupation with the concept of childhood is concomitant with a literary and cultural boom featuring the child, which scholar George Boas has termed "the cult of childhood" in a volume of the same name. Similarly, on the femininity front the "cult of domesticity" reinforced the standard ideality of femininity tied to the notions of purity and passivity which bound women to the home and the institution of marriage. Despite the popularity of this version of femininity that is represented in the *ángel del hogar* trope, the end of the century saw an increase in disputes regarding the traditional conception of woman and her role within society. These refutations were met with criticism accusing individuals of "la decadencia del hogar" or "la debilitación de las instituciones familiares" (Gómez de Baquero 153). Commonly referred to as the *cuestión feminina*, this dispute raged through social and literary circles in Europe and Latin America towards the latter half of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century.

One of the most prominent members of 19th-century European thought and important to the theoretical position of my analysis, Sigmund Freud examined 'the riddle of femininity,' the 'dark continent' of female sexuality, and the child as a 'polymorphous pervert.' Feminist scholars critical of Freud's theories have claimed that they were designed to capture masculine psychosexual development while relegating women to a position of inferiority (and alterity) through the reinforcement of sex-based differences that made man the norm (Millet 180).[15]

[15] Gayle Rubin issues a feminist critique of Psychoanalysis, particularly regarding the American clinical tradition: "psychoanalysis has often become more than a theory of the mechanisms of the reproduction of sexual arrangements; it has been one of those mechanisms" (47). Rubin's analysis of the transactional aspect of the sexes, exchanger (male) and exchanged (female), is linked to Freud and Lacan's conclusions on the phallus. In the case of this project, however, the *niñas fatales* herein subvert the gift economy by becoming both the exchanger and exchanged. In so doing, they subvert what Rubin refers to as "'phallic' culture" (52).

However, Juliet Mitchell makes a poignant observation regarding psychoanalysis stating that it "is not a recommendation *for* a patriarchal society, but an analysis *of* one" (xiii). To that end, I use several of Freud's concepts, particularly the Oedipus Complex, to analyze the *niñas fatales* herein who I claim are disrupting the processes which keep patriarchal society intact. The Oedipal triad appears in the three works examined, Letica/ doña Luisa/ don Daniel; Elena/ mother/ Bernal; Amalia/ Helena/ Jano, and is ultimately undermined by the girl's successful failure of same-sex parental identification given that they seduce the (stand-in) father. While clearer in the case of the young boy, Freud's Oedipus Complex sees the girl child move from attachment to rivalry with her mother over the possession of her father. Upon identifying with their mothers, the complex is successfully resolved, and girls internalize patriarchal laws.

For Freud, the Oedipus Complex is the point where individuals begin their constitution as subjects. His psychoanalytic theory provides Jacques Lacan with the framework for developing the representational value of the Oedipus Complex as the symbolic system upon which culture is structured. In the case of Lacan, however, he views the phallus, the thing that men have and what women want to be, as the site of subject formation which occurs through language (Mitchell 31). Lacan's emphasis on the phallus as the privileged signifier "of power, the sceptre, and also owing to which virility can be assumed" (247), positions men as the bearer of the phallus and consequently as the wielders of power. Additionally, for Lacan, the father enters as the figure of prohibition, and through the Oedipus Complex, forbids the incestuous relationship between mother and daughter. Yet, the (stand-in) fathers herein interrupt the mother/daughter dyad and succumb to the very prohibition they are tasked with regulating. The father moves into the perverse undermining his law and undoing the symbolic potential that is rooted in his power. Thus, the *niña fatal* exposes the void behind the phallic signifier turning the symbolic tables on "lack".

Thus, she jeopardizes patriarchy's underlying power through her undermining of the symbolic order which she achieves via the subversion of the law of the father. Consequently, she weakens the protective and prohibitive functions of the father by championing desire over his Name (Nom) and No! (Non), to reference Lacan's play on the homophones which he developed in his seminar, *The Psychoses* (1955-1956). This gives her a potency that is not necessarily available to the matured *femme fatale*, who lies outside his protective bounds. Her subjective formation is complete in its recognition of sexual difference and her performance of correct feminine socialization has been internalized. The *niña fatal*, conversely, is a subject-in-formation and her targets of seduction are representative of paternal authority.[16] The father's law decrees that her child's body requires his protection, however, he succumbs to her desire which his own law prohibits. In other words, she targets the pater in patriarchy. This is a powerful blow because it cripples patriarchy's chief institution, the family, and the *paterfamilias* through his removal from the symbolic order bringing its other two pillars, society, and state, to their knees.[17] Her early acquisition and understanding of the rules of patriarchy's play and power structure help her subvert the institutions that would seek to replicate the father's law, even in his lack.

Regarding the theories of Freud, his influence on the work of Rosa Chacel is highlighted by several of the critics that I refer to herein. Roberta Johnson stresses Freud's impact on the Spanish author and her oeuvre (*Gender and Nation* 43). Similarly, Meier claims that with *Memorias,* Chacel offers conclusions regarding Freudian theories of the socialization of girls and

[16] According to Dorothy Leland, Lacanian theory posits the Oedipus complex as "a universal of psychosexual development" (83). Leland critiques Lacan's rejection of the nuclear family as the site of social organization where the Oedipus complex plays out. She argues instead for sociohistorical specificity on the "psychological oppression of women" (82). I agree with Leland and argue that the dissolution of the supremacy of the fathers in both the real and in the symbolic sense, directly corresponds to a weakening of patriarchalism and the phallocentric discourse that undergirds psychosexual development.

[17] Kate Millet describes the interrelated nature of these pillars stating that "[a]s the fundamental instrument and the foundation unit of patriarchal society the family and its roles are prototypical. Serving as an agent of the larger society, the family not only encourages its members to adjust and conform but acts as a unit in the government of the patriarchal state which rules its citizens through its family heads (33).

their sexual proclivity ("Translator's Afterword" 178). In the critical work centered on Allende's "Niña perversa," Claire Lindsay is explicit in her deployment of the socio-psychoanalytic framework to examine the Oedipal triad in the story. She contests a wholly Lacanian reading stating that Elena does not experience her gender as lack but as discovery (141). Finally, she maintains that the story situates us more appropriately within the celebration of the mother-daughter bond than her entry into the Symbolic Order. While I share Lindsay's conclusions regarding the move away from a purely psychoanalytic reading of the text, I consider the rivalry present in Elena and her mother's relationship a precondition for this mother-daughter celebration. Additionally, while Elena's actions help to shake the foundations of the symbolic order, a phenomenon which occurs similarly for Leticia and Amalia, we are not privy to their destabilizing effect until the narrative moves us forward in time. This is a notable difference between the three pieces and allows us to see Bernal's descent into the perverse in a way that is not available to us in the other works examined.

Regarding *La niña santa,* Katy Stewart is explicit in her reference to the onscreen Oedipal trauma which is heightened by Martel's cinematic language and the suggestion of incestual relationships. Deborah Martin's analysis of the film, like Lindsay's, recurs to Freudian theories of the uncanny as well as phenomenological methods of analysis to illustrate the development of girls in patriarchal society. So, despite the contentious nature of Freudian theories, their influence is central to my investigation, the production of some of the pieces themselves, as well as the existing criticism that examines these works. Nevertheless, it is important to note that in Freud, the subjectivity of girls and women was radically undertheorized. Catherine Driscoll speaks to this

void regarding girl's subjectivity, or rather her exclusion from it, stating that she is often relegated "to the known about rather than knowing" (27).[18]

This leads us to the two interrelated results of the *niña fatal's* fatality. The first is the fall of the father(s) and his law. Secondly, the girl is removed from her confinement to the sidelines of subjectivity. Like most terms in this project, subjectivity is polyvalent and calls to mind concepts indispensable to its signification: subject/other, subjectivation, and subjection.[19] The process by which an individual is made subject, subjectivation, is integrally related to the interdependent concepts of power/knowledge and discourse where the former is a constitutive element of the latter which, in turn, is the building block of subjectivity. Historically, the hin-betweennesslders of power/knowledge have been those in charge of the elaboration, enforcement, and upkeep of discourses resulting in the privileging of a classical patriarchal subject who polices the bounds of subjectivity and defines its "legitimate" articulation. This is what Beauvoir alludes to when she declares that "[man] is the Subject, he is the Absolute – she is the Other" (xxii). Her claim has situated the self, the subject, and subjectivity as central concerns within poststructuralist feminist theory seeking to rescue the female-as-subject from her position as inferior to the privileged male subject who has enacted her subjection.[20]

[18] G. Stanley Hall has been described as the "father of adolescence" after his publication, *Adolescence: Its Psychology and Its Relations to Physiology, Anthropology, Sociology, Sex, Crime, Religion, and Education* (1904). He famously coined the term "storm and stress" to describe this period of human development. Yet, his vision of adolescence was sexist as he characterized girl's adolescence as "a dangerous phase when she needed special protection from society" (Dyhouse 122). His idealization of women reinforces the *ángel del hogar* trope and renders his theories less useful to the theoretical core of this investigation. Instead, I build off the work of female adolescence put forth by Catherine Driscoll, and Katherine Dalsimer.

[19] Michel Foucault provides two definitions of the word "subject" that are tied up in the notion of power: "subject to someone else by control and dependence; and tied to his own identity by a conscience or self-knowledge. Both meanings suggest a form of power which subjugates and makes subject" (781).

[20] Driscoll importantly signals that girls have been excluded from feminism's formulation of the subject/subjectivity due to "feminist discourses on maturity, autonomy, and individualism. Positioned in opposition to the stabilizing centrality of the transcendental Subject, girls are also positioned as always in the process of their own production" (130). So, while feminism has sought to reclaim models of subjectivity in relation to the adult woman, girls are marginal to this endeavor. This is touched on further in chapter 5 where I claim that an intergenerational solidarity is being forged particularly in Latin American feminisms.

Beauvoir's assertion also indicates the underlying organizational structure of patriarchal logic, which is hierarchically structured, codified as natural, and predicated on seemingly balanced imbalances – binaries. Hélène Cixous explains the consequences of this organization stating it "makes all conceptual organization subject to man" (*The Newly Born Woman* 64). Thus, it is not just the female as an individual who finds herself under the "control" and "dependence" of man, but also meaning itself which comes under his authority. Within this framework, the mind, like man, is historically prized as the center of identity formation while the body is situated as the object, separate from the processes of subjectivation. Elizabeth Grosz expands on this, indicating that "[t]he mind becomes associated with culture, reason, subject and self; while the body is correlated with nature, the passions, object and other" ("Notes Towards" 4). Grosz's phenomenological approach to corporality and subjectivity views the body and its correlations not as antithetical to culture, but rather as "a site of social, political, cultural and geographical inscriptions, productions or constitution" (*Volatile Bodies* 23). This serves us in the examination of the *niñas fatales* herein because they bring together the body and the mind in their quest for the constitution of self. It is also via their bodies and their minds that the symbolic father is dethroned from his position of supremacy.

Of the three pieces examined, *Memorias* has received the most critical attention regarding subjectivity, and Johnson and Elizabeth Scarlett are explicit in their analysis of Leticia's embodied subjectivity. Regarding authorship, Johnson states that "[i]n a reversal of women's radical objectivization as visual spectacle, women authors of the vanguard era cultivated more subjective forms of writing in order to reassert their position as subjects" ("'Self-Consciousness'" 56). This reassertion extends into her analysis of the novel and applies to Leticia with Johnson pointing to the primacy of senses as Leticia's gateway into the world, rather than her intellect (62-63).

Drawing from the work of Merleau-Ponty, Johnson centers the body as a protagonist in the process of subjectivation. Her focus on the senses as a site of knowledge production is fundamental to my analysis given that each of these girls employs a complex sensorial repertoire to engage with and undermine the power relations at work in their worlds.

Scarlett's turn to the body also illustrates its preeminence in Leticia's developing subjectivity. She places the mind and Leticia's intellectual precocity as the starting point for her body's surfacing power: "Leticia's mental maturity leads to a physical seduction, which, though unrepresented, is the central fact of the memoir, bridging the gap between mind and body in a highly disturbing way" (*Under Construction* 83). Scarlett's examination of the presence/absence of Leticia's body in the text and the corresponding discomfort this body generates because it does not act as a child, but rather as woman, are teased out in greater detail in chapter 2. Her suggestion that both the female body and subjectivity are empowered through don Daniel's downfall is central to my assertion that Leticia resists mental and corporeal subjection traditionally enacted onto girls. Through the merger of her mind and body, she initiates the realization of herself as subject, albeit an amorphous and seemingly contradictory one.

The body's relationship to subjectivity is less pronounced in the criticism of "Niña perversa." Nevertheless, Elena's body appears in the work of various critics who call attention to its power. Farhat Iftekharuddin explains that "the politics of the female body even as young and inexperienced as Elena's is sufficient to compel a perverse conversion in the male" (232). Iftekharuddin points to the politics of female sexuality and the adolescent body as the force behind the subversion of "phallic dominance" in the story (236). Lindsay also hints at this subversion; however, she does so through the lens of the romance genre. Like Johnson, Lindsay suggests that it is the senses, specifically the feeling of Elena's desire for Bernal, that initiates an inversion of

the male-as-subject. Instead, Elena engages "how it *feels* to be the subject rather than the object of the romance" (140; emphasis added). Elena's body is a powerful one that hovers in and over the narrative. Through her feeling of desire and her developing fantasy featuring Bernal, Elena's physical form and her self-in-definition, materialize. How this materialization happens, and its corresponding disruption of the symbolic order is probed in greater detail in chapter 3.

The body is also a central concern in the criticism of *La niña santa*. Martin describes Martel's cinematic style as "an aesthetic of sensation, a cinema which privileges the tactile and the sensorial over the visual" ("Wholly ambivalent" 7). It follows then, that the senses are vital to the internal workings of the viewing experience, a point which is examined in detail by Hugo Rios and Gerd Gemünden. By weakening visual supremacy, the male gaze is undermined by Martel and Amalia, whom Stewart tells us, "is an active subject rather than a controlled object, and therefore destabilises the male gaze" (215). Jens Andermann similarly comments on this gaze linking Amalia's subjectivity to both Jano and the spectator, stating that she "[asserts] her subjectivity by returning the gaze not just to the intradiegetic aggressor but the spectator as well" (157-158), while Ana Forcinito suggests that Amalia's constitution as a subject is a re-inscription that responds to her initial objectification by Jano, "[c]onstituida como objeto primero, Amalia se reescribe como sujeto del deseo, de la búsqueda, del tacto" (123). The result of Amalia's shift into the subject position and her disruptive desire that targets Jano is born from looking and touching as well as the intellectual exercise of deciphering the call of God, which reappears consistently in criticism of the film. Like Leticia and Elena, Amalia's embodied subjectivity is disruptive because it alters the relations of power encoded in gender and age which traditionally construct these girl children as passive objects. Yet, with their subjectivation, they are activated while the adult men they target are framed as the objects of their desire.

This inversion is enacted through the destabilization of masculine supremacy, the shift to the female as the desiring subject, and the coalescence of the mind and body as sites of knowledge production. As such, the *niña fatal* is a powerful fictional trope, albeit an uncomfortable one. She blends sexuality and childhood in a way that renders her difficult to read for modern critics. This difficulty is twofold because of the discomfort this merger produces in readers, and, like the *femme fatale* because she is "epistemologically traumatic" in that she hovers in between oversignification and a lack thereof (Doane 1). In other words, she exists between excess and erasure of meaning. This makes her a useful tool in unraveling hegemonic discourses because she invites new readings and new ways of reading, creating an aperture for new knowledge frameworks beyond those that patriarchal ideology sanctions. It also projects her fatality into the realm of signification, given that she destabilizes the previous systems charged with producing and regulating meaning. These are the systems responsible for ostracizing women from cultural production, relegating them to silence to keep male sovereignty and female subjection intact. In response, the *niña fatal* aggravates the ways of becoming and existing as female, and the future of the female subject. Acting beyond the standard ideality of femininity and childhood while weaponizing her sex against the stand-in father, she deconstructs order at its symbolic source.

To return to my claim that the *niña fatal* is a tool of unbecoming, I allege that this is a twofold process. The first of which, detailed above, relates to her unbecoming the patriarchy-approved subject. She is also unbecoming in the sense that her behavior is considered inappropriate according to patriarchal discourses that describe the expected conduct of girls.[21] Put differently, she becomes the dangerous *thing* that protectionist discourses aimed at girlhood are trying to

[21] The play on words between "unbecoming" as an adjective and a verb does not transfer into Spanish. This is due to the word's etymological roots which derive from the combination of the Proto-Germanic prefix of negation, *un* and *bikweman* meaning to become or to obtain. The adjective "unbecoming" used to communicate unseemly behavior did not come into use until the 16th century.

prevent. She enacts the process of unbecoming by subverting these discourses, thus problematizing the process of becoming woman. Driscoll explains that "[w]hile masculine adolescence is a progress to Subjectivity, feminine adolescence ideally awaits moments of transformation from girl to Woman" (57). Through this subversion and by inverting the relations of power whereby they are defined as objects, these *niñas fatales* actively engage in the "progress to subjectivity" traditionally denied to them.

Mapping the Terrain

Chapter 1 of this investigation excavates the cultural and sociopolitical frameworks that facilitate the *niña fatal'*s coming of age. Firstly, I turn to the *femme fatale'*s development as an iconic cultural trope that showcases masculine anxieties tied to the loss of subjectivity and subject/other relationality that is characteristic of the 19th and early 20th centuries in Europe and Latin America. I contend that she is a genealogical precursor to the *niña fatal*. By exploring the evolution of the *femme fatale* in the figures of Niña Chole, Salome, and Lolita, the arrival of the *niña fatal* is situated within a broader cultural phenomenon that is nourished by transatlantic literary and language currents. On the geopolitical front, the myth of Hispanism helps us to understand the parallel discourses that are used by the regimes of Francisco Franco in Spain, Augusto Pinochet in Chile, and the military junta heading the National Reorganization Process in Argentina ("Proceso").[22] These dictatorships exploited the power of discourse, the patriarchal nuclear family, and an "authentic" version of womanhood exemplified in the *femme fatale*'s

[22] The term Hispanism and its derivatives, Hispanic, and *hispanidad*, are a 19th-century response to land loss, which attempts to reinsert Spanishness as the prototypical essence of the independent or soon-to-be-independent Latin American nations. Joan Ramon Resina tells us that the effort to aggregate this territorial loss under a homogenized cultural banner codified in Hispanism "is the earliest instance of a postcolonial ideology engaged in promoting hegemonic ambitions by cultural means" (161). It comes as no surprise that the dictatorships examined herein, looking to promote these ambitions, recur to Hispanism as an ideological tool to construct a national subject linked to the myth of Spanish exceptionalism. This furthers their political and discursive agenda that seeks to delimit the boundaries between authentic and illegitimate forms of citizenry. My use of the term Hispanism, then, builds off its 19th-century elaboration, continuing into the 20th century with the Franco, Pinochet, and "Proceso" dictatorships as a postcolonial tool whose primary function is the reification of Spanish supremacy at the expense of alternate cultural markers.

opposite, the *ángel del hogar*, to restore an order which they claimed had been undermined by Marxism. These dictatorships inflect the creations of Chacel, Allende, and Martel, whom I claim situate their *niñas fatales* within the realm of the *ángel del hogar*, the home, to subvert the model/antimodel of femininity and childhood that is championed by these regimes.

Chapter 2 focuses on Leticia, the in-text author of *Memorias*, and her refusal of emphasized femininity and rejection of the category of child. She is an intellectual *niña fatal* who appropriates the male domain of knowledge and meaning-making through her seduction of don Daniel, the town archivist, and tutor, usurping his power and authority over the word and history. Furthermore, Leticia's coopting of the male gaze surfaces in the description of her interactions with don Daniel, whom she treats as an object, reversing the traditional positioning of male-as-subject, female-as-object. Her appropriation of the male voice is present in the generic format of the novel. Structured as a memoir, Leticia writes her version of events leading up to this seduction, privileging the female voice as the authority. Nevertheless, as a marginal creature who resides on a series of borders –femininity and masculinity, child and adult, victim and victimizer– Leticia's recounting of events also challenges the divide between fiction and history, reality and fantasy. Her process of subjectivation is grounded in ambivalence, which is reproduced on the generic level. Thus, this novel is a highly subjective work about subjectivity and its potential. It also alludes to the curtailment of that subjectivity in doña Luisa, wife to don Daniel, who symbolizes the infantilization of women under the Franco regime, a version of womanhood that Leticia rejects.

In the case of Elena, the *niña fatal* of chapter 3, we turn from the novel-memoir to the short story. This genre switch implies a perspective shift as well. Instead of a first-person account of the events surrounding Elena's "seduction" of Bernal, the implied narrator is Eva Luna, the eponymous protagonist of Allende's novel that precedes the volume of short stories of which

"Niña perversa" forms part. This chapter follows Elena's voyeuristic and haptic emergence, galvanized by fantasy, which occurs within the space of the *pensión* run by her mother. I explore Elena's relationship to this space, and how it dialogues with the space/time of her adolescence. Foucault's concept of the heterotopia alongside Julia Kristeva's conception of the abject, allows us to see how Elena's girlhood adolescence functions in relation to horror. This reveals how the narrative space and the space within which Elena pursues Bernal inform the alterity or otherness of adolescence, femininity, and exile. Through the resignification of her child's body as sexual, it too enters the realm of the heterotopic and the abject. Before her sexual episode with Bernal, she lingers about the *pensión*, floating ghostlike throughout, while following this episode, the imprint of her heterotopic body haunts his memories as he sinks into a world of pedophilic desire. By turning the tables on perversion, Elena acts as a phantasmal *niña fatal* who disrupts paternal sovereignty, unveiling the perversion of the father.

This turning of the tables is also present in *La niña santa*, examined in chapter 4. However, differently than Elena, Amalia's pursuit of Dr. Jano is instigated by the doctor's molestation of her on the streets of Salta, Argentina. Moreover, Martel focuses on the crisis of decadence of contemporary Argentine society, which is genealogically tied to the "Proceso." I contend that she films this crisis from the inside, zooming in on the discursive crisis of meaning and the structures that organize its expression. This is achieved through an intentional disruption of dichotomizing classifications. Amalia enters as the great disruptor who explores her developing adolescent subjectivity, which is grounded in an enmeshment between the sexual and the religious. This spiritual element differentiates her from Leticia and Elena as she wrangles with the tenets of faith through her own interpretive lens. The film adeptly plays with the oscillation of gazes, moving us from the male to the female, and back again. Amalia's monstrous femininity, her lurking about the

decadent Hotel Termas, her destabilizing of conventional configurations of religiosity and childhood sexuality, contribute to her unbearable "to-be-looked-at-ness," to use Laura Mulvey's terminology, and evoke a similar ambivalence in the spectator. As a spiritual *niña fatal*, Amalia inverts the salvationist discourse reserved for the young girl who must be safeguarded from the external dangers and perverse desires of the world. Instead, she becomes the dangerous, desiring subject against which one must be safeguarded.

The closing chapter of this investigation turns from the ambivalence, which characterizes the *niña fatal's* appearance in the fictional world, to the lifeworld as girl-child activists blend the boundary between victims and agents in response to the femi(ni)cide crisis. The girl victims of this crisis have been repeatedly constructed as having deserved their victimhood, because of their agency which situates them outside the traditional discourses of girlhood. To demonstrate this, I turn to the Alcàsser femi(ni)cides that occurred in Spain in 1992 which claimed the lives of three adolescent girls, Antonia Gómez Rodríguez (Toñi, 15), María Deseada Hernández Folch (Desiree, 14), and Miriam García Iborra (14). Beginning with victimhood exposes the tension that the politics of representation elicits in the face of girl victims. Following the national exposure of this case, mediatic discourses in Spain suggested that these girls were to be blamed for their murders given that their murders were occasioned by their acting beyond their girlhood. Active attempts were made by individuals close to the girl's families to restore the vulnerability that was demanded of their age. As we will see, this representational tension exposes how, for girls, their sex/gender is weaponized against them, not just physically, but also discursively. This demonstrates how traditional discourses of victim-blaming and girlhood deviance are enacted onto femi(ni)cide victims laying the groundwork for girlhood resistance. Part of the power of this resistance, I argue, is nourished by the harnessing of a similar ambivalence that we have seen with the *niña fatal.* Girl

activists, and activist representations of girl activists, are both agents and victims. Their agency and victimhood have mobilized a rallying cry that combats the victimization of girls (and women) as well as the continued representation of girls (and women) as victims.

Here we end our journey that began with the exploration of the birth of the *niña fatal*, who comes into being as a response to cultural and sociopolitical processes. This is a fitting end given that, in the face of the femi(ni)cide crisis, girls and women are collectively resisting discursive frameworks which support the structures of violence that ultimately shape their subjectivation or snuff it out entirely. They are taking a political stance to change culture. As a result, they are producing a bounty of cultural artifacts which identify their struggle and document their resistance. To this end, I situate my analysis of resistance within the 2015 Argentine movement *#niunamenos* which paved the way for the viralization of other movements, such as the 2019 Chilean collective LASTESIS' "Un violador en tu camino." I draw connections between the strategies of unbecoming that the *niña fatal* employs and the strategies of resistance that are embraced within these movements to decry and disrupt *machista* violence.

These movements are highly discursive and encourage both online and in-person participation organized around hashtags, slogans, and testimony. They also engage the private/public divide, moving from the realm of domesticity into the cybersphere and the streets. This recalls the spatial unrestraint mobilized by the *niña fatal*, a trait that she inherits from her predecessor. These movements have provided an aperture for girls to express their discontent with/in these frameworks and to showcase their hope for a future where, instead of raging against femi(ni)cide, they can instead celebrate the death of these frameworks and become "las mujeres que les dé la gana de ser." Thus, differing from the *niña fatal* who works individually within the fictional realm for autonomous subjectivation through the commandeering of discursive power

achieved via the overthrow of the father, the activists participating in the femi(ni)cide resistance have a similar, but broader goal. Instead of the localized *paterfamilias,* they are targeting the patriarchy as a system. They are agents fighting for the right to agency without the threat of victimhood, using their bodies politically, rather than sexually, to achieve discursive autonomy and the freedom to be whatever and whoever they want in a future they are helping to shape.

Chapter 1: Orienting an Archetype: The Road to the *niña fatal*

For many girls having been and being raised in conservative, heteronormative households, the fear and power of our fathers is absolute. Our mothers need only to threaten us with his arrival, "espera a que llegue tu padre," for that latent fear to surface. What happens when he arrives is implicitly understood, but never fully articulated: "cuando llegue tu padre te vas a enterar." His is the iron will that crushes any willful disobedience, that straightens us out when we are out of order. The order, of course, is his to define, and he polices its boundaries with the complicity of our mothers who rely on the threat codified in his title and the deference it inspires to keep us in line. He is, in many ways, our introduction to prohibition and punishment. But most of all he is our first example of the relations of power that govern our world, and we are impotent in the face of his supremacy. When we leave the confines of his domain, we encounter more fathers: God the father, forefathers, the founding fathers, the fatherland, patriarchs, patriots, and patrons, all bound up in the power of the father lurking beneath their surface signification. Yet, perhaps the most ubiquitous, and arguably insidious, derivative of the father's legacy of power is the patriarchy.[23]

Deniz Kandiyoti explains that "[t]he term patriarchy often evokes an overly monolithic conception of male dominance, which is treated at a level of abstraction that obfuscates rather than reveals the intimate inner workings of culturally and historically distinct arrangements between the genders" (98). Critics of the feminist movement and feminist critics alike have signaled the poverty of empirical and historical evidence surrounding the reference to and usage of the term patriarchy, which fails to account for *what* has led to the "relationship of domination and subordination between men and women" (Murray 13). While this question is beyond the scope of

[23] This paragraph hints at the word tree which has bloomed around the word patriarchy. From the Greek, *patriarkhēs*, the term traces its way back through *patria* (fatherland), to the central figure codified in the word and his function, the Greek *patēr* for father and *arkhē* for domination. The 20th century saw a radical resignification of the term, which was taken up by feminists as a way to identify male supremacy in society.

this chapter, instead I home in on specific cultural and sociopolitical processes which have reinforced this relationship of domination and subordination in the Spanish-speaking world, and more specifically, in Spain, Chile, and Argentina. I contend that the *niña fatal* emerges as a response and challenge to the legacy of the power of the patriarchy. Her genetic material pulls from the fruits of its impact upon culture, which in turn produces tropes—the *femme fatale* and the *ángel del hogar*—that showcase the polarity of patriarchy's operating logic. I consider these two figures to be the genealogical predecessors of the *niña fatal.*

The authors that create *niñas fatales* – Rosa Chacel, Isabel Allende, and Lucrecia Martel – share a common *patrimony* of violence derivative of the dictatorships whose impact is inflected in their creations.[24] The patriarchal discursive strategies of Franco in Spain, Pinochet in Chile, and the military junta heading the "Proceso" in Argentina, elaborated a version of "authentic" womanhood, a revival of the *ángel del hogar* trope of the century prior. The destiny of women in the eyes of these regimes was the home, whose structure and health were presented as a microcosm of the nation. Women who strayed from the discursive bounds of this version of authenticity were illegitimate, subversive antiwomen who, like the *femme fatale*, were punished for their deviance. This punishment in the real world shares with the fictional world of cultural production the same goal: the restoration of the patriarchal symbolic order.

On the threshold of womanhood, the *niña fatal* is a child who pulls from and defies this sanctioned version of femininity while actively subverting the power of the patriarchy. This power is embodied in the figures of paternal authority that enter the lives of these *niñas* and ultimately succumb to her power, which is mobilized through her awakening sexuality and subjectivity. Thus, she wreaks havoc on the home—the domain of the *ángel del hogar*—, and the preeminence of the

[24] Acclaimed as one of Latin America's leading auteurs, Lucrecia Martel as both the writer of the screenplay and director of the film, exemplifies Astruc's theory of director-as-author. For more on Martel as an auteur see Slobodian (2012).

paterfamilias. In this way, she is aligned with the *femme fatale.* Consequently, the emergence of these fatal girl children is not extemporaneous, as there are cultural and sociopolitical circumstances that usher them into being.

On the cultural front, the cultivation of the fatal woman archetype responds to crises brought on by the accelerating changes to social paradigms induced by modernity. These crises arose, in part, due to the growing dissolution between the private and the public spheres stemming from the shift in gender roles provoked by rapid industrialization. This shift threatened masculine subjectivity, which was perceived as a threat to the greater social order. In elaborating a cultural trope that amalgamates masculine anxieties tied to the loss of subjectivity derivative of these changes, the *femme fatale* functions both as a threat and a prospect of hope. With her metaphorical death and/or containment, she quells the anxieties that threaten masculine subjectivity, thus restoring the very order that her emergence threatens. The *niña fatal* reverses this process. As a child, she represents the prospect of hope for the future, however, she becomes threatening through her active seduction of the father. Order is not restored, but rather disturbed by her deployment.

The *femme fatale*'s development as a cultural icon offers a blueprint for understanding subject/other relationality, which sees her relegated to the realm of other given her existence as autonomously refusing social and sexual subordination. Conversely, the *ángel del hogar*, whose passive, pious, and pure discursive construction, which proliferated in the 19th century with the same intensity as representations of the fatal woman, sets the bar for the cult of "true womanhood." This is the same cult that the dictatorships of Franco, Pinochet, and the "Proceso" return to in the 20th century in their quest for the restoration of order which they claimed had been corrupted by subversive Marxist ideologies. These dictatorships elaborated a socially conservative and gendered discursive framework that mobilized the model of the Marian women who "actúa como

caja de resonancia de los valores autoritarios en el seno familiar" (Munizaga 537). The discursive polarity between femininities exemplified in the *femme fatale* and the *ángel* extends beyond representation and into the real via the commandeering of discursive power engendered by these regimes. Where it concerns the *niña fatal*, these dictatorships act as the sociopolitical backdrop that catalyzes her deployment, while these cultural precursors evidence the operative discourses of legitimate and illegitimate femininity to which she responds and disorders.

To this end, this chapter begins by exploring the fatal woman trope and the centrality of Hispanism to her development. The staging of the *femme fatale* within Spanish-speaking cultures by Northern European creators, and conversely by Spanish creators, reveals some of the salient characteristics of subject/other relations that reflect some of the geopolitical currents underway in the West at the close of the 19th and beginning of the 20th century. This establishes Spain and Latin America as sites of cultural exploitation where the rehearsal of these relations is ongoing, conditioning the *niña fatal's* later emergence in cultural production. Hispanism becomes a crucible melting down cultural referents and allowing for the cross-cultural liquidity which sees them seep through national boundaries. This is not only the case for the *femme fatale*, the *ángel del hogar*, and the *niña fatal* but also applies to the conservative discourses embraced by these dictatorships which recurred to a shared Hispanic and Catholic heritage as a means of legitimating their violent seizures of power. Their strategies of legitimation rest upon the elaboration of "authentic" national subjects and they return to the discursive power of the *femme fatale's* opposite, the *ángel del hogar*, to quell the threat of the subversive other by returning women to the domestic sphere. Consequently, this is the domain of the *niña fatal* who, born in the wake of these dictatorships, becomes a symbolic tool that weaponizes her age and gender to subvert the model/antimodel of femininity.

From *Femme* to *Fille*: The *niña fatal's* Emergence in Cultural Production

Spanish and Latin American cultures and literatures play a prominent role in the development of the fatal woman archetype in the 19th century. Spain serves as the setting for and home to two of the more iconic *femmes fatales* of the fin-de-siècle: Prosper Mérimée's Carmen from his 1845 novella of the same name and Pierre Louys' Conchita Perez from his 1898 novel *La Femme et le patin (The Women and the Puppet*.)[25] José Colmeiro contends that during this period Spain straddled the us/them binary reifying the cultural hegemony of Northern Europeans who characterized Spain and "Spanish culture as sensual and exuberant with the exotic oriental accent of the other" (131). Thus, as an erotized, liminal land where west meets east and north meets south, Spain functioned as a site of confluence in the creative realm between the Orient with its Moorish past and Roma population and the Occident with its Christian history and decadent colonial might.[26]

Joseba Gabilondo comments on this process of orientalization where Spain is feminized and "the femme fatale, in her orientalist and Spanish embodiment, becomes the discursive subject that defines . . . what bourgeois sexuality becomes at home: a discursive apparatus always on the brink of psychotic crisis" (35). Carmen represents the culmination of a series of discursive factors that mark her portrayal as wholly opposite to the virile Don José who cannot resist her charms, killing both her and himself at the novella's close. Presented as a site of excess, via her sexuality,

[25] Carmen and Conchita have been immortalized in the Western cultural imagination. Carmen's cultural legacy was cemented with the premiere of Georges Bizet's opera *Carmen* (1875), based on Mérimée's novella, which has since inspired over 30 cinematic adaptations. Conchita, to a lesser degree than Carmen, has similarly left the confines of text to appear in opera (Ricardo Zandonai's *Conchita* which premiered in 1911), and several films, of which Luis Buñuel's *Ese oscuro objeto del deseo* (1977) is worth noting.
[26] Edward Said brings critical attention to the term Orientalism with his 1978 publication of the same name. Interest in the "Orient" flourished in the 19th century and, as Said points out, is central to European identity politics. He maintains that "European culture gained in strength and identity by setting itself off against the Orient as a sort of surrogate and even underground self" (*Orientalism* 3). While there was indisputable focus by authors and artists on North African, Middle Eastern, and Near and Far East Asian societies which were culturally and geographically distinct, Spain also became a target of Oriental interest for architects, photographers, and writers fascinated by the country's Moorish past.

and ethnicity, she threatens the symbolic order. Gabilondo explains that this excess is "impossible to neutralize except through her sacrificial death. Her body is a constant reminder of her resistance to domination" (140). Both Gabilondo and Colmeiro point to the discursive construction of national identity formation through this external (Northern European) reading of Spain and Spanishness via Carmen and highlight the restoration of order achieved through her death and annihilation. Consequently, this sexually excessive, unrestrained woman synthesizes the anxieties tied to the other and provides a cathartic release of these anxieties through her death. This becomes the norm in the representation of the fatal woman at the century's end, given that she symbolizes the prospect of restoration of order and control, albeit in the fictional realm, in a world whose rapidly changing social and cultural landscapes seemed out of control.

Carmen's literary debut as a *femme fatale* marks the beginning of a proliferation of representations, literary, artistic, and later cinematic, which flourish in the works of Decadent and Symbolist creators in France, England, and Germany in the mid to late 19th century. Virginia Allen traces the rise of this archetype as an erotic icon to the masculine manifestation of the desire for and fascination with the sexuality illicit other. This desire coexists alongside the fear of masculine impotence in the face of this figure's assertive control over her sexuality (191-196). The dialectic of fear/desire is a staple feature in her representation and a driving force behind her origin, which Mario Praz argues is a product of Romanticism.[27] Lily Litvak tells us that the Romantics were responsible for the discovery of "la unión del dolor y del placer . . . Los románticos legaron al fin de siglo la simbiosis entre crueldad y deseo" (125). The combination of these discrete sensations is tied to a geographic and temporal escapism resulting from the industrial revolution, imperialist

[27] Critical theorists point to the second chapter of Mario Praz's *The Romantic Agony* (1933) titled "La Belle Dame sans Merci" as the start of criticism examining the fatal women. As the title of the book indicates, he examines the "erotic sensibility" present in a selection of Romantic literatures of England, France, and Italy from roughly 1800 to 1900.

anxieties, rising class tensions, and feminism's debut. The Romantic's escapism, grounded in the "cult of the exotic," flees the present to seek refuge in "remote landscapes" thus birthing the "fascination with Mediterranean cultures and the Orient" (Colmeiro 128). Spain becomes for Northern Europeans a land that is both familiar and strange, far but close. With its peripheral location, it is an other to the Northern European-centered subject.[28] Additionally, the penetration and occupation of the Iberian Peninsula by Napoleonic forces in 1807 dominoed into a series of crises that led to the independence of most of Spain's former Latin American colonies. This devastated imperial might, which is catalyzed by the domestic invasion, reifies the subject/other relationality, and contributes to the geopolitical sexualization of Spain as feminine to the Northern European masculine.[29] As a *femme fatale*, Carmen embodies this process and the affective responses it elicits.

Consequently, this spatially unrestrained figure, whose appearance in literature is marked by her exploitation of the porosity of the private and public spheres, dialogues with the spatial politics inherent in the constitution of the subject and other. As other, she threatens the masculine subject to whom she serves as a warning, portending what awaits those who surrender to her charms: engulfment. In this way, the *femme fatale* and the processes of colonization and imperialism are intimately linked, especially where it concerns colonized bodies. Anne

[28] Spain was not the only country subject to this form of othering but belongs to a block of othered countries that fueled the notion of a culturally and geographically distinct "Southern" Europe. Authors such as Goethe, Heine, and Dickens turned to Italy to cultivate a series of stereotypes about the nation which reified the north/south distinction within the country and the continent. Nelson J. Moe examines this at length in *The View from Vesuvius: Italian Culture and the Southern Question* (2002). The Spanish case is similar, although perhaps slightly more polemic given the anti-Spanish sentiment that reigned in Europe during the 16th-18th centuries. This is clear in the writings of Voltaire who declares that "Spain is a country with which we are no better acquainted than with the most savage parts of Africa, and which does not deserve the trouble of being known" (390-391). Interestingly, Spain was not one of the principal countries on the Grand Tour which reinforces Voltaire's suggestion of the merit of knowability.

[29] The same nation responsible for the destabilization of Fernando VII's reign, which had cataclysmic effects on the Spanish empire, continued its imperialist impulses under the rule of Napoleon III with its intervention in Mexico. It is important to note that before this invasion an ideological program was underway by French intellectuals, especially Michel Chevalier, to legitimate French expansion into North, Central, and South America. From this program emerged the term "Latin" America. Nevertheless, it should be noted, as Michel Gobat points out, that "'Latin America' had already been used in 1856 by Central and South Americans protesting U.S. expansion into the Southern Hemisphere." (1346).

McClintock highlights the feminine nature attributed to colonized land and explains the resulting fears of the male conqueror that stem from this feminization. She states that they reside in between the trappings of power, lust "and a contradictory fear of engulfment" (26). McClintock's analysis suggests that land and the female body are conflated into a single, explorable, penetrable thing, stating: "[k]nowledge of the unknown world was mapped as a metaphysics of gender violence . . . the world is feminized and spatially spread for male exploration, then reassembled and deployed in the interests of massive imperial power" (23). The woman's body is akin to the land in that she represents both offering and entry for the male into a position of supremacy, which is made possible through her subordination, domestication, penetration, and consumption. Yet, like the *femme fatale* who both attracts and repels, colonial and imperial processes rehearsed this contradictory polarity onto the land itself. With the loss of Spain's empire, masculine supremacy and the symbolic order suffered a potent blow. The *femme fatale* becomes a tool for exploring anxieties tied to this loss while reenacting the colonial process of penetration and domestication, which is largely no longer accessible on the geopolitical level.

Spain was not immune to the fin-de-siècle malaise that saw the fatal woman rise to representational power elsewhere in Europe. The orientalization of Spain by Northern European countries was similarly reproduced inside Spain onto Latin America. The Spanish struggle to reconstruct a homogenized national identity at the close of the 19th century in the wake of the loss and impotence of its colonial prowess was answered by Spanish authors, some of whom turned to the fatal woman exemplified in Carmen to comment on this struggle. One such example is Ramón del Valle-Inclán's *Sonata del estío* (1903) wherein the story's protagonist, el Marqués de Bradomín, recalls his adventures in Mexico.[30] There he is struck by the appearance of a woman,

[30] Valle-Inclán engages in his own kind of Grand Tour with his trips to Mexico, first in 1892 and later in 1921, as well as a six-month trip with his wife and actress, Josefina Blanco, to Argentina, Chile, Uruguay y Paraguay. The impression left by the Mexican

Niña Chole, with whom he has a love affair. The *Sonata* abounds in comparisons between the Orient, the ancient Aztec empire, and the Yucatan, whose civilizations, "solo tiene par en ese misterioso cuanto remote Oriente" (94). This comparison extends to Niña Chole as he comments on her appearance that "tenía esas bellas actitudes de ídolo, esa quietud extática y sagrada de la raza maya, raza tan antigua, tan noble, tan misteriosa, que parece haber emigrado del fondo de la India" (99).

Marina Cuzovic-Severn's analysis of the *Sonata* likens Bradomín to a Don Juan or dandy who represents "Spanish imperial masculinity" while Niña Chole, the story's childlike fatal woman, is a "modernist Carmen" or a "colonial femme fatale" whose infantile tricks and childish behavior appear throughout the *Sonata* (232).[31] In other words, her fatality and childishness are enmeshed. Cuzovic-Severn signals her name, Niña, and the episode wherein she goads "el negro" into killing a shark as part of a bet as the primary display which "expresses Niña's cruelty, but at the same time her childishness" (232). Additionally, she explains that in recurring to Mérimée's orientalization of Spain, Valle-Inclán attempts "to recuperate Spanish Imperial power by turning this orientalism towards its former colonies . . . It is in this way, this irresistible attraction of Mexico's orientalism is internalized by Spain" (216). Thus, the dialectic continues, and the subject/other relationship that positions Spanishness as other in *Carmen* is converted to the Spanish imposition of subject/other relationality to Latin America in Niña Chole, who functions as the updated other. However, as Cuzovic-Severn points out, Valle-Inclán's "modernism mobilizes the

landscape, people, culture, and building conflict, which would result in the Mexican Revolution, is notable in "La niña Chole", *Sonata de estio*, and most pronounced in *Tirano Banderas*. For more, see Schneider, Luis Mario., and Ramón del Valle-Inclán. *Todo Valle-Inclán en México*. 1. ed. México: Coordinación de Difusión Cultural, Dirección de Literatura, UNAM, 1992. Print.

[31] Javier Krauel signals a range of criticism concerning the neocolonialist intentions in Valle-Inclán's *Tirano Banderas* (1926), his short story "La niña Chole" (1895), and *Sonata de estío*. Some argue that the author advocates for the restoration of Spain's lost empire, while others describe these works as anti-colonial endeavors (306). Within the frame of my analysis and pulling from Cuzovic-Severn, in *Sonata de estío* the ambivalence of this neocolonial stance is heightened due to the presence of Niña Chole. Mobilized by feminine fatality, I allege that the decadence of the old order, rather than its restoration, conditions the tone of the tale.

femme fatale to address the core trauma of Spanish imperialism . . . With *Sonata de estío*, the colonial femme fatale in Spanish literature finally disappears" (235). The use of the fatal woman as a "discursive apparatus" to express the anxieties surrounding national identity, sexuality, and the decentralization of masculine hegemony does not end here, however, nor does the importance of the Spanish and Latin American literary tradition in the representation of this figure.

Cuzovic-Severn reads Niña Chole and her childishness as allegorically "[representing] the need for control and monitoring of the colonies" (232-233). But she alleges that this control is ultimately foiled through what she reads as an incomplete and ironic conquest due to the looming threat of Niña Chole's future transgressions. Niña Chole's childishness, this allegorical reading of surveillance projected onto her, as well as the subversive nature of her power contribute to the ambiguous portrait of a female that confounds the victim/victimizer divide. This is especially the case when she informs Bradomín of how she was robbed of her innocence at 12 years of age. He remarks, "[v]olvió a cubrirse el rostro con las manos, y en el mismo instante yo adiviné su pecado. Era el magnífico pecado de las tragedias antiguas. La Niña Chole estaba maldita como Mirra y como Salomé" (132). The reference and comparison of Niña Chole to Myrrha, mother of Adonis by her father Cinyras, whom she tricks into sleeping with her, and Salome, Herod's daughter whose dance for him results in John the Baptist losing his head, are significant. The connection between the three is rooted in the sin of incest between daughters and fathers, and the suggestion of the former's role as agents in these sexually perverse encounters. It is here where the *niña fatal* begins to emerge along with her surfacing perversity and power: despite her role as agent, she still retains the traces of victim due to her age. To this end, she frustrates the restoration of order achieved seamlessly with the *femme fatale* because her gender linked with the nature of her sin positions her as to be blamed while her age suggests that she is blameless.

Beyond the connection of their "sin", Niña Chole and Salome spring from a similar fount of destabilizing femininity which exposes anxieties related to masculine subjectivity. While Niña Chole, represents a challenge to "Spanish imperial masculinity" (Cuzovic-Severn 218), Ana Peluffo explains that, "[p]ara los autores latinoamericanos, Salomé en sus versiones visuales y textuales sirvió para reflexionar sobre formas de identidad masculinas en crisis y para establecer un diálogo con poetas y lectores sobre la forma en que el sentimentalismo masculino podía hacer frente o no a excesos de la modernización liberal" (297).[32] In the case of Salome, her cultural importation to Latin American modernism at the close of the century is noteworthy because it reflects her cultural liquidity. She permeates geographic boundaries and becomes one of the most repeated and recognizable images of this literary movement. Delfina Fonseca traces the flow of Salome's seepage into Latin American literature, citing Oscar Wilde and his 1891 theatrical play *Salomé* as one of the most influencing factors that conditioned her spread into Latin American modernism.

Wilde's *Salomé* is noteworthy for its influence on subsequent cultural production but also because it does something distinct with its principal character. It severs, by and large, the mother-daughter link between Herodias and Salome wherein the former is portrayed as the *femme fatale* with her daughter aiding her in carrying out her fatal fantasies, seen in Stephane Mallarmé's poem, *Hérodiade* (1864-1887), and Gustave Flaubert's novella *Herodias* (1877). Instead, Wilde's play not only makes Salome the central focus of the work but also imbues her with a perverse sexuality that claims the lives of various men, resulting in her death at the hands of Herod at the play's close. Ruben Dario will similarly kill off his Salome in his 1891 story "La muerte de Salomé." The

[32] For a detailed breakdown of the allegorical presence of Salome as a vehicle for expressing masculine fears related to modernization in the work of the modernist Rubén Darío, see Peluffo (2006). For a more general overview of the "waves" of Salome in cultural production in Spanish and Latin American literatures see Fonseca (1997).

implied death of Marta at the close of Enrique Gómez Carrillo's story, "El triunfo de Salomé" (1898) echoes this choice as well. Thus, Latin American modernism follows Wilde in transferring Herodias' fatality onto Salome and resolves the disorder caused by its articulation through her death. Consequently, Salome is embraced by tradition as a more compelling version of fatal femininity than her mother as well as more shocking in her immorality, thus better suited to assuage anxieties tied to the crisis of masculinity.

I allege that this shift is a result of Salome's youth, which we can infer via her statements surrounding her virginity and chastity that she declares to the corpse of Jokanaan near the close of Wilde's play. This is also evident in Wilde's incorporation of the phrase "la danse des sept voiles" in the stage directions, which precipitates what has been envisioned as Salome's striptease for her stepfather (70). Rafael Cansinos-Assens describes both the incestuous undertones which characterize this dance as well as the implication of Salome's youth and her awakening sexuality, which is related to the removal of these veils.

> La pasión senil e incestuosa es otra congoja erótica que rehúye su expresión directa y elige como su símbolo la danza, alegoría artística de la copula, ampliación magnificada del ritmo de la nupcia. . . Y por último la pasión de Salomé por el profeta asume la forma de una terrible crisis de adolescencia, de un súbito y pavoroso despertar del sexo, más bien de sus instintos pravos [sic] y agresivos, inseguros todavía de sus fines, faltos aún de conciencia y que encubren su intención tras de máscaras engañosas." (52-53)

The sexual taboo of the (step)father/daughter relationship combined with her adolescence makes Salome a highly transgressive figure whose fatality eclipses that of her mother due to the contrast between the severity of this transgression and her capriciousness, resulting from her age. Dijkstra explains this, stating that she is "not so much deliberately evil as playfully wasteful of man's

essence. She is both a carnal temptress and a virgin who, with her self-centered passion tarnishes the gold of purity she has collected in her Danae-like hunger for the seed of man's spiritual ambitions" (384). She becomes the virgin-whore who, like the *niña fatal*, brings images of purity into contact with sexual proclivity. Both are threatening to masculine subjectivity; however, the *niña fatal*, rather than targeting the spiritual chastity of John the Baptist, instead works her seductive charms on the figure of patriarchal power that Herod represents.

Like Valle-Inclán's Niña Chole, in the case of Latin American cultural production, Salome's popularization is largely a response to "un debilitamiento o emasculación del yo" (Peluffo 299).[33] She becomes discursively useful for male authors and poets because she provides the cathartic release necessary to alleviate anxieties that are associated with the loss of (masculine) subjectivity brought on by the changing tides of modernity and the infancy of national construction projects in Latin America which still relied heavily on the "European Subject." She functions on multiple planes because she "calms" the crisis of the interior realm, which responds to the exterior conditions of change. Yet, when we zoom in on the youthfulness of Niña Chole and Salome, that calming is hindered by the horror elicited through their portrayal as childlike.[34] This has the corresponding effect of exacerbating their subversiveness because the suggestion of youth intensifies the perversion of their sin by highlighting the corruptibility of their innocence. So, differently than the *femme fatale*, these proto *niñas fatales* weaponize the ambivalence between

[33] This is noted as well in the work of Allen (1983), and Mary Ann Doane (1991). Allen claims that the *femme fatale* is "what he himself may have feared most: a woman so compelling that she might dominate him, corrupt or destroy his work, deprive him of emotional independence and personal liberty" (19), while Doane explains, "[t]he femme fatale is an articulation of fears surrounding the loss of stability and centrality of the self, the 'I,' the ego" (2).

[34] Edouard Toudouze's 1886 painting *Salome triumphant*, and Gustav Adolf Mossa's 1901 illustration *Salomé* are prime examples of the Salome-as-child motif taken from the Gospels wherein Salome is not referred to by name but rather "the girl." Fonseca cites the satirical poem, *Atta Troll* (1841), by Heinrich Heine as the start of a new proliferation of Salome's which "en nada recuerdan aquella joven obediente retratada por los evangelistas. Ataviada con sus nuevos ropajes de femme fatale la bailarina bíblica pasa de ser una anodina jovencita a convertirse en el símbolo de la lujuria, la belleza perversa y la fatalidad" ("Del arquetipo" 411). This move to fatality is more thoroughly concretized, however, with the publication of Wilde's play.

perversion and innocence, victim and victimizer that is particular to their age. They thwart the sociocultural discursive framework which constructs the child as innocent and vulnerable, while also disturbing the framework of sanctioned femininity exemplified in the *ángel del hogar*. As such, the discomfort that the *niña fatal* elicits is more potent because it disrupts the normative prescriptions of both frameworks while targeting the individual responsible for maintaining their order. Furthermore, she lays a trap for her audience, inculcated in the very discourses which she breaks from, using her age to disturb the tendency to blame her outright for man's destruction. She ensnares us in the trappings of the overlay of discourses that say that she is guilty because she is female, but innocent because she is a child.

Regarding childhood and sexuality (and childhood sexuality), James Kincaid underscores that adults are responsible for the authorship of these concepts and have "according to the needs of history and our own whim, made children savages and sinners, but we have also maintained their innocence" (*Erotic Innocence* 53). The creation of the category of child and its discursive confines are externally generated by adults who have exited the boundaries which they define and surveil. This positions them relationally opposite to the child, which replicates the subject/other relationship previously examined. Kincaid remarks, "[i]f the child is not distinguished from the adult, we imagine that we are seriously threatened, threatened in such a way as to put at risk our very being, what it means to be an adult in the first place" (*Child Loving* 7). Like the *femme fatale* of the fin-de-siècle, configurations of children and childhood are rooted in adult fear and desire and their corresponding negation in the child who is constituted as other.

Salome, Myrrha, Niña Chole, and the *niñas fatales* of this investigation challenge this external subject/other relationality projected onto them on multiple planes (masculine/feminine; adult/child, colonized/colonizer). By disrupting the discourses that are produced by these

relationalities, they undermine the externally applied characteristics which serve to reify their position as other. Additionally, because they defy the Romantic version of the child as naturally asexual and innocent, they are read as perverse. Yet, their perversion is problematic because instead of being "incapable of practicing or inciting sex" (55), they are actively sexual with the individuals who are culturally charged with policing their innocence: the father or his stand-in. These *niñas fatales* oscillate between perversion and innocence, making their discursive unease, to use Doane's terminology, more precarious and their power more disruptive than their older counterparts.[35]

In this way, the *niña fatal* sits on a series of boundaries that increase her anxiety-producing power: she is sexual, but also sexually inexperienced. She is a child, but she is approaching womanhood. She is playful, but she is also cruel. This distances her from the imagined sexual innocence projected onto and expected of girl children, given that she actively pursues the targets of her desires, slipping into the discursive category of the "bad girl". Churchill claims that she "is a socially disruptive trans-textual creature, . . . whose visage breaks the very rules by which contemporary notions of girlhood innocence are constructed" (5). This rule-breaking, I argue, is with regards to the discursive frameworks which produce and contain the standard ideality of childhood and femininity, thus constructing sanctioned subjectivities. As a boundary breaker, the *niña fatal* disrupts these frameworks across a variety of genres. Her trans-textuality reinforces her generic mobility, which is evident in this investigation through her appearance in different literary and cinematic forms. In the case of Niña Chole and the "Salomania" that gripped literature and art at the turn of the century in Spain and Latin America, this generic mobility translates into

[35] This reference to "discursive unease" and later to "epistemological trauma" come from the opening lines of Doane's, *Femmes fatales.* She states, "The femme fatale is the figure of a certain discursive unease, a potential epistemological trauma. For her most striking characteristic, perhaps, is the fact that she never really is what she seems to be" (1).

geographic mobility, as she is a transnational creature who borrows from the cross-cultural crucible in ways that expose and link socio-cultural idiosyncrasies. In contemporary culture, the most renowned literary example of this trend in the English-speaking world is Vladimir Nabokov's *Lolita* (1955).

Lolita's cultural and symbolic import is indisputable, and she is often considered the fatal girl child par excellence. Churchill traces the genealogy between the "child (femme) fatale" embodied in Lolita and the *femme fatale*, exposing the nature of the threat they both pose to the preconceived standards of femininity and social order (8). However, where the *femme fatale* previously assuaged anxieties through her containment or erasure, the "child (femme) fatale" exacerbates these anxieties because she is neither contained nor erased. Her punishment is concomitant with her age and does not result in a curtailment of her fatality. Nevertheless, both Lolita and the early *femme fatale* share the characteristic of being the object of the male gaze – a gaze that simultaneously projects disquiet and desire onto her while *looking for* a resolution to this double-edged angst through her. Clavel calls attention to this fact claiming that it is specifically the male gaze that is responsible for reading purity and perversity onto Lolita, who becomes easily recognized by the transcultural, societal gaze. Yet, the ambivalence between the active sexuality and passive naivety read onto her marks her as both predator and prey, a characteristic that she shares with the Salome of the fin-de-siècle.

Turning to Lolita's literary antecedent, Michael Maar's research surrounding Lolita's origins reveals a connection to a short story ("Lolita") written by the German author Heinz von Lichberg (the pen name of Heinz von Eschwege) forty years before the publication of Nabokov's *Lolita*.[36] The story, taken from his collection of short stories entitled, *The Accursed Gioconda*

[36] Critics are divided as to the veracity of Maar's Lichberg theory, with many, such as Dieter E. Zimmer and Delia Ungureanu, rejecting it outright and instead citing other cultural and literary influences at work in *Lolita*. Nabokov expert Suzanne Fraysse cites

(1916), details a familiar tale of forbidden love between a lodger and a pre-teen named Lolita. The setting for this story is a *pensión* in Alicante, Spain, and the original Lolita is Spanish.[37] This choice in setting and character profile is crucial as it returns us to the orientalization of Spain and the construction of the North/South European divide which reifies geographic and cultural subject/other relationality. This is the case for both the original "Lolita" and her Nabokovian update where, in the case of the former, the male protagonist hails from Germany and turns his gaze towards Spain. Humbert Humbert, on the other hand, is a French professor of literature who turns his gaze to American suburbia.

The gothic and horror saturate von Lichberg's text as this "terribly young" girl suffers from a familial curse brought on by Lola, her great-great-great-grandmother who was strangled after driving two lovers crazy. As Maar explains, the curse is that "the women of the line would always have just one daughter, and then die insane a few weeks after the birth of their child" (35). This story is central to the turn to the *niña fatal* because of the curse facing this young girl, which does two things. Firstly, it remits us to the first sinner Eve, arguably a child before her loss of innocence upon eating the forbidden fruit, who disobeyed God-the-father's order, and who was condemned for her disobedience. His curse subjugated her to the will of her husband and pain in childbirth, intimately linking her punishment with her sex. It can also be read allegorically as the curse of the patriarchy for girls and women everywhere: femi(ni)cide. Lolita, who drives the world of men mad and is killed for it, births Lolita, who drives the world of men mad and is killed for it, births Lolita . . . In other words, the cycle of violence by which women are killed by men for the effect they have on men is precisely what Maar terms "curse, demonism, repetition compulsion" (36). In the

several literary allusions at work in *Lolita* including, Edgar Allen Poe's *Annabel Lee* (1849), Herman Melville's *Omoo* (1847), and Prosper Merimee's *Carmen*.

[37] The *pensión*/inn/hotel is also a central motif in Allende's "Niña perversa" and Martel's *La niña Santa* which backdrops Elena and Amalia's fatality while aiding in its maturation.

life world, girl activists are reacting to and combating this "repetition compulsion," a phenomenon I examine in chapter 5. In the realm of fiction, specifically in woman-authored fiction, *niñas fatales* are breaking this curse. In Chacel's novel, *Memorias de Leticia Valle,* Allende's short story, "Niña perversa," and Martel's film *La niña santa*, fatality abounds; however, the *niñas fatales* that protagonize these pieces do not succumb to the violent correction of their "deviant" sex.

Furthermore, the previously mentioned process of orientalization and feminization of Spain seen in *Carmen,* a process which was correspondingly acted onto Latin America via Niña Chole and re-elaborated in Latin America via the figure of Salome, is echoed in the genesis of the 20th century *Lolita*. This cultural circularity demands that this archetype be considered as a cross-cultural, geographically "loose" figure, or as Churchill calls her, a "wayward girl" who not only traverses the globe through the process of cultural exchange but also appears at varied points in time, tied to moments of intense social unease and/or crisis. This is important to this project because it undergirds the transnational component of this investigation and accounts for this archetype's appearance in cultural production at different points in the 20th and 21st centuries, aided by the intercultural flow of literary and artistic materials as well as people across the Atlantic. This project's turn to Spain, Chile, and Argentina reflects the primacy of this archetype's development and dissemination within these cultures and speaks to the absence of critical examination of the *niña fatal*, who is often eclipsed by Lolita's legacy.

My focus on Spain, Chile, and Argentina is additionally rooted in sociopolitical circumstances that produce a series of crises to which the *niña fatal* is both a response and a product. In the 20th century, these countries are marked by the violent overturning of democratic processes in favor of military rule, which recurs to highly patriarchal discourses that enact the processes of subject/other seen in the development of the *femme fatale*. They additionally turn to

the domestic ideal, the *ángel del hogar*, as the model of the "authentic" woman who, by tending to her home, husband, and children, safeguards the values of the nation from the corrosive effect of the other. I allege that it is not a coincidence that female creators from each of these countries employ the *niña fatal* as a tool of unbecoming given the impact of these dictatorships upon the discourses of sex/gender which threaten their role as curators of culture as well as the subjectivation of women and girls as future women. By highlighting the parallel discursive frameworks that are employed by these dictatorships, the socio-cultural and political landscapes that are built upon a series of dichotomizing principles become clearer. This is the environment that births the *niña fatal*, and these are the principles that she blends, blurs, and breaks.

Legitimating Discourse, Dictating Girlhood: The Sociopolitical Origins of the *niña fatal*

The transition from the cultural realm of literary production into the geopolitical world under these dictatorships showcases the conditions which foreground the emergence of the *niña fatal*. In other words, the cultural trajectory that was previously examined suggests the stirrings of her development, while the social and political consequences of the seizure of power by these authoritarian regimes and the highly patriarchal discourses that each employs lay the groundwork for her solidification in the cultural register. Differently from her predecessor, the *niña fatal* sits at the crossroads of the discourses of femininity and age, which allows her to navigate and conflate the characteristics of the fatal woman and the *ángel del hogar*. To understand how she does this, it is important to zoom in on the latter of these, given that she becomes the paradigmatic model of true womanhood in the 19th century and under these 20th-century dictatorships. This solidifies the discursive reification of the separate sphere's ideology, linking the "authentic" female subject to the private sphere and women's role as guardians of morality. The *niña fatal* pulls from, and complicates, two prominent characteristics of the *ángel del hogar*: the configuration of women as

childlike and therefore innocent/ignorant, and their confinement to the domestic sphere situated within the familial matrix. She responds to this model of true womanhood by disintegrating the supremacy of the patriarchal nuclear family through the seduction of the figure of paternal authority, which moreover, takes place within the home. The danger that she poses and the terror she enacts transform the home-as-refuge into a theater of turmoil.

As we have seen, the *femme fatale* responds to the masculine fear of feminine emancipatory potential, synthesizing a series of characteristics that are opposed in the *ángel del hogar*, who does not challenge masculine supremacy but rather submits to it. The *femme fatale* is spatially unrestrained, while the *ángel* is locked firmly into the confines of the domestic sphere. The former's spatial mobility is propelled by her self-serving desires, while the latter surrenders herself to her duty as mother and wife, sacrificing her selfhood for/in the interests of others. Finally, the *femme fatale* operates through sexual excess whereas the *ángel* is characterized by her purity and sexual lack.

This denial of the self along with the *ángel*'s virtuousness is intimately linked with the Virgin Mary, who serves as the archetypal blueprint for the *ángel*'s discursive elaboration. Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar refer to the *femme fatale*/*ángel del hogar* polarity in British literature as the monster/angel construction where, in the case of the *ángel*, "there is a clear line of literary descent from divine Virgin to domestic angel, passing through (among many others) Dante, Milton, and Goethe" (20). The immaculate, devout, and pure construction of the Virgin Mary, mother of Jesus Christ who redeemed believers from the bondage of sin, is a discursive antecedent of the *ángel del hogar* who saves the home and future generations from the worldly corruptions that exist without.[38] Turning to these dictatorships, her representation is taken a step further and

[38] This sin entered the world through Eve's disobedience and Mary in her role as the "New Eve" births and mothers the correction for Eve's original rebellion. Eve becomes the proto *femme fatale* while Mary opposes her as the *ángel del hogar* par excellence.

she functions as the spiritual savior of nations in crisis given that the family becomes the base institution that conditions, controls, and ensures the posterity of these regime's new-old orders.

Given this connection, the *ángel del hogar's* proliferation in the 19th century is better understood as a revitalization of never-wholly dormant discourses of femininity that are characterized as natural. This is clear in Fray Luis de Leon's 1583 marriage manual, *La perfecta casada* which lays the groundwork for the cultural return to this trope in the 19th century. Therein we find that women's *natural* state is one of silence, ignorance, and enclosure in the home:

> Porque, así como la naturaleza . . . hizo á las mujeres para que encerradas guardasen la casa, así las obliga á que cerrasen la boca . . . á la mujer buena y honesta la naturaleza no la hizo para el estudio de las ciencias, ni para los negocios de dificultades, sino para un solo oficio simple y doméstico. (125)

Spanish author María del Pilar Sinués de Marco's 1859 book titled *El ángel del hogar* recalls de Leon's discursive construction of womanhood stemming from the function of mother and wife.[39] De Marco similarly naturalizes the function of women in the home given that they are "a quienes Dios ha impuesto tan sagrado y dulce deber" (30). This treatise, which outlines the sacred duty of women, contributed to the international spread of this trope and the reification of the *ángel del hogar* and was received with acclaim in Latin America.[40]

Nancy LaGreca underscores the transatlantic currents that evidence the spread of this trope to Latin America, specifically highlighting transatlantic literary exchanges. She documents "the

[39] Coventry Patmore's poem, "The Angel in the House" (1854-1856) is often cited as the origin of the expression denoted by its title. To this end, in her 1994 study, *Ambiguous Angels,* Catherine Jagoe details the close and largely interchangeable notion of women in the abstract within Europe and beyond in the late 19th century which sees the *ángel del hogar* trope replicated in works like de Marco's and novelists such as Galdós.

[40] LaGreca comments on the strength of influence that de Marco's publications had on the Spanish-speaking world and cites the Peruvian novelist, Clorinda Matto de Turner as being familiar with de Marco's work given that in *Aves sin nido,* a citation appears from the work of an unnamed "escritora española," presumably de Marco (10-11). Additionally, the spreading influence of de Marco's text is evident in the 6th edition printed in 1881, which includes a literary review from a Colombian newspaper qualifying the publication as an "obra social, de NECESARIA; como obra moral, de INDISPENSABLE; como obra bella, de IMPRESCINDIBLE; como obra filosófica, de INMEJORABLE" (21).

protective bubble of domesticity" that enveloped women and the women writers who resisted engulfment through the act of writing (2). She states that "[t]he importance of the notion of the Angel of the House went beyond the intimate familial unit in Latin America. Print media of the 1800s and early 1900s in the region portrayed women as the vessels of national morality" (11). This is not to undermine the significance of the family as an institution in her construction, but rather to emphasize her link between and source material for the healthy home and the healthy nation.

LaGreca, along with scholars such as Bridget Aldaraca, Catherine Jagoe, and Alda Blanco, has stressed the relationship between the rising popularity of this figure, the spread of bourgeois ideology as the normative framework imposed upon society and its members, and the mounting cultural trepidation in the face of the "new woman" who challenged this ideology of domesticity. They concur that while highly literary, the increase in publications during the 19th century targeting middle-class women, their "hygiene, fashion, beauty regimens, religiosity, and dedication to the family," served as a bridge to bring the *ángel* into material existence (LaGreca 11). The discursive construction of this sanctioned and desired version of femininity was presented as imitable, unlike the *femme fatale,* who was presented as the forbidden antimodel. Nevertheless, despite their integral differences, the *ángel* shares with her opposite the traits of idealization and literary proliferation, and stems largely from the workings of male fantasy. Aldaraca expounds upon this fantasy, which recalls the oedipal conflict stating, "the iconization of woman as an eternally young and virginal mother has much more to do with a nostalgic longing for home, that is, with a return to the relationship between male child and mother, than it does with the relationship between adult men and women in marriage or outside of marriage" (19-20). The turn, or rather return, to the family and women's idealized function within positions the domestic sphere as a refuge guarded

over by the self-abnegating, pure, virtuous *ángel* whose domain contrasts with the chaotic exterior world in which the "home" in the national sense is being radically redefined.

In this way, her 19th-century boom continues into the 20th century and is embraced as the discursive ideal of legitimate femininity put forth by conservative factions seeking to resolve the emerging crises surrounding societal and national identity. In their quest for national legitimacy, the regimes of Franco, Pinochet, and el "Proceso" turn to the idealization of women and their roles as mothers and guardians of the home as a way of quelling the rising tide of feminist initiatives, and to subdue the dangerous and corrupting force of the other. Like the *femme fatale*, the *ángel del hogar* becomes a tool to combat crisis. Yet, unlike her counterpart, her modus operandi relies on an implied passivity where the only appropriate agency she is permitted relates to her childbearing capacity and her duties within the home. Thus, due to the discursive reproduction of the family as a microcosm of the nation, the home and women's role within are integral elements in these dictatorships' approaches to combating crisis. This corruption takes the form of societal diseases caused by the spread of Marxist ideology. The woman who embraces her role as *ángel del hogar* saves both her family and the nation from this threat.

In the case of Spain, Inmaculada Blasco Herranz details the relationship between gender and national identity at the end of the 19th and into the 20th century, stating that, "the role of women and the discourse of domesticity prevailed as a metaphor of the authentic Spanish essence" (107). Not surprisingly, the connection is concomitant with what Robert Newcomb, referring to the Spanish and Portuguese cases, calls a "litany of misfortune" responsible for producing a "consciousness" of crisis that developed in tandem with aspirations of modernity during this time (20). Calamity continues into the period of Monarchic Restoration (1874-1931) as the reconciliatory attempts at assuaging the ills of the past century were instead intensified by the

centralization of power that was marked by a series of disasters. The response by the country's intellectuals, the Regenerationists and the Generation of '98, of which Valle-Inclán formed part, sought to identify the root cause of Spain's decline and decadence of the national failings of the Restoration. The emergence in the early decades of the 20th century of the "new woman," whose budding rights were concretized with the Constitution of 1931 and the legalization of divorce in 1932, did not go unnoticed by conservative factions. They linked the social and cultural decline of turn-of-the-century Spain to the rise of this "new" figure who also became a target of the Franco regime.

The national project under Franco realized in the wake of the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939) declared war on the modernist notions of "progress, secularism, anti-clericalism and the emancipation of female workers" (Blasco Herranz 109) embodied in the constitution and legal reforms achieved under the *Segunda República*. Instead, the authenticity of Spanish women was defined by "their reproductive capacity and the patriotic sense they assigned to it, [and their] religious and moral sentiments emanating from the concept of virtue" (119). The Francoist version of true womanhood returns her to the home, legitimizing her through her body and its functions which perform a duty to the nation and God. Catholicism linked to Spanish nationalism becomes the moralizing principle used to define Spanish identity at the individual and the national level, beginning with the family, and more specifically, with the role of women in the family.

There is a circularity to the discursive strategies elaborated by Franco whereby the family functions as a national allegory, a characteristic which all three dictatorships share ("[l]a nueva España representará a la gran familia nacional" ["Noticias"]), as well as the base institution for social organization and control: "El Estado reconoce a la familia como célula primaria natural y fundamento de la sociedad, y al mismo tiempo como institución moral dotada de derecho

inalienable y superior a toda ley positiva" (*Fuero del Trabajo* Art. XII.3). Matilde Peinado Rodríguez speaks to this control, especially as it relates to the sanctioned model of Spanish-Catholic femininity put forth by the regime, explaining that "se garantiza el encardinamiento de la familia en los principios morales consiguiendo, en última instancia, el control social" (287). This control, its relation to gender, and its link to the National-Catholic ethos, is evident in the establishment of the Sección Femenina (SF).

Founded in 1934 by José Antonio Primo de Rivera, the SF was a social organization, operated by Pilar Primo de Rivera (José's sister), and comprised of women in whom the ideas of obedience, duty, and service to the fatherland were instilled. The growing liberties that were won by women in the few years of the *Segunda República* were stymied. Instead, the agential, voting, transitioning-to-public-sphere woman was returned to the cult of domesticity to reverse the trend of the "new woman" by creating an army of *ángeles del hogar*. The juridical reversion of legal rights of women in the wake of the *Segunda República*'s overthrow stressed "los rasgos fundamentales del sistema patriarcal basado en el predominio natural del varón, la jerarquía y la autoridad, y va a situar a las mujeres en el ámbito doméstico" (Nielfa Cristóbal 121).[41] Operating as an arm of the state, the SF was the chief organization responsible for inculcating women with the goals of the regime, which co-opted their wombs in the name of national regeneration while pathologizing any social progress as anti-feminine and other.

Begoña Barrera's comprehensive study on the SF stresses its organizational and ideological congruence with Franco's government, explaining that its goal was "[l]a creación de una comunidad de mujeres cuyas subjetividades estuvieran eficazmente domesticadas bajo el patrón

[41] According to María Ruiz Franco the "Ley de Jefatura del Estado de 1939; la Ley Constitutiva de las Cortes de 1942; el Fuero de los españoles; la Ley de Referéndum Nacional de 1945 y la Ley de Jefatura de Estado de 1947" (35), are the clearest examples of these reversions.

identitario de la feminidad" (23). This is a key feature in the instrumentalization of the *ángel del hogar* trope, as Aldaraca indicates that it "takes as its starting point the negation of woman's existence as individual" (60). Self-abnegation or the domestication of subjectivity, as Barrera calls it, is the championed ideal of true womanhood and the model of femininity put forth by the SF and developed within the organization's mediatic and educational network.[42] The act of subjecting oneself to another eradicates the potential for self-realization, thus eliminating the need for women to exist as subjects. Additionally, this ideal stressed "antifeminismo, el espíritu de sacrificio y la alegría" (Barrera 240) and continually evoked the negative iteration of this ideal, the countermodel of femininity. This countermodel was a corruption of women's essential nature and applied to the Modern or Republican woman, who were labeled as "masculinizadas, malvadas y marxistas" (236). The delimitation of these anti-qualities reified the legitimacy of the specific vision of womanhood fashioned by the SF which radically opposed these classifications. Like the *femme fatale/ángel del hogar* polarity, by identifying the model and the countermodel, adherence to and deviation from the championed standard becomes easily distinguishable. As such, the discursive limits of sanctioned womanhood were drawn and rested upon the clear articulation of their negative.[43]

In 1940 the SF set its sights on girlhood when they incorporated the girls of the *Frente de Juventudes* into their ranks. The integration of girls was instrumental in the SF's enforcement of the national model of womanhood because by targeting the future women of Spain, they fortified

[42] This message of self-abnegation appears repeatedly throughout the various publications issued by the SF. One such example is from the magazine, *Medina*, which reads: "La vida de toda mujer . . . no es más que un eterno deseo de encontrar a quien someterse. La dependencia voluntaria, la ofrenda de todos los minutos, de todos los deseos y las ilusiones, es el estado más hermoso."

[43] We will see in chapter 2 that Leticia pathologizes the type of femininity embraced by the SF, claiming that the girls at the Carmelites school she is forced to attend are sick with their own infancy and not entirely awake. She blurs the rigidly demarcated boundary between the discourse of femininity institutionally reinforced by the Franco regime, and implemented in practice on the ground by the SF. While Chacel began the novel before the organization's installation, its 1945 release is timely and comes in the wake of the integration of Spanish girls into the SF's fold.

the discursive cycle of "true" womanhood whereby girls were educated in the roles of future mothers and housekeepers. The result of this indoctrination was the homogenization of the standard ideality of femininity in present and future generations of girls and women who were bound by the limitations of this ideality.[44] Anything outside of the standard that was determined by the SF and Franco's regime (Marxism, anti-clerical, anti-nationalist sentiment, feminine emancipation, etc.) was defined as the other and the enemy. This constructed a narrow version of femininity and was rooted in the cult of the nation, the divine, and the domestic and recalled the 19th century's bourgeois obsession with the *ángel del hogar*. As a result, the predetermined destinies of wifedom and motherhood and the processes of domestication which led young girls there offered scant pathways for their subjectivation and broad illustrations of vilification if they strayed from that path.

The influence of the SF and their legitimating strategies of discourse, which promulgated the "cult of true womanhood," extended into Latin America in a form of ideological imperialism under the banner of Hispanism that Isabel Jara Hinojosa claims this was "un eje central de la política exterior franquista hacia Latinoamérica, basado en el supuesto que la España católica era el baluarte de la civilización cristiano-occidental y el puente de ésta hacia Latinoamérica" (234). She identifies this movement as one of the layers of conservative ideology which aided Augusto Pinochet and his regime in legitimating the seizure of power after the 1973 coup. Specifically, through the establishment of the project *Comunidad Hispánica de Naciones*, the geographic borders between the nations gave way to those that were more ideological in nature: "[las] fronteras estaban definidas por la concepción nacional-católica, la identidad común y la cooperación técnica,

[44] The text is a primary vehicle for the elaboration and delivery of this version of womanhood that was employed by the SF in their publications directed at girls. The children's magazine *Bazar* (1947-1970) contained sections on sewing, fashion, and learning how to paint, and included a section titled "Lo que una niña debe hacer" which outlined behaviors that "tenía que seguir o evitar una niña en distintas situaciones. Venía a ser una *moderna* urbanidad" (Martínez Cuesta 237).

y también por sus exclusiones, ya que se definía como, anticomunista, antiliberal y anti-imperialista" (Tessada, "Fronteras" 2). Here, this common model of Hispanic culture is defined by what it is as much as what it is not, evidencing the preeminence of this discursive strategy pulling from patriarchal ideology and built upon a series of hierarchical dichotomies. This dichotomization extends into the conception of womanhood as the Pinochet regime, like Franco's, advocated for a return to conservative ideals wherein women were converted into *ángeles del hogar* whose duty was to the health of the home, which reflected the health of the nation.

The strategies of homogenization of Franco's dictatorship yields a universal vision of culture or *hispanidad* among countries united in a common history, religion, and cause.[45] According to the Delegación Nacional de la Sección Femenina, "La Hispanidad no es un mito, sino una realidad histórica . . . Nació con el descubrimiento de España y Portugal, pues estos no crearon colonias, sino se prolongaron a sí mismos" (65). This "prolongation" is initiated in 1948 by the *Coros y Danzas* of the SF, which travels to Argentina and Brazil, as a propaganda tool for Franco's New Spain. The performative aspect of the youth organizations from Spain seeps into the Chilean *Secretaría Nacional de la Juventud* and is on display during the various gatherings at Chacarrillas following the initial celebration in 1975.[46] The influence of Hispanism continues and in 1949, the *Coros y Danzas* reaches Chile. The *Círculos Culturales Femeninos Hispanoamericanos*, which Vanessa Tessada describes as the arms of the SF in the exterior, begin a scholarship program for elite girls and women in Latin America to travel to Spain to study in SF

[45] This surfaces in the *Declaración de Principios de la Junta de Gobierno Militar de Chile* (1974) which decrees that any society adhering to Marxists ideology should be rejected "dado su carácter totalitario y anulador de la persona humana, todo lo cual contradice *nuestra tradición cristiana e hispánica*" (emphasis added).

[46] The Gremialist movement under the influence of Hispanism and the guidance of Franco admirer and staunch Catholic, Jaime Guzmán, set up the *Secretaría Nacional de la Juventud* (SNJ) in October of 1973, one month after the coup. Yanko González states that the SNJ "impone una política de adoctrinamiento palingenésico y fidelización juvenil para reproducirse, logrando 'encarnarse' en nuevas subjetividades e identidades generacionales leales al régimen" (102). This palingenetic indoctrination is clear in the youth gathering atop of Chacarillas de Santiago on the 10th of July of 1975. There, in a ritual act of obeisance, thousands of Chile's youths congregated to celebrate the 77 young soldiers that had sacrificed themselves during the Sierra Campaign in the War of the Pacific (1882).

centers (Tessada "Fronteras" 6). This intervention occurs materially with the exchange happening across the Atlantic with individuals and institutions founded on the preservation and perseverance of Hispanism. It also occurs ideologically in its reliance on discourse and the reification of the traditional models of femininity posited as natural while providing "un discurso legitimador de la intervención militar" (Tessada "La Secretaría" 63).

With Pinochet's regime, we return to the essentialism which naturalizes women's place in the domestic sphere through her biological capacity for childbearing. In the Chilean case, Pinochet's dictatorship positions woman as "guardiana de los valores esenciales de la nación" who, through motherhood, births and educates the nation's future generations in these essential values which she safeguards (Power 541). Thus, via institutional mechanisms, albeit to a lesser degree than with Franco's regime, both women and children are targeted through the familial matrix. This is reflected in the "Declaración de Principios," the foundational document of the dictatorship which outlines the key ideological and historical principles of the regime:

> En la familia, la mujer se realza en toda la grandeza de su misión, que la convierte en la roca espiritual de la Patria. De ella sale también la juventud, que hoy más que nunca debe incorporar su generosidad e idealismo a la tarea de Chile. El coraje que mujeres y jóvenes demostraron en los últimos años, como baluartes del movimiento cívico que culminará con el pronunciamiento militar del 11 de septiembre, debe ahora convertirse en fibra patriótica para afrontar el duro sacrificio que nos espera por delante, y en fuerza creadora para transformar en realidad una honda esperanza nacional.[47]

[47] The *Declaración de Principios* is attributed to Guzman who is instrumental in the redaction of the Military Junta's ideological stance. For a literary reading of the *Declaration* see Vidal, Hernán. "La Declaración de Principios de la Junta militar chilena como sistema literario: la lucha antifascista y el cuerpo humano." *The Discourse of Power. Culture, Hegemony and The Authoritarian State in Latin America*, edited by N. Larsen, Institute for the Study of Ideologies and Literature, 1983, pp. 43-66.

The mission of motherhood and women's discursive positioning as the spiritual cornerstone of the homeland enabled the Pinochet regime to carve out a space for them in the regenerative project of the nation which sought to "transform reality." This transformation was grounded in the eradication of the "Marxist cancer" embodied in Allende's government and reincorporated women into the traditional role of mother, the *ángel del hogar*, to stymie the genesis of Marxist ideology at the source of life itself. This strategy and the language of its implementation echo those that are employed by the SF during Franco's dictatorship. Yet, this echo is more than a subtle reverberation. Rather, it is grounded in the material connection of the SF's influence in the Americas via Hispanism, which evidences the circulatory nature of discourse and power relations.

In this way, Hispanism creates an aperture wherein the texts of femininity promoted by the Franco regime maintain their validity over time and across distance, reaching the widest audience possible. This is also the case for institutions that reinforce the ideological positions endorsed by Hispanism. In the Chilean case, this is clear with the establishment of the *Secretaría Nacional de la Mujer* (SNM) and *CEMA (Centro de Madres)*, modeled after the SF. Tessada explains the SNM's objectives, stating that they "pasaban por difundir los valores patrios y familiares y ayudar a las mujeres a comprender la importancia de su misión dentro de la familia y la sociedad" ("La Secretaría" 68). Originally established in 1972 during Allende's presidency, the SNM was a civic training organization that was eventually incorporated into the dictatorship with Pinochet's wife, Lucía Hiriart, heading the organization along with the CEMA. Despite being less institutionally mobilized than the SF, they share with their Spanish counterpart the function of acting as regulatory centers of sanctioned gender ideology while also serving as propaganda centers that ensured the acceptance of Pinochet's operative ideologies. Patricia Graf details the function of the SNM, calling it "an ideologic propaganda tool. . . [which] was intended to generate legitimacy for

the military regime and to propagate Pinochet's vision of the 'patriarchal family' as the ideal order" (4). This ideal order, like the Franco regime, created a double dictatorship: patriarchal domination in the home under the rule of the father's law and at the level of the state under repressive social policies and coercive violence that were used to keep them intact (Valdés 8).

To this end, both the Franco and Pinochet dictatorships were pervasive as they engaged in top-down and bottom-up strategies of control, which enabled the general populace to engage in the statist policies of policing and surveilling while being surveilled and policed. In the case of women, this resulted in the inevitable contradiction of activism beyond the private sphere, advocating for women's return to the private sphere. This is the case with Chile's *Poder Feminino* (PF), a group of upper-class, white women who radically opposed Allende's socialist government while supporting the coup. They began their anti-Allende activities "con el fin de recuperar los valores perdidos, la vida de hogar y la tranquilidad; apagar las tensiones que destruyen las familias" (Power 194). The essentialist view of women emanating from the elite women of the PF, who proclaimed to be defenders of *all* Chilean women, coupled with institutions such as the SNM, bifurcated womanhood. On the one hand, some women were operating outside of tradition, searching for "una nueva definición de la mujer," while others "realizaban sus actividades con el fin de asegurar su retorno tranquillo a sus funciones y prácticas femeninas tradicionales" (Power 203). The distinction between these two womanhoods, one new/aberrant and the other old/authentic, recalls the processes of othering seen in the elaboration of the fatal woman trope. This was a strategy utilized by both regimes to establish ideological frameworks that responded to the "chaos" of Marxism by providing a discursive antidote that cleaved the Spanish and Chilean national subjects into either/or. Thus, the institutional tools that actuated conservative discourses in Spain, resuscitating the *ángel del hogar* trope, were similarly reproduced in Chile. This was

achieved through the circulatory relations of power and discourse, which recurred to Hispanism to reify traditional knowledge structures that inform discourse formation. Thus, Hispanism is weaponized as a discursive tool to fight against Marxism which in turn, enabled the neoliberal agenda of the Chilean regime to proceed unhindered by social disturbances.

Pinochet's reliance on Hispanism as a legitimizing discourse appears similarly in Argentina, with the military junta's violent rise to power. Responsible for the military coup deposing Isabel Peron's de facto presidency, these military leaders initiated the self-proclaimed National Reorganization Process ("Proceso") on March 24th, 1976, and referred to Argentina as firmly inscribed in the tradition of the "mundo occidental." Jorge Rafael Videla, the de facto dictator from the coup until 1981, describes Argentina as the inheritor of this occidental culture through historic cultural ties: "heredó de España la cultura occidental y nunca renunció esa condición" (Videla qtd. in Filc 45).[48] Argentina's link with Western Civilization, which was inherited through its colonial ties with Spain is a bridge reinforcing the country's connection to Catholicism, which saturates the moralizing discourse that was embraced and reproduced by the military junta:

> consideramos que es un delito grave atentar contra el estilo de vida occidental y cristiano queriéndolo cambiar por otro que nos es ajeno, y en este tipo de lucha no solamente es considerado como agresor el que agrede a través de la bomba, del disparo o del secuestro, sino también aquel que en el plano de las ideas quiera cambiar nuestro sistema de vida a través de ideas que son justamente subversivas; es decir subvierten valores. (Videla qtd. in Avellaneda 162-163)

[48] This is reinforced in the *Formación Cívica* course instituted by the Ministry of Culture and Education which contains a section titled "valoración de la herencia cultural hispanoamericana" (3).

This "plano de ideas" is a primary target of the State's terrorist activities, which is built upon a "plan antisubversivo" designed to destroy a corrosive enemy that had penetrated Argentina, corrupting its families, and introducing ideologies that were eating away at the conservative Christian morality of old.[49] On the institutional front, the "Proceso" relied on a "nuevo orden educativo" which targeted the Nation's youth and the family as the "célula básica de la sociedad"—note the similarity here to the language that was used by the Franco regime—to police and enforce its doctrines (*Manual Estrada* 252). The family as an organizational unit assisted the police state via indoctrination and surveillance tactics, a characteristic of all three dictatorships.

Carolina Kaufmann and Delfina Doval analyze the educational policies and texts instituted by the military junta which they claim attempted to "cohesionar a los sujetos en torno a valores universales y perennes, propios de sociedades occidentales y cristianas" (204). This pattern of homogenization seen with the Franco and Pinochet regimes repeats here and targets Argentine youth to diffuse and eternalize a value set considered by the junta to be universal and natural. This is evident in the "Formación Cívica" course named by Decree No. 1259 on July 8th, 1976, which was added to the public school curriculum.[50] Organized around several basic principles that target the individual within the social matrix, Kaufmann and Doval stress the presence of the moralizing discourse in the text and the enmeshment between "argentinidad", "tradicionales morales" and "valores cristianos." This enmeshment allowed the regime to mold subjects "en la conformación de hábitos, conductas, comportamientos y valores religiosos acordes con un proyecto político que debía evitar el surgimiento del conflicto y el disenso" (219-220). In this way, the military junta

[49] Nevertheless, as Marcos Novaro points out, what followed the realization of this plan was both "vago y genérico. Y ello no se resolvería sino que se agravaría con el tiempo. Sus metas, en particular en el terreno político institucional y en el económico, eran tan amplias y ambiciosas como ambiguas y poco consistentes" (60). This is a salient difference between the three regimes.
[50] This course is updated and changed names in July of 1978 to *Formación Moral y Cívica.*

engaged existing organizations to continue its ideological war and produce docile subjects who would adhere to its dictates both now and in the future.

The junta similarly relied on the family, both materially and allegorically, as a site of legitimation. Judith Filc highlights the dictatorship's discursive framework, which attempted to create a "gran familia Argentina" to which only the good, "authentic" Argentines belonged.[51] She states, "solo los 'buenos' hijos-ciudadanos, aquellos en los que podían hallarse los valores 'occidentales y cristianos' que conformaban la 'esencia del ser nacional', eran verdaderamente argentinos. El único capaz de identificar a sus 'verdaderos hijos' era, por supuesto, el Estado-padre" (46-47). In this schema, the state, which has discursively constructed itself as the "father" of the National family, is the only site of knowledge of and power over the discourse that delimits who is "authentically" Argentine. This is significant as it reinforces the junta's exercise of power as natural, given its discursive elaboration of and connection to the family as natural. It additionally deprives individuals of access to total discursive literacy. In other words, the threat of exclusion from this Argentine family as dictated by the dictatorship is constant.

Filc goes on to explain that this "modelo de la nación-familia seguía el modelo tradicional católico. En la tradición católica, el padre es el jefe de la familia y la madre es tanto la que nutre y cría como la guardiana de la tradición" (47). Argentina is like authoritarian Spain and Chile in that women were split into a double subject responsible for preserving the values of the nation as "madres de la República" (Massera 54-55) and on the base-level for enforcing this value set within

[51] The human rights group, Las Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo founded in 1977, has resisted and continues to resist the violence of this regime on multiple fronts. One such act of resistance is visible in their co-optation of the vocabulary of the family which was used by the dictatorship. Las Abuelas' demand for the identification of stolen children and their denunciation of the culture of impunity in the aftermath of the dictatorship has challenged the institutional response at the state level and the collective amnesia on the public and personal fronts. Their insistence on speaking/seeking is fundamental in the evolution of women's protest in Latin America which confounds the public/private divide.

the family.[52] Thus, being a "good" woman in Argentina meant preserving the sanctity and morality of the family unit in the home from the invasion of subversive ideologies which loomed as a constant threat to the sanctity of the home/nation. This protected society at large from the "shadowy, evil, plotting enemy." The metaphor of the family would become the "reserva fundamental" for the dictatorship.

The imagined Argentine Family that the "Proceso" sought to establish, much like that of Franco and Pinochet, was built on the perverse and immoral tactics of disappearing, torture, abduction, and murder, which obliterated Argentine families. Marguerite Feitlowitz investigates the discursive practices of the regime which she describes as "brutal, sadistic, and rapacious, . . . intensely verbal" (20). The violence of the dictatorship was justified at its conclusion through the implementation of a rhetorical strategy that stressed the humanitarianism of these child abductions. Carla Villalta indicates that individuals justifying these abductions did so through "un discurso salvacionista que consideraba a los niños que eran apropiados como 'seres desprotegidos', 'abandonados' o en 'situación de peligro'" (83). This "exculpatory strategy" legitimized the state-sanctioned dismantling of families through the abduction of children who were painted as innocent victims of unfit, dangerous parents. These children were considered at risk of damnation and were "saved" through their placement with families that aligned with the official ideals of the dictatorship. The authoritarian agenda to purify the country was steeped in religious rhetoric and was aided by the complicity of the Catholic Church, much like the case in Franco's Spain.

Gustavo Morello clarifies that Antisecular Catholics in Argentina resisted the Church's transformation following Vatican II and instead sought to "rebuild a Catholic fortress" whose

[52] Concerning the individual, Michel Foucault comments on power and the split subject explaining that "focused the development of knowledge of man around two roles: one, globalizing and quantitative, concerning the population; the other, analytical, concerning the individual" ("Subject and Power" 784). The subject that emerges from this exercise in power is a double subject who is at once integrated in a macro milieu as well as individuated into micro localities. This power which acts upon and constitutes the subject as global and localized sets discourse as its object and in so doing renders this double subject.

model was "General Francisco Franco's Spain and an idealized medieval order" (12). The dictatorship associated antisecular Catholicism with Argentine "authenticity." This reinforced the tradition of binarism whereby the military junta justified their position as good, Catholic Argentines who were carrying out a divine mission against an enemy that subverted the "authentic" way of existing (134). Videla's recurring to religious terminology to support his violent tactics assisted in formulating a resolute and authoritarian response to the national question in Argentina. This provides a clear and absolute response to the woman question.[53]

This response is similar in the case of each of the three dictatorships. Women are to return to the home to produce and safeguard the next generation of individuals who will carry the ideological torch of these regimes. This is the space where social uniformity is established and where unsanctioned discourses are prevented from taking root. Consequently, the role of women as mothers and wives is foundational to the successful articulation and longevity of the operative ideologies of these regimes. Their reliance on Catholicism, especially in the Argentine and Spanish case, whose exaltation of the Virgin Mary serves as the literary and cultural antecedent of the *ángel del hogar*, strengthens the case for the trope's return within the cultural register and provides these regimes with a blueprint for their discursive model of legitimate womanhood. Any articulation outside of the confines of this model was viewed as a dangerous corruption of women's true and essential nature. In many instances, this deviant woman was, like the *femme fatale*, "corrected" to restore the desired order of the regime. In other cases, however, she was required to abandon her home and homeland to escape the looming threat that accompanied her inability to conform, as is the case with Chacel and Allende.

[53] As we will see in chapter 4, by eradicating paternal control, Amalia can formulate "a direct link to God" thus transforming the rigid precepts of the religious institution ("Vocational Education"). Using desire, her body, and her own reading of the principles of good and evil, she breeches the "Catholic fortress", perverting the historically perverse reification of morality.

Yet, where does the *niña fatal* fit into this picture of rigidly defined expectations for women? The *niña fatal* is, more than anything else, ambivalent and her ambivalent characterization entangles the discourses of female deviancy and childhood innocence, allowing her to blur the boundaries undergirding the binary discourses which sustain patriarchal logic. Like the *ángel del hogar,* she operates within the domestic realm. Additionally, given the private sphere as the setting, family is a chief protagonist in the *niña fatal's* unfolding. Nevertheless, she does not uphold the moral integrity of the family unit. Instead, she turns away from purity to sexual proclivity in her pursuit of men who are representative of the father's stand-in, exploiting the terrain paved by the cult of domesticity in service to herself and her self's development. Moreover, there is a discursive overlap between age and femininity in the *femme fatale/ángel del hogar* polarity. Of the two, the *ángel del hogar's* innocence, purity, and submission to the masculine head of household are connected to the discourses which frame the modern conceptions of childhood. The *niña fatal* preys on this connection, generating discursive confusion because she remains a child in age but acts within the register of illegitimate womanhood—illegitimate because of her sexual appetite, which is antithetical to the discourses that characterize her as a child. In this way, she is a potent agent that responds to and symbolically unravels patriarchal discursive frameworks.

Therefore, as the cultural inheritors of this legacy of dictatorship, the effect of Rosa Chacel's, Isabel Allende's, and Lucrecia Martel's turn to the *niña fatal* symbolically undermines patriarchal power. This is a necessary turn in the symbolic overthrow of the father because the *femme fatale's* archetypal determinacy traditionally ends in the reification of the patriarchy, although as I signaled previously, this is changing in her contemporary representations. While she helps us to understand, as Rebecca Stott explains, "why cultures need to set up types as threateningly 'Other'" (xiii), she is less useful as a tool of symbolic de(con)struction because she

is ultimately destroyed. The *niña fatal*, on the other hand, not only resists destruction but enacts it through her ambivalent positioning within traditional discursive frameworks by employing features of both the *femme fatale* and the *ángel del hogar*. Her age, which situates her as a victim, thwarts the violent correction that we see enacted onto the *femme fatale*. Additionally, because of the enmeshment of the father/lover, the force that should punish or regulate the *niña fatal* has already been rendered impotent. Order cannot be restored because she has undermined its source: the father. This illegibility or contradiction present in the *niña fatal* results from the overlap of age and femininity.

Conclusions

By examining the cultural and sociopolitical foundations from which the *niña fatal* springs, the circulatory nature and impact of discourse are rendered evident. This circularity is propelled by Hispanism and extends to the products and effects of culture whereby the constitution of subject/other, seen in the elaboration of the *femme fatale*, is repurposed to violent ends under these dictatorships. Central to their claim to legitimacy, these regimes recur to a version of womanhood embodied in the *ángel del hogar* trope, which relegates women to the private sphere. Even though these dictatorships only partially overlapped in chronological terms, this version of womanhood is shared by each. Correspondingly, despite the passage of time between the dates of publication of the pieces I examine, the *niña fatal* serves as an antidote to this version of womanhood, despite not having reached womanhood, and the regimes of control which require adherence to this model. Through the *niña fatal*, Chacel, Allende, and Martel play with the dismantling of patriarchal overlay while amplifying the anxiety surrounding the developing subjectivity and sexuality in young girls. Leticia's, Elena's, and Amalia's emergent selfhood lays bare the ambiguous nature of childhood and femininity, which is discursively constructed and regulated by patriarchal

institutions. With the *niña fatal*, the patriarchal institution that is on the chopping block is the nuclear patriarchal family.

In the life world, these dictatorships recurred to violence as a function of social control, to keep masculine supremacy and the ideology of the patriarchy intact. In the fictional realm, *niñas fatales* symbolically destabilize this ideology, represented by failing fathers, and call into question our response as readers to the perpetuation of the operating logic which positions these girls as perverse and in need of correction. This is the trap she lays for us. Traditional responses to her disorder would see the restitution of the father to control and surveil the appropriate upbringing of these girls. This assumes, however, that the girls are the problem, and the father is the remedy to her deviance, which moves us into the dangerous terrain of victim-blaming, and leaves us right where we started. Yet, the *niña fatal* actively invites, through her sex/gender, and resists, through her age, the patriarchal habit of victim-blaming. It is here where her fatality extends beyond the confines of the home and instead sets its sights on patriarchal collapse and the potentials which exist beyond this system of ordering which imprisons and regulates subject formation in girls and our conventional responses to their actions.

Chacel's, Allende's, and Martel's exploration of this collapse dialogues with the situations from which they write. Each speaks to the sins of the father and explores alternative solutions to the legislative collapse of the fatherland (*patria*) through the development of this alternative and subversive female subjectivity. In the case of Rosa Chacel and Isabel Allende, they write from a place of geopolitical orphanhood after fleeing from the dictatorships of Franco and Pinochet. In the absence of the (father)land and the father's law, their writing exposes the potential that patriarchal collapse implies. Lucrecia Martel echoes this collapse, however, unlike Chacel and Allende, she films this crisis from the inside. Her new aesthetic, characterized by an innovative

cinematic language, speaks to the social and economic ruin in Argentina brought on by the state-sanctioned terrorism implemented during the "Proceso" and the neoliberal policies of the 1990s, which drove the country to economic disaster. Spain's authoritarian rule under Franco, Chile's brutal dictatorship under Pinochet, and Argentina's revolving door of failed leadership resulting from the "Proceso," provide the sociocultural backdrop from which these women create.

The operative discursive similarities of these regimes, bolstered by Hispanism and the circulatory and imitable quality of discourse, are echoed in the strategies of undoing presented in the figure of the *niña fatal*. Chacel, Allende, and Martel each inherit a legacy of violent correction stemming from the ideological cooptation of dictatorships, which stress the importance of the patriarchal nuclear family, God, and civic responsibility. This legacy is a shared experience between the three, while the *niña fatal* is a shared response. By recurring to the tradition of fatal femininity, these creators turn the metaphoric tables on patriarchy's legacy and elaborate an uncomfortable constitution of bodies-in-formation that, rather than restoring, dismantles and disorders. I am hesitant, however, to consider the individual processes of destruction underway in each piece as political allegories specific to Spain, Chile, and Argentina, and their repressive dictatorships. Nevertheless, there is a domino effect of conjecture that seems to arise from the ashes of the father and his decadent sovereignty. If the family, and particularly the father, are the base unit upon and through which the patriarchal state enacts its mandates, then it follows that through the father's and the nuclear patriarchal family's destruction, the patriarchal state is also rendered impotent.

Chapter 2: Before there was Lolita, there was Leticia

If I had to choose one word to succinctly encapsulate the tone of Rosa Chacel's novel *Memorias de Leticia Valle* that word would be ambiguity.[54] Its enigmatic quality stems from its autobiographical construction, the psychological meanderings of the novel's protagonist, Leticia, her developing subjectivity, and sexuality, as well as its who-is-to-blame final seduction. Speaking to this ambiguity, Jesús Peréz-Magallón explains that in the novel, "no hay nada explícito, que todo aparece rodeado de ambigüedades y ausencias, de palabras y silencios, de hechos y vacíos . . . El texto, pues, quiere ser perpetuación de una identidad que es precisamente inestable e infijable" (150-151). The genesis of this unfixed identity can be traced to Leticia's age. At the start of the novel, we learn that she is a day away from her 12th birthday. As a child entering adolescence, it comes as no surprise that Leticia's sense of self is in the nascent stages of formation. And yet, the narrative voice that transcribes this self-in-development via the text is one of astute maturity. Additionally, Leticia is a girl. However, she neither embraces nor enacts the "appropriate" behavior of girl children during the early decades of the 20th century. These contradictions undergird Leticia's construction of herself as a subject. By refusing emphasized femininity and the category of child, she rejects the restrictive demarcations of the patriarchal system as applied to gender and age.[55] This is possible because of the *paterfamilias'* waning power, which opens the door for Leticia's seduction and later destruction of the stand-in father, don Daniel. With the fall of the father(s), the metaphorical destruction of the name of the father as the reigning metaphor for psychic constitution is realized. Leticia's process of auto-signification is ultimately grounded

[54] Abbreviated as *Memorias* in all mentions to follow.

[55] The idea of subject in this chapter is an embodied and acting agent. Valerie Walkerdine maintains that "the subject position is not fixed… [It] is produced at the intersection of history, biography and the body" (*Challenging Subjects* 9). I use Subjectivity in the Foucauldian sense, as the process by which one calls them self into being. With *Memorias,* genre is evocative because it displays the statements Leticia makes about herself and the activities that prompt these statements, thus providing a vision of her process of subjectivation.

in ambivalence, which produces a hybrid subjectivity, as opposed to a homologous one, presaging the feminist subjectivities of the third and fourth waves of feminism at the century's close.[56]

The convergence of fiction and history as the inspiration for the novel highlights the intentional disruption of the supremacy of opposing pairs that similarly occurs within. Rosa Chacel indicates two sources that stimulated the novel's creation. The first is 'Stavrogin's confession' in a censored chapter of Dostoevsky's *The Devils*, which relates the rape of Matryosha, an eleven-year-old girl who later hangs herself. Secondly, in recalling a historic scandal in a town in the province of Valladolid where a schoolteacher seduces a student, Chacel decides to author a book where a young girl seduces an older man. In a reversal of Matryosha's fate, it is the man who "hangs" (Antonio de Villena 42). *Memorias'* plot stems from Chacel's contact with these stories while the novel's characters, specifically Leticia, bear more autobiographical traces.[57] Chacel, like Leticia, begins composing the novel during her first year of exile from the Franco regime and its violent dismantling of the intellectual and social progress achieved during the *Segunda República*. Chacel's exile was motivated by her Republican ties and the impending end of the Spanish Civil War, while Leticia's exile is a product of an illicit relationship between her and her tutor. Writing from Switzerland, she recounts her memories of the months following her family's move to Simancas, a town in the municipality of Valladolid. She is placed first in the hands of doña Luisa for music lessons and later under the tutelage of don Daniel, doña Luisa's husband. Their relationship culminates in the "unspeakable," after which her father confronts don Daniel,

[56] Roberta Johnson and Mary Nash elaborate upon the discursive turn in Spain in the 1920s and 1930s from the "ángel del hogar" trope to the "new (modern) woman." In the case of Leticia-as-protagonist, the modernity she *embodies* skips several generations and instead aligns with the child-as-agent, or the "can-do" girl of the late 20th and early 21st century. In this way, Chacel (and Leticia), are truly avantgarde, despite the former's exclusion from that literary group during her lifetime.

[57] For more on the topic, see Glenn, Kathleen M. "Fiction and Autobiography in Rosa Chacel's *Memorias de Leticia Valle*." *Letras penisulares 4* (1991): 285-94; Johnson (1996); and Maier (1994).

demanding his exile. He sends Leticia abroad to live with his brother's family. The slight pop that she hears near the novel's end suggests don Daniel's suicide.

With her father's impotence, and the stand-in father's death, the novel deconstructs the supremacy of the patriarchal family unit and the established norms of femininity enforced by the Franco regime and state programs like the Sección Femenina. Roberta Johnson's assertion that "[f]rom the outset, gender was inextricably linked to a developing nationalism in Spain" (*Gender and Nation* 14) is reinforced by Blasco Herranz, who tells us that in the case of Francoist Spain, "[g]ender was a crucial element in the enterprise of recovering the supposedly lost national identity . . . The idea was to recover women and make them serviceable in reconstructing the nation, based on a reference subject with attributes grounded in obedience, service, self-denial and sacrifice for a dilapidated homeland" (117). *Memorias*' response to, and overt rejection of this reference subject, instead posits a girl who "negotiates a precarious position between finely chiseled masculine and feminine stereotypes" (Johnson, *Gender and Nation* 62). This negotiation puts Leticia in between the material and intellectual realms as her developing body and mind drive her seduction of don Daniel. Through this activated sexual conquest, she challenges patriarchy's cultural mandate of feminine temperament and status, while exiting the confines of childhood via the sexual rite of passage.[58] This perpetuates a breakdown in the family, and the father's dominance over it, establishing her as a *niña fatal* who actively subverts the institutions that would keep her frozen as a child forever.[59]

[58] Regarding temperament, role, and status through which the authority of sexual politics under the patriarchy are enacted, Kate Millet explains, "As to status, a pervasive assent to the prejudice of male superiority guarantees superior status in the male, inferior in the female. The first item, temperament, involves the formation of human personality along stereotyped lines of sex category ('masculine' and 'feminine'), based on the needs and values of the dominant group and dictated by what its members cherish in themselves and find convenient in subordinates" (26). When referring to temperament/role/status in this chapter, I am making use of Millet's definitions.

[59] Here I am referring to the historic conflation of the discourses of child and women. Regarding the Spanish case, and the idea of women as children or "eternas menores" under the Franco regime, see Ruiz Franco (2007).

Like the other *niñas fatales* of this investigation, Leticia is a marginal creature who occupies the borderlands between femininity and masculinity, girl and woman, victim and victimizer. Comparable to the *femme fatale*, she "is always Other. She is always outside, either literally . . . or metaphorically" (Stott 37). In occupying the frontier of the beyond, Leticia rejects the traditional configurations of the self that are determined by the categories of gender and age. This, in turn, complicates the victim/victimizer divide. Through her refutation of these categories which would see her subjugated, she is instead, as Paul Smith terms it, a "contestatory 'subject'" who threatens patriarchy's operating logic by refusing domination (138). This refusal subverts patriarchy's mandate for stable and discrete categories that are exemplified in the proscribed gender roles of Nationalist ideology. In destabilizing these binary distinctions, Leticia exposes the precarity of patriarchy's mechanisms for social ordering namely through the father and the nuclear patriarchal family.

Concerning her own family, her absent mother perverts the "authentic" woman standard, which prompts her father's desire for an early death.[60] Elaborating on the role of family within the patriarchal framework, Kate Millet explains, "[t]he chief contribution of the family in patriarchy is the socialization of the young (largely through the example and admonition of their parents) into patriarchal ideology's prescribed attitudes" (35). Leticia's family is a failure by patriarchy's standards and contributes to the breakdown in the systems of power that would serve to regulate her behavior and inform her normative socialization. This breakdown is also the source of liberation for the realization of her potential as a subject.

[60] The increase of post-war Spanish novels featuring absent mothers is directly connected to the erasure of rights and personhood of women under the Franco regime, according to Sandra Schumm. She states, "the plethora of motherless protagonists beginning in 1945 suggests that the removal of the mother figure is connected to Franco's policies that essentially made women invisible, both legally (by eliminating their rights) and personally (by influencing them to hide their true feelings)" (19). Began in 1938 and finally published in 1954, *Memorias* reflects the absent-mother-effect seen in interior women's literature during this time.

Tertium Quid: The Girl from Valladolid

Unlike Leticia, whose orphanhood provides an aperture for this liberation, Rosa Chacel's development was nurtured by both her mother and father, who oversaw her education from an early age. Inmaculada de la Fuente highlights their involvement in Chacel's intellectual formation, explaining that they improvised theatrical works for her and read from Spanish literary classics while she lay bedridden during spells of health issues as a child in their house in Valladolid (328). These same health problems would excuse her from attending school with any regularity, a fact which did not hinder her entry into the *Escuela de Artes y Oficios* at the age of 11, after her family's move to Madrid. As an only child (until the age of 16) in a family of intellectually inclined parents, Chacel's upbringing differed from the girls of her time, whose intellectual growth was limited by their own families, class standing, or social customs relating to gender and more specifically, "the woman question" (Johnson, *Gender and Nation* 212).

Chacel's relationship to "the woman question" is cited by Shirley Mangini as equivocal and bears directly on the content of her novels. In the case of *Memorias,* Mangini teases out Chacel's confusing stance regarding gender, stating, "[t]he novel illustrates how [Leticia] is unable to choose between the two adults, the same ambiguity we observe in Chacel's rejection of the 'feminization' of women while admiring women's maternal capacities" ("Women" 131). Chacel's rejection of women's "feminization" coincides with her refutation of conclusions reached by George Simmel regarding the inferiority of women's minds.[61] She points to "religious and social prejudice" as roadblocks for the intellectual advancement of women, but, as Mangini makes clear, Chacel never connects the dots back to the preservers of this prejudice, and occasionally partakes

[61] Roberta Johnson traces Chacel's detestation of the feminization of women to Simmel and his configuration of gender difference through binaries (*Gender and Nation* 214, "Spanish Feminist Thought" 44). See his 1923 article, "Lo masculino y lo femenino" featured in *Revista de Occidente.*

in this prejudice as well ("Women" 132).[62] Additionally, Chacel takes a strong stance against strategies that feminism embraced to combat the historical absence of women from cultural production.[63] In an interview with Mariano Aguirre, the author comments on the consideration of her work as "feminine writing." She responds, "¡Nunca! ¡Jamás! Hacer literatura específicamente femenina es la mayor estupidez que puede hacer un ser humano" ("Entrevista a Rosa Chacel" 5). When considered alongside critical approximations of her novels and essays, Chacel's denunciation of feminine literature is ironic given that her oeuvre can be and often is regarded as "feminine writing" (Davies 155).

Chacel's approach to carving out a place for herself in a culture that was slow to make space for females outside of the private sphere, is central, according to Lori Beth Pattison, to Chacel's conceived gender ideology. Pattison cites Teresa de Lauretis' theories on the representation of gender and the alternation between hegemonic discourses and the beyond. She claims that "Chacel's life reflects 'the tension of contradiction, multiplicity, and heteronomy,' and crosses traditional gender barriers" given that her professional life often impacted upon her role as a mother, separating her often from her children (6-7). She goes a step further to indicate that her intellectual relationship with her mentor, José Ortega y Gasset, was also one of 'contradiction, multiplicity, and heteronomy' owing to their gender differences and their theoretical approaches to art (16). Chacel's complicated relationship with Ortega is inflected in many of her novels and essays and is worth mentioning briefly given its influence on *Memorias.* Reyes Lázaro alludes to

[62] Lázaro combs through the contradictions of Chacel's stance on femininity comparing the author's statements about her writing against her writing. One such example appears in a statement she made regarding one of the story's that stimulated *Memorias* creation: "yo estaba allí en casa de mis tíos--el marido de mi tía era el maestro--, y llegaron esas fiestas veraniegas y fuimos a otros pueblos. El maestro de uno de ellos era un tipo encantador, un hombre guapo, con barba roja, atractivo, arrollador .... Bueno, al año siguiente, cuando vuelvo yo, pregunto por él y me dicen: ¡huy!, no, aquello termino muy mal, aquel señor sedujo a una niña y termino con un escándalo espantoso y tal .... Entonces yo dije, antes de nada, dije: bueno, aquel señor sedujo a la niña; *pero la niña se dejaría seducir enseguida, porque el señor era encantador*, ¿verdad? (riéndose)" (27; emphasis added).

[63] Chacel instead advocates for a type of integration of women into "man's" culture: "La cultura está hecha por los hombres y las que quieran entrar, que entren" ("Entrevista con Rosa Chacel" 10). Her opinions reflect early feminist formulations on the sex/gender system which codify masculine supremacy as more or less neutral and the site of creative genesis.

this influence when she states that the novel "casi un psicoanálisis de la relación discipular con Ortega" (211).

Elizabeth Scarlet comments on the paternal role that Ortega played in the lives of his "disciples," claiming that his interaction "with each writer in a way [was] analogous to the archetype of father and son . . . When considering Ortega and Rosa Chacel, the bond becomes father-daughter, and the factor of sexual difference enters the picture" ("Rosa Chacel" 21).[64] Teresa Bordons and Susan Kirkpatrick similarly consider this conflict a generational conflict regarding Chacel's "Oedipal relation to the father" (286). The affective ambivalence between the two, "admiration and anger, respect and rebelliousness," was polarized by the conflict between the personal and professional nature of their relationship (286). They explain, "In his position as father, embodiment of the law, he could support a daughter's emotional life, but could not grant her the same support for her professional and creative life" (287). Thus, the sexual difference which marks her as different from her contemporaries extends into her relationship with her mentor, creating another site of ambivalence for Chacel concerning her sex/gender and its impact on her writing.

Despite the complex nature of Ortega and Chacel's relationship, his mentorship stimulates an important creative turn in the author which she contrasts with Ortega's contemporaries: "Ser discípulo de Unamuno significaba unamunizar, ser discípulo de Valle Inclán ser valleinclanesco; ser discípulo de Ortega significa ser uno mismo" ("Ortega a distancia"). This impulse to "ser uno mismo" paved the way for Chacel's preoccupation with subjectivity, which would become a prevailing concern in many of her novels. Johnson signals the interconnectedness of gender and subjectivity together with the historical context from which they emerged, stating: "In a reversal

[64] Scarlet analyzes Chacel's novel *Estación. Ida y Vuelta* (1930), where she claims that "'the father's law,' in the form of masculine mastery over the narrative, is rejected and denied, in favor of permeable character boundaries" ("Rosa Chacel" 30). These permeable boundaries are tied up in what she calls "gender-crossing."

of women's radical objectification as visual spectacle, women authors of the vanguard era cultivated more subjective forms of writing in order to reassert their position as subjects" (*Gender and Nation* 216). The way Chacel carries this out extends to her probing the bounds of the Chacelian self in her literary creations, an act that was, ironically, at odds with the "modernist goal of distanced objectivity" that Ortega championed (Mangini 135).

To this end, much of her work is imbued with autobiographical tones, which returns us to Lázaro's claim that *Memorias* is a psychoanalytic blueprint for understanding the relationship between Chacel and Ortega.[65] Their father-daughter bond, steeped in intellectualism, is symbolically reproduced in the novel in the relationship between don Daniel and Leticia. While don Daniel es not, strictly speaking, Ortega, where the overlap happens between mentor and protagonist "es en el carácter contradictorio y en la ambivalencia de ambas frente al maestro y también frente a las figuras femeninas" (169-170). Additionally, Lázaro's claim situates us within the Lacanian theory that informs this chapter. Lacan embraces Freud's Oedipus Complex as the symbolic system that initiates culture's construction. His turn to language as the ontological impetus of thought of which the subject is an effect is crucial in understanding Leticia's development as a subject. She informs us on the first page of the novel, "Yo no sabía decir que todo lo mío era inaudito. Pero procuraba dártelo a entender" (*Memorias* 7). Her inability to summon the language to explain the lack of language to describe herself reveals her resistance to interpellation within patriarchal culture, which is documented in the memoir via language. Through the act of writing, we witness her struggle with the preeminence of determined signifiers and her experiment with meaning and its possible existence beyond the limits of language.

[65] Inmaculada de la Fuente refers to the confluence of elements from the childhood of Chacel which appear in the novel as "huellas biográficas," seen specifically in the Spanish setting of Valladolid, Chacel's absence from school (except her brief stint with the Carmelites), her precocious memory and voracious appetite for reading (347).

Johnson elaborates upon the similarities between Chacel and Leticia, stating that the latter is like the former in that "instead of coming of age in and being socialized into the values of the surrounding Spanish culture, [she] struggles through a miasmically bipolarized social sexuality to listen to her own body and consciousness and find her own place essentially outside of social norms" (*Gender and Nation* 223). The boundaries of the external world and the boundaries the external world imposes are symbolically deconstructed in Chacel's writing through the destruction of this polarity. In this way, Chacel's fiction opens the door of possibilities for the girl child and her self-defined subjectivation in a time when doors were rapidly shutting for girls and women. She executes this by derailing the conservative authority of the name-of-the-father, which materializes through Leticia in language and sexual difference.

The subversion of his name and corresponding law is achieved in the novel due to several factors. The nuclear patriarchal family responsible for acting out the Oedipal drama does not exist for Leticia. Instead, she grows up surrounded by women, none of whom represents the real or the symbolic mother. Her father's departure to Africa during her youth fosters an imaginative turn that plays out later in the novel in Leticia's seduction of don Daniel. Both his and her mother's absence arguably frustrate the phallic phase of development, and instead of lack, Leticia resides in the *excess* of difference. This is not, however, the difference that establishes the law of the signifier, but rather a difference derived from the difference of said difference, hence the excess. This suggests a more plural signification than that proposed by the Lacanian metaphor. In other words, aboard Lacan's proverbial train, Leticia sits in the middle, her head swiveling about, able to see and read both the Ladies and the Gentlemen's signs. This is evident in her symbolic positioning in-between both the masculine and the feminine, e.g., the girls at the Carmelites schools whom she views as sick in their infancy (femininity), and her professor's consideration of her as "un

muchacho." Don Daniel and doña Luisa's presence in the novel is a reinstatement of the Oedipal triad, which adheres to the Oedipal script as proposed by Lacan and Freud: The law of the father intervenes and cuts off the child's (Leticia) desire for the mother (doña Luisa). Yet, Leticia's ambiguous gender positioning provides contradictory readings of this metaphor: she is no Electra as she does not kill doña Luisa to avenge don Daniel. Instead, like the axiomatic son, she wields a performative sword against the stand-in father. His fate is sealed when the symbolic seduction passes into the real, ending with the war of the fathers. It is not doña Luisa who is defeated at the stories close, but rather the fathers whose sins are exposed, and in the case of don Daniel, punished. Leticia's punishment for her transgression is exile, which has its own rewards.

Given the autobiographical overlay and Chacel's claims that Leticia is a "retrato" of herself, the novel's form echoes the undermining of categories happening within and resulting from the collapse between the voices of the author, narrator, and protagonist.[66] It toes the line between fictionalized memoir, and autobiographical novel while pulling from the conventions of seduction literature, which is highly masculinized in the Spanish tradition via the don Juan archetype, as well as feminine diary-writing. The ambiguity of form partakes in the destabilization of language whereby fiction and truth, fantasy and reality lose their unitary foothold and instead coalesce into murky signification. Thus, Chacel's fictionalizing of the memoir, or her "autobiographing" of the novel, has comparable results to Leticia's destabilization of discrete forms: the signifier detaches itself from its referent, defusing meaning and subverting its prescribed homogeneity. In other words, there are parallels between the ambiguity of genre and gender presentation. One of the principal sites of this diffusion that is present in both the life of Chacel and in the novel is that of the culturally determined gender differences.

[66] Maier indicates that Chacel addressed this question on two occasions, claiming that, while the novel was not autobiographical, "it is a portrait of me", and later that the novel "is my own, it is memories" ("Translator's Afterword" 175).

Leticia's gender blending as well as her manifest oscillation between doña Luisa and don Daniel contributes to the breakdown of the law of the father. However, this breakdown goes beyond the metaphorical overthrowing and is explicit. The father's decadence as well as Leticia's ability to navigate her own "permeable character boundaries" bears on her ability to define herself as a subject, and as Katherine Murphy indicates, it is don Daniel's death that allows Leticia to enter a self-defined subjectivity ("Monstrosity" 169). This process unfolds firstly in Leticia's home with her father, who opts out of his head-of-household duties. He fails at raising a daughter who passively accepts the prescriptions of culture and the father's mandates. Instead, Leticia discovers rebellion as a way of gaining access to that which she is being denied. Johnson explains that Leticia, like Chacel, "is the embodiment of woman's entrance into culture via her rebellion against it; she eschews the polarized existences of Daniel and Luisa that allegorize the Cartesian tension between mind and body" (*Gender and Nation* 215). The space between these polarized categories is the space from which Leticia orders her world. Her age becomes instrumental to her navigating these categories because she is both a subject in formation and a subject that confounds formation. As a girl who is not yet a woman, she exacerbates the tension between hierarchical binaries, and particularly the man/woman polarity, by destabilizing the division further: man/girl. This division recalls the intellectual relationship between Chacel and her mentor.

Despite their complex relationship, critics have often cited the positive impact Ortega had on Chacel's literary career.[67] Pattison calls his influence one of "empowerment" (15), while Maier alleges that "Ortega himself belonged to Chacel's 'past' as her mentor or 'father' and would thus be subject to whatever innovation she might devise" ("Siting" 87). This innovation surfaces in her writing through the challenges she poses to the boundaries and demarcations that are maintained

[67] Shirley Mangini González has commented extensively on this complexity in her publication *Las modernas de Madrid: las grandes intelectuales españolas de la vanguardia*. 1. ed. Barcelona: Ediciones Península, 2001.

by cultural institutions. What is rendered from this challenge is a sort of tertium quid: an undefined new, derivative of two already knowns. The flavor of ambiguity that undergirds Chacel's life and writing is traceable to this intermediate component and is a characteristic she and Leticia share.

Breaking the Cartesian Divide: I Think and Feel, Therefore I Am

With regards to fathers, Johnson indicates that Leticia's father is symbolic of "Spain's moribund glory" through his involvement in the disastrous war effort in Morocco at the turn of the century, while she says that don Daniel is symbolic of the "Spanish masculinist tradition" (*Gender and Nation* 216). Yet, it is Leticia's seduction of don Daniel that paves the way for her literal and metaphorical coming of age.[68] His profession as the town archivist links him "inextricably to the historiographical discourse of the Nationalists during the Civil War and into the postwar period" and situates him as a potential participant in the revisionist history imposed by Nationalists onto Spain (Lawless 525). Leticia's embrace of traditionally masculine subject positions, however, subverts this discourse through her usurpation of the keeper and "maker" of history. The sexual encounter between them results in don Daniel's later suicide and overthrows patriarchy's reign on the narrative of purity reserved for girls. His actions further the "moral" decay in the novel through the implication of suicide itself, a mortal sin in the eyes of the Church. Coupled with don Daniel's end-of-life decision, the depravity of his relationship with Leticia indicates the failure of both the surrogate and original *paterfamilias*. This failure signals the decadence of the *pater patriea*, given that don Daniel, the keeper of history, is destroyed. The official and universal version of history advanced by the Franco regime effectively rewrote or altogether erased the story of Spanish

[68] Olga Bezhanova's book *Growing Up in an Inhospitable World: Female Bildungsroman in Spain* considers the novel to be a coming-of-age tale. She expands on the genre and claims that "[t]he narrative space of a Spanish female *Bildungsroman* becomes a universe where the female protagonist can mold reality to her will and, in this way, compensate for the lack of power she experiences in the world" (5). Luis Antonio de Villena similarly places the novel in this generic classification (42).

republicans, the anti-Spain, which mirrors the silencing that has plagued the history of women and women's histories. Don Daniel's downfall suggests the deterioration of the official version of history that he safeguards, specifically the exaltation of the legacy of the Empire and foundational myths. In its ruins, Leticia emerges, writing her own version of events. The politics governing how history "is written and whose history is written" (Lawless 513) is a fundamental element in the novel and begins with the primacy of form: Leticia is the protagonist and author of her own story.

This genre challenges the boundaries of fiction and reality in that it is, ostensibly, a nonfiction narrative based on memories. Compared to Lolita, the *niña fatal* par excellence, Leticia is a subject who authors her story through the act of remembering, whereas Dolores Haze remains an object in the eyes of the narrator Humbert Humbert, who constructs her from without. This is a fundamental distinction. Leticia writes and exists as a body that inscribes meaning while Lolita is written, her body inscribed into the text as an object. Leticia's activation is intimately linked to her developing subjectivity, given that she rewrites the rules for how she is read, both at the generic level and within the novel itself. And while both books deal with the theme of man/girl relationships, critical appraisals of *Memorias* continually reference Leticia's and don Daniel's relationship in relation to her developing self. Murphy points to the "pre-eminence [of] female subjectivity" in Chacel's work, which was relegated to the periphery while Modernist and avant-garde authors in Spain became the standard along with their male subjects ("Monstrosity" 170). At a time when Ortegian "distanced objectivity" reigned supreme amongst these male subjects, Leticia, her physical body, and her precocious mind team up to elaborate subjectivity and its development as central features of the novel. Armed with sensorial prowess and intellectual might, Leticia's body weakens the cartesian privilege that is conferred onto the mind by detailing the effects of the external world and its characters on her developing interior. In her analysis of the

importance of the senses at work in the novel, Johnson explains that "[t]he perceiving body is a source of knowledge that facilitates the freedom necessary to have an effect on the world. . . Leticia's senses (her physical body) tell the hidden story that she refuses to narrate overtly. . . Coming into knowledge of oneself and the world is at the center of *Memorias de Leticia Valle*" (*Gender and Nation* 219-220). Nevertheless, despite the preeminence of senses as a portal for knowing, the tension in the novel between the body and the mind derives from her age. Leticia seems to possess the mental maturity of an adult but is incarnate in the body of an 11-year-old girl. Thus, the supremacy of the mind yields protagonism to the budding primacy of the senses. Her journey into a self-fashioned subjectivity navigates this tension between old and young, mind and body, through her relationship with don Daniel. His body emerges in the text as the inscribed while Leticia's hovers effervescently on the surface.

Leticia's body and sensorial perception enter the text through the haptic medium of skin and Leticia's contact with her mother as a child. While Leticia never entirely clarifies her mother's absence, she comments on a singular sensorial recollection of her which she identifies as love (Pérez-Magallón 143):

> [l]a verdad es que nunca pude recordar cómo era mi madre, pero recuerdo que yo estaba con ella en la cama, debía ser en el verano, y yo me despertaba y sentía que la piel de mi cara estaba enteramente pegada a su brazo, y la palma de mi mano pegada a su pecho . . . yo siempre digo en mi fondo: el amor era aquello. (Chacel *Memorias* 10-11)

Given that the novel centers on the act of remembering, an intellectual exercise that demonstrates Leticia's precocity, it is significant that she clings to this memory of her mother, which references the body and the act of touching as opposed to the rational workings of the mind. Johnson informs us that for Leticia, "[t]he senses, not the intellect (while one of her best assets), are her door to the

world . . . to embrace, to touch, is to know" ("'Self'-Consciousness" 63). This is demonstrated when she shares a long embrace with doña Luisa after a visit she pays to her cousin Adriana. Leticia says of this embrace that, "[a]quel abrazo, aquel beso más largo que lo acostumbrado, me ayudaron a conocerla, aunque su conocimiento siguiera siéndome inexpresable. Toda la noche pensé en ello y pensé que yo no merecía aquella ternura inmensa" (Chacel *Memorias* 100). It is the contact between doña Luisa's skin and Leticia's that allows her to know her, although that knowledge evades expression, unlike the surety of her mother's touch which she definitively knows as love. Correspondingly, corporeal communion is connected to her developing sexuality because it is through touching that she comes into knowing. Fueled by the memory of physical intimacy, this contact triggers her quest for knowledge as experienced by both the mind and the body. This presages the desire to know as experienced by her body, which she utilizes in her conquest of don Daniel.

Unlike her mother, who surfaces through these memories of tactility, Leticia's father appears in the text when she intellectualizes his decision to travel to Africa. Leticia relates the comments of the adults around her who claim that her father's decision was motivated by a desire to "hacerse matar por los moros" (11). This is an early sign in the novel of the father's decadence as he chooses a fate abroad that will bring him closer to death instead of ensuring the upbringing of his daughter at home.[69] In the wake of his departure, Leticia remains in the custody of her aunt Aurelia, the silent sister of her absent father. She speaks of this solitary time, saying, "vivíamos puede decirse que solas, pues el ama y las criadas quedaban perdidas en la parte interior de la casa, y no venía a vernos casi nadie" (12). The figures that appear in her childhood view are

[69] The conflict alluded to in this instance is the Rif War which was held in low regard by the Spanish public and contributed to the destabilization of the Spanish government. Sebastian Balfour points to this conflict as the stage the ideological enactment of a type of colonialism which would be later turned on Spain herself (316).

predominantly female: her grandmother, aunts, her professor Margarita Velayos, friends of her aunt Aurelia, "dos hermanas solteras ya muy mayores" (15), and the infantile students at the Carmelite school which she attends briefly. Despite this preponderance of women who surround Leticia at an early age, she nevertheless rejects a feminine temperament and instead blurs its rigid, socially-constructed configurations. In describing the essentializing prowess of patriarchy where it concerns the categories of masculine and feminine, Toril Moi explains: "[t]o posit all women as necessarily feminine . . . enables the patriarchal powers to define, not femininity but all women as marginal to the symbolic order and to society" (127). Consequently, Leticia is subject to several layers of marginality. Firstly, as female, she is marginal in the symbolic order. Secondly, by rejecting traditional femininity, she is marginalized further. This marginalization carries with it the same ambiguity or tension that Leticia exhibits given that it is a source of her agency, but also marks her as deviant and potentiates the possibility of oppression for her rebellion.

An Unbecoming Girl – (Un)becoming Girl

Her rejection of traditional femininity appears at the start of the novel when she is sent to the Carmelites school. She pathologizes the reasons needed for attending: "[m]e mandaban allí a curarme de algo: a que aprendiese a ser niña, decían" (18). Upon seeing "lo que eran las chicas" (Chacel *Memorias* 18), her response is one of shock: "me produjeron horror, horror y asco. Eran ellas las que estaban enfermas de su niñez; unas parecía que no podían nada; todo lo que intentaban les quedaba corto, como si no estuviesen enteramente despiertas" (18). Leticia's rejection of childhood is intimately tied to a rejection of femininity itself. The illness that she perceives in these children is juxtaposed against the rehabilitative motivations for her attending the school: to learn how to be a girl, which will cure her of *something*. This cure, for "algo" related to femininity that Leticia appears to lack, is a new and unbearable sickness that evokes her horror and disgust. We

see this disgust again in the novel when Leticia is ruminating on what she perceives to be her stupidity after her first lesson with don Daniel. She states, "[e]ntonces sentí asco de ser mujer que me quitó la fe hasta para llorar . . . en aquel despacho por donde jamás habría pasado nada semejante a mí…discípulos sí, sin duda, pero chicos; bárbaros si se quiere, pero no esto, esto que era yo" (50-51). The revulsion that she feels in the face of her femaleness motivates the exploration of her gendered subjectivity, whose traditional prescriptions she considers an affliction. Debra Faszer-McMahon claims that *Memorias* is, in fact, a discursive undertaking that examines and criticizes the underdevelopment of women, culturally and intellectually. She points out that Leticia is "highly critical of the women in her world who act in accordance with a discourse that suggests that they are children" (18). Leticia's observation of her classmates as "sick" in their infancy and her later regard for doña Luisa as childlike, echoes the historic conflation of the categories of woman and child. This produces horror in Leticia, for she knows that she is expected to be like them, but she understands that she is quite unlike them.

Murphy traces Leticia's rejection of the traditionally feminine characteristics and behavior observed in her classmates to the absence of her mother, claiming that she "lacks a feminine role model who can teach her the expected ideals of gender roles and female decorum, as well as sexuality" ("Monstrosity" 164). Murphy's suggestion recalls one of the traps that the *niña fatal* sets for her audience that awakens the return to patriarchal discourses in us. In other words, if Leticia had a *normal* patriarchal nuclear family with its authoritative head and its *ángel del hogar* mother to condition her correct gendered socialization, she would be a *normal* girl. The disruption of the nuclear patriarchal family, then, is a stepping stone for the *niña fatal's* budding fatality, which allows her to perpetuate the disruption.

Despite the absence of Leticia's mother, she was not without a feminine role model as her Aunt Aurelia serves as an early model of femininity, albeit undesirable for Leticia who consistently comments on her aunt's inability to communicate with everyone except for Margarita.[70] She is also husbandless and childless and therefore provides a model for sterility rather than sexuality. When Leticia's father returns from the war, he is a broken man dependent on drink and a father only in name. Aurelia shifts her attention from Leticia to him, abandoning the supervisory role she formerly played in her life. Leticia remarks,

> [u]na vez en Simancas, mi padre ya no necesitó ningún cuidado especial y, sin embargo, la atención que mi tía me prestaba antes de que él viniera no volvió a recomenzar . . . En los días que mi padre estaba grave aún empecé a hacerlo yo sola porque mi tía no se separaba de su lado un momento, y después ni ella volvió a ayudarme ni yo fui a pedírselo. Desde ese momento empecé a encontrar el cambio en muchas cosas. No puedo decir que estuviese descuidada, pero empecé a tener una libertad que antes no había tenido (Chacel *Memorias* 22-23).

The move to Simancas ends Aurelia's role as caretaker of Leticia and coincides with the growing freedom that the lack of supervision offers. While the move is initially prompted by her father's wish for isolation and enclosure, Leticia embraces this newly found freedom, in which she is, ironically, more alone given her father's return. She loses Aurelia's protection, and that of her father which has never fully materialized. The lack of paternal authority opens the door further for complicating the divisions between femininity and masculinity in Leticia's developing subjectivity because she is not bound to the home. Still, Aurelia ironically shows concern at Leticia's apparent

[70] Elena Grau-Lleveria refers to the cast of female characters in the novel as a "museum" of feminine prototypes. Thus, it might be more appropriate to consider Aurelia a *type* of femininity available to Leticia. Making use of this metaphor, the placard outside of Aurelia's display case would read "Spinster".

shift from disobedience to docility, caused by the move to the country. After consulting with her father, it is decided that the local schoolteacher will instruct Leticia daily.[71]

Leticia's opinion of this teacher is predicated on the comparison to her previous tutor, Margarita Velayos, a woman who "había viajado hacia los cuatro puntos cardinales y que era muy machuna" (26). An enigmatic character with an ambiguous relationship with Leticia's father, Margarita serves as a model of masculine femininity that Leticia wishes to imitate (26). Acting as a foil to generic configurations, Margarita is described as both virginal and virile: "al mismo tiempo que hacía aquel ademán varonil, su cabeza tomaba una actitud tan delicada como la de una virgen" (126). While Leticia, by and large, rejects the models of expressed femininity offered up in the panoply of women who surround her, she embraces the model Margarita provides as an "androgynous intellectual female" (Murphy, "Unspeakable Relations" 56). Blurring the distinction between the idealized femininity of the *ángel del hogar* (virginal), and marginalized femininity (virile) embodied in the figure of the fatal woman, Margarita and Leticia enter the category of "masculine" by favoring qualities and behaviors reserved for the male sex. This seeps into Margarita's treatment of Leticia: "siempre me había tratado como se trata a un muchacho" (Chacel *Memorias* 123). Yet, Margarita herself does not shed femininity entirely but rather resides in the no man's land between the opposing poles of gender performativity. Because she does not adhere to a stable gender category, the process of her signification is problematic. The difference between Leticia and Margarita, however, aside from their age, is that while Leticia is also enigmatic, she provides a language of resignification through the act of writing herself.[72]

[71] Leticia's initial experience with the tutor is lackluster. She states, "[e]ntonces la pobre señora se esforzaba en explicarme, y se daba cuenta ella misma de que sus explicaciones me parecían tontas" (Chacel 27). Nevertheless, Leticia changes her tune after learning of her mastery in embroidery, communicating her deference for expertise, regardless of the discipline.

[72] This has led some critics, Murphy and Lázaro, to classify Leticia as androgynous, while others, Scarlet, consider her relationship with doña Luisa and her cousin Adriana to have sapphic overtones. While she never speaks to attraction in terms of gender, she does suggest a fascination with aptitude and skill.

If Margarita is one of the more influential adults in Leticia's life, her cousin Adriana is the most influential girl to appear in Leticia's memories. When she arrives in Simancas with her father and mother for a surprise visit, Leticia describes her cousin as "la chica más bonita que yo había visto. Tenía solo unos meses más que yo y era un poco más alta y más gruesa, pero tan aniñada que daban ganas de llevarla en brazos" (87). Leticia's return to the infantilization of her peers is echoed in this description of Adriana; however, as they continue to interact during the visit, her cousin's capacity to know and perform quickly wins Leticia over. As the two lay in bed one night, Adriana shares with Leticia her artistic skill set, acquired under the direction of private tutors. She regales her with an account of the end-of-the-year festivities in her school and asks Leticia to hum a tune so she can perform for her. However, Leticia knows nothing of Mozart, nor a single *minuetto* (91). Instead, sensing Leticia's lack of knowledge, Adriana proposes to dance *la pavana*, playing the roles of lady and marques. Leticia narrates in minute detail Adriana's performance and her alternation between gender roles. She comments, "La bailaba los dos porque se sustituían con tal ligereza que la imagen del uno no se borraba antes de que el otro estuviese presente" (91). Pattison claims that it is in her role as a spectator to this portrayal that Leticia is alerted to "the idea that gender roles are largely learned or acted out, rather than biological givens or essences" (130). Having already realized her difference from her peers, Pattinson's analysis reinforces Leticia's growing awareness of the permutability and performativity of gender differences. Whether it is this, her "corporeal attraction" to other females, or her appreciation for Adriana's artistic virtue, Leticia decides that her cousin must repeat the performance for doña Luisa (Fraszer-McMahon 25). And while the encore does not have the same effect as the original, Adriana's impact on Leticia, specifically the power of performance, is a lesson that she will later weaponize.

Doña Luisa's relationship with Leticia is one of the more complex in the novel. Through her compliance and maintenance of the polarity between the feminine-domestic-passive and the masculine-intellectual-active, doña Luisa is the literary manifestation of the *ángel del hogar* trope that was embraced by the Francoist regime and its state-sponsored institutions like the SF (Murphy, "Unspeakable Relations" 51). The fulfillment of this mandate is evident from her first encounter with Leticia. After being encouraged to seek out music lessons, Leticia arrives at the traditional household and discovers the paradigmatic maternal figure of doña Luisa with her children in tow.[73] Her function as a mother is reinforced in the preliminary tour doña Luisa gives Leticia of the house. In the piano room where the two will work on music, they stand in silence as the children fuss about. Leticia remarks that, "yo conseguí que el pequeño pasase de los brazos de su madre a los míos, y así ella pudo estirarse un poco: se esponjó el vestido, logró libertar su falda de las manos del otro; parecía una chica pequeña" (Chacel *Memorias* 35). Her categorization of doña Luisa as a "little girl" comes after we learn of Leticia's disdain for the "sick" children of the Carmelite school, who she considers incapable because they are not entirely "awake". This comparison, following the rejection of the category of child for herself, highlights Leticia's initial perceptions of doña Luisa. Nevertheless, Leticia assists with the household chores and consistently remarks on her admiration for doña Luisa's mastery of musical theory, a fact which undoubtedly contributes to her desire to study music at the close of the novel. So, while there is an underlying tension between the two as to who is the child and who is the adult, there is also a bond of complicity wherein each tries to encourage and empower the talents of the other.

[73] The referral to doña Luisa for music lessons comes from Leticia's storytelling prowess. She is chosen to quell the fears of a class full of children caught at school during a thunderstorm by telling a story. She eventually moves from storytelling to singing, after which, she is encouraged to seek out music lessons.

The complicity present in their relationship is ruptured by don Daniel, who stokes a competitiveness in his relationship with Leticia and with his wife regarding Leticia. This is evident in don Daniel's and Leticia's initial encounter. After concluding music lessons one evening, doña Luisa and several girls gather in the doorway of the house. The town doctor arrives with don Daniel, who observes the scene, stretches out his hand, and grabs a fistful of Leticia's hair saying, "[e]sta es la que tiene que darte más guerra; con estos pelos, buena debe ser" (37). Initiated by don Daniel, this violent exchange casts Leticia as the bellicose party in don Daniel's eyes and presages the budding confrontation between the two.[74] Don Daniel continues to hold a single ringlet of Leticia's hair in between his fingers as if he were feeling "la calidad de una tela" (38). Reinforcing the importance of tactility and suggesting the corporeal possession, don Daniel rubs Leticia's hair, which informs him of her warlike nature and provides the erotic uncurrent that characterizes their battle. Pérez-Magallón points to the undeniable erotic element of women's hair in the novel (148). This incident brings that eroticism to the fore through touching and initiates Leticia's developing fantasy featuring don Daniel. In the archetypal symbolism of the fatal woman, her hair as both alluring and deadly is a central motif in her representation. Yet, the fatal woman of the fin-de-siècle, differing from modern formulations of the *niña fatal*, acts through her "desire for autonomy" (Hedgecock 209), ensnaring her unsuspecting male victims. The *niña fatal*, on the other hand, is awakened in terms of her sexuality and is invited to use her wiles on the man who has engaged her. This is an important distinction: her fatality is not initially active, but rather activated, which we will see again in the case of *La niña santa.* Her activation is crucial because it paves the way for her subjective realization by transcending the category of child. Yet, indicative of the trap set by the *niña fatal*, this transcendence is disconcerting because it stimulates an agency,

[74] For more on the belligerent nature of Leticia and don Daniel's courtship see Katherine Murphy (2010) and Geraldine Lawless (2016).

which is more in line with conceptions of adulthood and thus belies the victimhood which attaches itself to the child in patriarchal discourse. Regarding Leticia, it is the caressing of her hair that serves as the point of departure for her girlhood fantasy featuring don Daniel, which extricates doña Luisa from the surrogate familial triad.

Leticia foreshadows doña Luisa's removal, explaining that she finds her "bajo aquella luz cruda, por estar aun la parra sin hojas, con un espejo en la mano y unas pinzas; estaba rebuscando media docena de canas que le salían en las sienes. Nada más verme, me dijo: '—Oye, no vuelvas a llamarme doña Luisa, que no soy tan vieja.' (Chacel *Memorias* 79). Doña Luisa's grey hairs and her mandate to be called Luisa, combined with Leticia's estimation of doña Luisa as childlike, signal the contradiction between her aging appearance and her childlike bearing. This exchange makes clear the reversal of roles that has been underway since entering don Daniel's tutelage, which is vocalized when doña Luisa says to Leticia, "—Podría bien ser tu madre," and Leticia replies, "—Pues, a veces, me parece que por dentro podría yo ser la suya" (80). This is a motif that we will see with *La niña santa*, which hints at the circularity of the mother/daughter relationship wherein the girl positions herself as forward-looking towards adulthood and the woman looks back to the past and her history as a girl. With Leticia, her assertion of mental maturity over doña Luisa and the juxtaposition of doña Luisa's grey hairs against the alluring hair of Leticia foreshadows the usurpation that will take place after doña Luisa is rendered immobile due to a broken leg. This heightens doña Luisa's infantilization, given that her limited mobility is exacerbated by her physical disability. Additionally, her imposed passivity recalls the infantilizing of women during the Franco regime and speaks to the loss of subjectivity they experienced, which rendered them childlike. Leticia's comment suggests a maturity that corresponds to her blooming subjectivity, uninhibited by the sociocultural yokes which kept women eternally childlike. It similarly reveals

internal contradictions at work in the novel: Leticia, while a child, considers herself an adult, whereas Luisa is an adult that is considered a child.

Before this usurpation takes place, both wife and husband engage in a tug-of-war over Leticia. Murphy terms this war a "power-struggle . . . for 'possession' of the protagonist" ("Unspeakable Relations" 57). Leticia's desire to escape a future that would see her confined to the house of the father (Aunt Aurelia), or consigned to the roles of wife/mother (doña Luisa), in tandem with her developing fantasy featuring don Daniel, prompts her to choose the *despacho*, the site of her lesson with don Daniel, over domesticity. In this room, he cultivates her talents, while also assisting in the cultivation of his demise as he teaches Leticia the very tools that she uses against him. Through the traditionally male gaze and the male voice, which would otherwise position Leticia as an object to the masculine subject, she inverts masculine dominion by partaking in the discursive construction of meaning, by inserting herself as a subject who gazes and writes. Thus, she who is read becomes the reader, the girl upon which meaning is written becomes the writer, and the seduced becomes the seducer. Murphy claims that this "power-struggle" and seduction "destroys the protagonist's relationship with a surrogate maternal figure, Luisa" ("Unspeakable Relations" 65). The maternal protection that doña Luisa offers, inherently limited by paternal authority, appears throughout the novel as she repeatedly attempts to insert herself into the intellectual sphere or to bring Leticia back under her influence. Leticia remarks, "aunque me instalase en el despacho con toda formalidad, ella vendría cada cinco minutos a proponerme una cosa" (Chacel *Memorias* 59). These continual interruptions lead to her unease at doña Luisa's presence in the space, which arises both from the fear that doña Luisa will realize that she is no longer interested "por sus cosas" (59) and from don Daniel's reaction to these interruptions. Leticia details one such encounter stating, "le hacía comprender su inoportunidad sin ningún miramiento.

Él le contestaba bruscamente cuando entraba a preguntar algo, le lanzaba una mirada furibunda cada vez que abría la puerta" (59). The *despacho* then, becomes a space in which doña Luisa, the paradigmatic model of traditional femininity, is not welcome, underscoring Leticia's ambiguity given that there are no spaces to which she is denied entry, masculine or feminine. This spatial mobility is a primary feature of the *niña fatal* and her predecessor who move in between spaces at will. While the *despacho* is a closed and crowded space, it represents freedom from the confines of the spaces that are associated with her sex.

With her growing distaste for being female and the prospects this portends, don Daniel becomes the source and target of Leticia's desires as he intervenes as the newly established law, cutting Leticia off from her desire for doña Luisa. Catherine Clément explains that "[m]others take care of the bodies, fathers intervene as law" (50). This assertion is important in understanding the relationship that ensues between the three. Leticia imitates the physical closeness with doña Luisa that she recalls in the memory of her mother (Murphy 165). Thus, she enters as a replica of the mother figure in the familial triad, whose closeness to Leticia is epidermal, much like her original mother. Gathered around the table with libations flowing on Christmas evening, Leticia, after having consumed some wine and feeling its effects, lays her head down on doña Luisa's hand while she stares at don Daniel: "[c]ontemplándole aún, apoyé mi mejilla en la mano de doña Luisa, que aún retenía, y seguí largo rato echada sobre ella, no sé si dormida o no. Al menos, no luché más por comprender, cerré los ojos y seguí acariciando dentro de mi cabeza todas aquellas cosas queridas. Así conseguí sentirme un momento superior a mí misma" (Chacel *Memorias* 73). The image of the skin of Leticia's face glued to her mother's arm repeats here, as does the primacy of the senses over understanding. This takes place through Leticia's contact with female bodies, specifically maternal bodies. Nevertheless, don Daniel supplants doña Luisa's care of the body.

After Leticia sees a young girl throwing a litter of puppies into the river to drown, she arrives at the archivist's house greatly shaken. Doña Luisa attempts to provide the unsettled Leticia with a glass of water, which don Daniel reprimands. He takes control of the situation by seizing control of the care of Leticia, giving her rum, and taking her to the *despacho* so she may sleep. He shuts out the maternal influence of doña Luisa, allowing him to take charge of Leticia's body, as well as her mind, without his wife's intervention. Nevertheless, it is within this masculine space, which is the setting for multiple seductions, that Leticia begins the process of taking control over the power of the space through acts of seduction which she has reappropriated.

Through the acts of looking and telling, Leticia develops the tools to achieve her own subjective realization. The trajectory of destruction that is initiated by her embrace of these roles, sets its sight on the conventional systems of patriarchal organization, and the individuals that uphold these systems. The reversal of roles is evident from the outset, and in their initial encounter in the *despacho* don Daniel tells Leticia, "Parece que eres tú la que me está examinando a mí" (47). His assessment of her as the one in control within the domain and space of the male makes evident the transposition of power occurring in the novel. We see this happen again after the puppy episode. Don Daniel lays Leticia on the couch of the *despacho* and goes to the door from which "se volvió a mirarme, se quedó un rato mirándome, apoyado en el quicio . . . Era como si él estuviese viendo dentro de mis ojos el horror de lo que yo había visto. Parecía que él también estaba mirando algo monstruoso, algo que le inspirase un terror fuera de lo natural y, sin embargo, sonreía" (78-79). Don Daniel's contradictory behavior—smiling in the face of horror—echoes the contradictory nature of monstrosity as experienced by Leticia in the novel.

Murphy, utilizing Julia Kristeva's theory of abjection, claims that "Leticia's precocious and unrestrained sexuality thus becomes the potentially horrific, monstrous and terrifying threat to

order and the feminine ideal" ("Monstrosity" 166). In this episode, don Daniel reads Leticia as monstrous, which stands in direct opposition to the abject horror she associates with traditional femininity. Beyond concretizing Leticia as a horrific, monstrous other, this moment heralds Leticia's absorption of the traditionally masculine subject position. Don Daniel figuratively enters Leticia's world and what she has seen by looking at and through her. Yet, we are only aware of his looking because she returns his gaze. Through the act of writing, Leticia communicates this reversal, which confirms her as a subject that both gazes and speaks. The *mise en abyme* effect of the looker looking at the looked-at looking back takes us through the looking glass, as it were, conferring onto Leticia the status of "the bearer of the gaze and initiator of the action" (Kaplan 215). Nevertheless, this is not a gaze nor a discourse that adheres to the hegemonic ideal and Leticia is not a servant of the patriarchy in a girl's body. The voice she speaks and writes with does not perpetuate the official version of history, and neither does her gaze. Instead, it disrupts masculine control through these very behaviors, which constitute the basis of gender coherence, thus serving as a "threat and a resistance to dominatory structures" (Smith 138), through the transposition of the girl-as-object becoming the girl-as-subject.

After this episode, we see the results of this "lesson" play out again in the *despacho*. Leticia feigns the attentive student but runs her eyes over don Daniel, focusing on the male body which, "depicted in piecemeal fashion, becomes the site of narrative pleasure" (Aramburu 67):

> Hacía como si le escuchase con una atención enorme, pero en realidad no hacía más que mirarle. Me entretenía en observar cómo le nacía el pelo en las sienes, como se le recortaba alrededor de las orejas y como la barba le formaba distintas corrientes que partían de junto a la boca . . . Mientras él hablaba . . . le miraba fijamente, como para comprender lo que

> decía y me cercioraba bien de cómo brotaban en el borde de sus párpados las pestañas, brillantes y negras. (Chacel *Memorias* 81)

As Leticia orients her gaze toward don Daniel's features, whose eroticism derives from their relation to hair and the conflict between looking and touching, we are reminded of Laura Mulvey's conclusion that "[i]n a world ordered by sexual imbalance, pleasure in looking has been split between active male and passive female. The determining male gaze projects its fantasy onto the female figure" (40). This convention is reversed, however, as the *despacho* provides the space necessary for Leticia to learn to look at don Daniel as he looks at her. She returns the traditionally male gaze, laying claim to the "sovereign status of seer" (Bartky 30). The reversal of voyeuristic practices in which don Daniel becomes the observed and Leticia the observer distances her further from the traditional trappings of femininity and establishes her subjectivity in a traditionally masculine sense and in a traditionally masculine space. Furthermore, this reversal opens the door for fantasy formation. Through the act of looking, Leticia's desire for don Daniel moves beyond the appeal of his intellectual superiority. The flame of her desire is stoked through the g(r)aze, which activates her desire for the body. Katherine Murphy explains that the result of this sexual desire, characterized by the intellectual parrying between the two, is the seduction that ultimately leads to his suicide ("Unspeakable Relations" 66).

Breaking the Father's Law: Fatal Fantasies

With Leticia's developing fantasy featuring don Daniel, we encounter another subverted binary: fantasy and reality. This dialogues directly with the fiction/history coupling that is disrupted in the novel's formation and its content, as evidenced by the opposition between don Daniel, the keeper of history, and Leticia, the teller of tales. Part of Leticia's fatality stems from destabilizing the domination of history by the male voice. Geraldine Lawless highlights that

"Leticia persistently tries to understand, challenge and ultimately control the rules for writing history" (515). Through the generic convention of the memoir, Leticia follows her own rules and controls her own story. It is important to note that she also makes history, both in the literal and the figurative sense. Lawless explains that Leticia, "explicitly rejects formal historical record in favor of something more vital and creative" (515). We see this in the episode following Leticia's voyeuristic gazing at don Daniel in the *despacho*.

Upon realizing that Leticia is distracted, he gives her a box of photographs to look over while he writes a letter. The photos are not enough to satiate her need to know, however. As she sets some aside, she wishes to have a story to accompany them, which don Daniel momentarily provides. He expresses that the photos are staged for tourists with young girls peering out over window grilles while below, boys play guitars (Chacel *Memorias* 83). Leticia expresses her fondness for the photos which transport her mind to her early years in Valladolid. Seeing her moved by a memory she does not fully articulate, don Daniel demands that she share it with him: "[m]e preguntaba con una avidez, con una curiosidad tal que yo, acaso por el remordimiento de tener en mi cabeza tantas cosas que no podía contarle, me propuse contarle aquella hasta en los detalles más superfluos" (83). She commandeers the narrative authority in the *despacho* and tells a tale of herself at five years old: A storekeeper's son turned organ grinder arrives in town and plays in Leticia's neighborhood. She, like the girls in the photo, hangs over the balcony and throws him a few coins, asking him to repeat a *habanera* that she enjoyed and wants to learn. "'Lo que tú quieres, salada'" (84), responds the organ grinder. When Leticia finishes her story and gets up to leave, don Daniel jumps up from the couch. She tells us: "me cogió la cabeza con las dos manos, hundiendo los dedos en mi pelo, después me apretó el pescuezo como si fueses a ahogarme" (85). Don Daniel leads her to the door, calls her a traitor, and tells her to leave. His response recalls their

first encounter where he grabs Leticia's hair and accuses her of being the aggressive combatant. The erotic and the violent elements present in this response, unlike their first encounter, signal Leticia's success as a storyteller: both her manipulation of history and her fantasy formation are taking their toll on don Daniel. Leticia's overlay of her history onto the photograph, don Daniel's desire to hear her story, and his subsequent reaction all point to the reversal underway. As such, Leticia actively grounds her developing sexual fantasy more firmly in reality and undermines his control over history, and the spaces and methods by which it is relayed.

Leticia's discursive prowess grows after this episode. The surprise visit of her uncle Alberto, his wife Frida, and Adriana, triggers a trip to the archive, a space that Leticia's aunt Frida, is especially interested in. As the families tour the space with don Daniel as their guide, Leticia remarks,

> Yo quería que Adriana se metiese conmigo en los huecos profundísimos que formaban los muros en las ventanas y que dejáramos a los otros seguir viendo cosas, porque allí sí que había cosas que ver . . . Yo estaba segura de que, si hubiera podido concentrarme y quedarme quieta un rato en aquellos banquitos laterales que tenían las ventanas, habría llegado a comprenderlo todo, a ver todo tal cual había sido en otro tiempo, pero no nos dejaban tranquilas ni un momento. Había que seguir, había que pasar a otra y otra sala, donde estaban las cartas de santos y de reyes. (97)

Her disinterest in the archive is contrasted with the desire to gaze out the window and imagine a different kind of history as opposed to the one preserved and controlled by don Daniel. In her comments on this episode, Lawless states that Leticia "must constrain her imaginative interpretation of the past, forego the pleasure of discovering history for herself, and allow the official version to dictate how she behaves" (516). She goes on to say, however, that this does not

stop Leticia from telling her tale. It is precisely in telling via the memoir, that we learn of the imaginative potential that lies outside the window of the archive. Thus, Leticia communicates both the restraints imposed upon her and the apertures through which her story can flourish. Like the photograph and Leticia's experience with the organ grinder, the window is a fundamental link to a world beyond the official, restrictive, and contained past.

Carmen Martín Gaite informs us that the window "es el punto de referencia de que dispone para soñar desde dentro el mundo que bulle fuera, es el puente tendido entre las orillas de lo conocido y lo desconocido, la única brecha por donde puede echar a volar sus ojos, en busca de otra luz y otros perfiles que no sean los del interior" (*Desde la ventana* 36). The window, like Leticia, functions as the point of convergence through which binary oppositions dissolve as she brings the outside into dialogue with the inside, the feminine with the masculine, and the child with the adult. As such, the window and specifically, a branch of ivy outside her bedroom window in Switzerland serves as the opening and closing metaphor in the novel which documents Leticia's growth through the process of narration, as well as her unconventional tracking of time. She compares herself to the ivy branch, "[c]on todo, me pasa lo que con la rama de hiedra que llega al marco de mi ventana" (Chacel *Memorias* 8), and declares it to be a friend. Her return at the close of the novel to the ivy and her confirmation of correct calculations as to its growth, "[m]iré la rama de hiedra que subía por el marco de la ventana y había crecido lo que yo tenía calculado," (174) signals Leticia's aptitude for understanding her development as well the revelation provided in the growth—the ivy, like Leticia, no longer stops just short of the window frame but reaches it and grows along it.[75] Unlike the archive and the imagined history outside of the window of the archive,

[75] The effects of ivy can be beneficial but are often pernicious, especially if the structure upon which it finds support bears any signs of damage. If we consider the ivy to be a source of self-identification for Leticia, then she, like the ivy roots in the cracks and crevices of the "damaged" home, exposing the structure's defects.

apocryphal to the history inside that is defined and preserved by don Daniel, Leticia's contemplation of the ivy on the other side of the glass at the start and close of her memoir reinserts her connection to the outside via her relaying of her interior journey. In this instance, she is not prevented from "concentrating" or "sitting for a while" and instead Leticia can finally write her story. This results in the disruption of masculine control over feminine subjective formation because Leticia rights history to the extent that she writes *her* history, and herself. She takes command of the right to write and in so doing, she answers Cixous' call to the woman writer "to carry out the indispensable ruptures and transformation in her history . . . To write and thus to forge for herself the antilogos weapon. To become *at will* the taker and initiator, for her own right, in every symbolic system" ("The Laugh" 880). The metaphor of the window indicates a type of transformative destabilization or rupture that allows Leticia to exteriorize her interior via the act of writing and to capture a genealogy of the feminine denied to her because of her mother's absence. This destabilization repeats itself in Leticia's subversive sexual fantasy, which becomes the "antilogos weapon," heralding the fatal end to the father's law, and its stand-in, don Daniel.

After Leticia and don Daniel's first encounter, she speaks of feeling strange and unsure of herself (Chacel *Memorias* 38). The initial confidence of this eleven-year-old who knows that she is not like other girls falters as she does not know why she feels the way she does. It is here where Leticia's fantasy featuring don Daniel comes to light. She informs us that she has seen him before this encounter. Upon being told that he is the archivist in Simancas, Leticia responds with, "'[p]arece un rey moro'" (38). Murphy traces Leticia's estimation of don Daniel to the figure of the Romantic hero ("Unspeakable Relations" 59). Terry Leahy's analysis of the discursive functions of femininity and adolescence in man/girl relationships underscores this trope. She notes that while the types of texts that position romance as a patriarchal genre were familiar to her study's

participants, “the established and conservative ideal of romance [was] adapted and challenged by the interviewees” (54). Such is the case in this novel. Leticia’s associating don Daniel with a Moorish king is significant when we return to her father’s rationale for going to Africa. His desire to be killed by the *moros* foreshadows the paternal coup that is enacted through Leticia and don Daniel’s illicit relationship. Leahy further explains of man/girl relationships that, “[t]he adult power of her lover is seen as a challenge to the proper authority of her father and his control over her sexual contacts” (53). This very challenge that destabilizes the father’s control is programmed into Leticia’s fantasy of don Daniel, who represents a duplication of paternal authority in that he represents the father in the newly established Oedipal triad.

Leticia replicates the subversion of his authority through the seduction of authority. This is seen in her recitation of “La carrera,” a fragment of the poem “La leyenda de Alhamar” from Zorrilla’s *Granada* (135-153), which acts as the performative catalyst for this discursive adaptation and challenge to patriarchal conventions and reinforces don Daniel’s connection to a Romantic, Orientalized hero. It is also an agential act that seals both her father’s and don Daniel’s fate. The poem itself is symbolic of the battle that is taking place between Leticia and don Daniel in that its form is filed down like the tip of a blade beginning with the fourteen-syllable alexandrine verses and ending in the fine point of a single syllable verse. Similarly, Leticia’s performative gestures while reciting this poem echo the acute tapering of the verses present in its form: “Me había levantado disimuladamente las mangas hasta el hombro antes de subir a la tribuna . . . Señalé a un sitio en la primera fila de espectadores, con la mano abierta, como si tocase algo con la punta de los dedos, como si descorriese un velo que descubriese el misterio. Y desde allí, desde la tribuna misma, sentí latir su corazón” (Chacel *Memorias* 131-132). Her exposed arms, skinny but apt tools to allow her to gesticulate gracefully, end in an open hand and piercing fingers, which like the tip

of the sword, point to the beating heart of don Daniel, which she claims to feel beating: "[e]sto no es solo palabras: lo sentí (132).[76] Additionally, Leticia's calculated decision to wear her communion dress alludes to the purity and innocence of the new land in the poem penetrated by the Moorish knight of Al-hamar and his horse. This performance, however, is reserved for don Daniel, as Leticia remarks upon returning home that "no quería que mi padre me viese vestida de aquel modo" (140), and changes from her communion dress before wishing him good night. Reinforcing the control over herself, she intentionally subverts the authority of the father, albeit through a different kind of performance.

Leticia's adolescent fantasy featuring don Daniel as the Moorish king who conquers "virgin lands," and kills her father, is realized through her recital of "La carrera". Paradoxically, it is also the moment when don Daniel, simultaneously connected to the Nationalist cause and the Moorish invasion, is vanquished by Leticia's Orientalizing fantasy realized, ironically, through the inferior art of performative poetic recitation cloaked in Catholic virtue. As the orator of her own romantic fiction, which positions don Daniel as the romantic hero, her voice is exalted while he is silenced. He is unable to escape the trap she has set and "he is forced into a position of passivity" (Lawless 519). He cannot flee, escape her gaze, throw her out of his *despacho*, or reprimand her. She has taken their private battle into the public realm. Jennifer Hedgecock illustrates the performativity of the *femme fatale* of the 19th century and how this relates to identity politics stating, "[t]he masquerade between the femme fatale and her suitor is a dialogue, its discourse somewhat cryptic, calling attention to the nature of one's identity or one's invented identity, the public self vs. the private self" (45). Leticia's public display of a private fantasy highlights the

[76] Before the recital, Leticia says to doña Luisa that "me gustaría ver en su mano una espada" (Chacel *Memorias* 115). Disoriented by this comment, doña Luisa shrugs it off and tells Leticia that she is a scatterbrain. Leticia's attempt at empowering doña Luisa through fantasy is rejected and Leticia instead becomes the sword.

dialogic nature of her performance. With don Daniel rendered a passive victim of Leticia's active narration, a series of patriarchal precepts is subverted: the old keeper of history is overthrown by the young teller of tales; the female is activated while the male is inoperative; the child is exalted while the adult stumbles.

As the novel ends a series of events makes the culmination of Leticia's fantasy real. Firstly, doña Luisa breaks her leg and is relegated to her bed for forty days. As the embodiment of traditional, child-like femininity, doña Luisa's already limited social mobility is heightened by this relegation. She is immobilized and whatever little power she had before is paralyzed along with her. Leticia initially makes it a point to tend to her. The war, however, continues, and don Daniel begins to make casual comments about Leticia's neglected studies. When doña Luisa begins to instruct Leticia in music theory, don Daniel assumes that Leticia's alliances have shifted which produces "desconfianza, ironía, acritud" in the archivist (Chacel *Memorias* 155). Cixous and Clement tell us that "[t]he father is the Law; . . . the privileged force of the order, come from the looming, immemorial figure of the prehistoric father. This father is overpossessive: the perverse Law. Thou shalt love none other than me" (45). Thus, in his role as surrogate father, don Daniel's jealousy in the face of her tending to doña Luisa and her interest in the lesser arts manifests in his increasing annoyance at these attentions. Later, Leticia returns to the *despacho* with some regularity but still spends her mornings with doña Luisa. She remarks to don Daniel that she is not thinking of seriously studying music, but she would like to sing well (Chacel *Memorias* 160). Don Daniel's acrimony, is evident in the way he looks at Leticia and in what he says, "—'Eso es lo que tú eres, exactamente, de pies a cabeza: una artista, una verdadera artista. Te creo capaz de incendiar Roma" (161). The connection in this statement to the musical inclinations and the tyrannical reign of Nero, who is credited for the Great Fire of Rome, is significant given that don Daniel

acknowledges the destructive power of this eleven-year-old girl. As Leticia lies on the couch sobbing at don Daniel's cruelty, he watches her from the doorway. This fatality he has accused her of is juxtaposed against his own statement, "—'¡Te voy a matar, te voy a matar!'"(162), after which he closes the door, the narrative contracts, and they avoid speaking of the unspeakable.

Following what happens behind closed doors and beyond words, Leticia ceases to visit doña Luisa, and for five days only attends her lessons with don Daniel. Her choice of the *despacho* over doña Luisa is finalized along with the end to the maternal supervision and model of femininity that doña Luisa provides. Free to control her subjective development outside the confines of traditional gender roles, Leticia "must kill the 'father' and wound the 'mother' whose polarized existences she wishes to, but cannot, reconcile" (Johnson, "Self'-Consciousness" 64). Her destruction of the father is two-fold, as the paternal supervision that has been largely absent or articulated through don Daniel, is reasserted. Her father bursts through the closed *despacho* door and demands that don Daniel exile himself for his unspeakable behavior. Leticia remarks that "No era posible saber cuál de los dos era dueño de la situación" (Chacel *Memorias* 164), exposing the underlying fact that neither appears capable of taking charge of her. Nevertheless, her father, who consistently references a refusal to see repeated a past wrong brought to life again, asserts his paternal right and might. He calls for don Daniel's exile and does the same to his daughter, sending Leticia to live with his brother and his family in Switzerland.

This banishment is enacted because of Leticia's "transgression which places her beyond the boundaries of what is considered acceptable" (Murphy, "Monstrosity" 149). Furthering the novel's allegorical connection to Nationalist Spain, her propensity for breaking the father's law marks her as dangerous and demands that she be exiled from the fatherland. Yet, she is not fully silenced, despite the unspeakable nature of the transgression that she has committed. Instead,

through her memoir, she speaks. Yet, as Maier comments, central to the text is "the highly verbal silence engulfing the incidents that occasioned Leticia's narration" ("Translator's afterword" 189). Critics have consistently analyzed this silence that speaks with Lawless telling us that in the novel, "[a]mbiguity and ellipsis are central throughout" (514). Murphy elaborates on this further, stating, "Throughout the memoirs, Leticia strives to find the words to express something which eludes her grasp, parts of which are inexpressible, and left unvoiced" ("Monstrosity" 169). This is evident when it appears that Leticia is on the brink of communicating what transpired between her and don Daniel. Yet, she explains, "[e]s estúpido querer describir una fiebre alta; basta con decir los grados que llegó a alcanzar" (Chacel *Memorias* 162). The allusion to the ineffability of experience through the metaphor connecting illness and desire reflects the tension between what is felt, and the language used to relay that feeling. Instead, Leticia opts for ellipsis. She refers to this ellipsis on the first page of the novel when she recalls that her father described the act buried beneath the silence as "inaudito", an adjective which she also claims for herself. Despite her situating herself within the unspeakable, the driving force of the novel attempts to make understood that which cannot be named.

Leticia offers conclusions about the act of understanding after the unspeakable act between her and don Daniel transpires. She states, "[y]o comprendía ya en aquel momento la inutilidad de comprender" (163). The paradox of understanding the futility of understanding, or trying to understand that which is monstrously unspeakable, echoes Leticia's attempt at making known the unknowable. Endeavoring to "[express] the indefinable", to bring the "inaudito" into the realm of the comprehensible, Leticia allows it to remain unknown in the face of conventional ways of knowing (Murphy, "Monstrosity" 162). The reasons for which she does this are entrenched in her undermining of rationality by exposing the insufficiencies of language as conceived of by the

mind, and the codes which determine a subject's entry into language via the law of the father. The result is a shifting of power whereby Leticia, as author/subject of the narration, deprives the reader of the certainty of knowing what happened behind the closed doors of the *despacho*, once again exerting her control over the space and exiling her readers into the realm of speculation. Now, she is the one who knows, while we remain on the margins of the text wondering if what we think happened, really did. She says, "describí todos mis sentimientos sublimes hasta que desembocaron en aquello, porque para eso lo hice: para que se viese donde fueron a parar" (Chacel *Memorias* 172). As readers, then, we enter a world of speculation, intuiting what has happened. We can feel where the action has been leading us and what the consequences of these actions are, but we are denied the explicit, observable "reality" –or archive—of events. We enter the battle between the binaries of fantasy and reality, history and fiction, that Leticia has actively waged throughout the novel.

For some critics, this casts doubt on Leticia's written account. Katherine Murphy reasons that "[t]here exists the possibility that the seduction of Chacel's novel is fantasy, that the child-protagonist has fantasied something monstrous" ("Unspeakable Relations" 68, "Monstrosity" 162). Pattison similarly communicates the potential for disbelief in Leticia's tale, primarily because of her age: "[h]er credibility as a focalizer becomes suspect from the opening paragraph of the novel where she reveals that she is not yet twelve years old" (105). The adult-centric idea that the tales of children are inevitably lacking credibility because they are children is problematic precisely because it is this same form of logic that leads to discrediting those who are marginal in systems of power. We see this with the patriarchal impulse to discredit women's testimony when coming forward with abuse suffered. These interpretations cement the precepts of rationality in the observable, knowable world accessible to adults and males. Nevertheless, these critics raise an

important question which is introduced by the overlay of literature that demands accounts of the reliability of narrators. The *niña fatal* finds herself at an interesting crossroads concerning believability given that as a child and as a female she is discredited, but as a child she is also a victim and thus demands that some credibility be afforded to her testimony to activate this discursive identification. This is further complicated in the novel given that, in her 11-year-old body, Leticia chooses feelings, ellipses, and ambivalence to communicate the insufficiencies of the privileged tools of rationality. In so doing, she additionally challenges the boundaries of reality and fiction.

An integral part of this communication is silence, which conveys the failure of language to communicate Leticia's experiential reality: "temo que . . . no consiga demostrar de un modo enteramente claro como son las cosas imposibles, como se puede vivir dentro de su atmósfera, sabiendo que de un momento a otro van a explotar y todo va a hacerse añicos" (Chacel *Memorias* 162). Murphy describes this silence as the struggle for the expression of form and explains that Leticia's silence is paradoxical, given that she recurs to words to express that which is beyond words, and rather the memoir is an exploration of the human consciousness ("Monstrosity" 147-148). Yet, as I have alluded to previously, the novel's form exhibits tensions that are also taking place within. This is evident in the enmeshment between the characteristics of seduction literature and diary writing that complicate generic conventions. Regarding seduction literature, Lázaro claims that Valle-Inclán's *Memorias del Marqués de Brandomín*, of which "Sonata de estío" forms part, "son modelo de la narrativa de seducción en la España moderna" (141). She traces the generic tradition in Spain back to the archetypal don Juan, a product of the 17th-century playwright, Tirso de Molina. Within the traditional generic conventions of seduction literature, it is the man's point of view and his escapades that take center stage while the women are largely silenced. Lázaro

points to a subversion of this convention in *Memorias*, whereby the seducer is female, and the silenced victim is male. Yet, despite this subversion and Leticia's narrative control over the seduction itself, silence is still a protagonist feature of the novel, only this time it appears as a deliberate choice rather than an imposed convention.

The other side of this generic tension lies in the claim that *Memories* is an example of diary writing, which, while not exclusively feminine, has been considered attractive to women writers for "[t]he lack of an imposed form and of rules to follow" (Raoul 62). Examining this novel as a subversion of seduction literature is productive in that it unveils how generic conventions are subverted. On the other hand, considering this novel through the lens of diary writing unveils the plurality of subject positions taken up by the writer: "[t]he specular and speculative narcissistic nature of the act of diary-writing enables the Self to be simultaneously desiring and desired, watching and watched, inside and outside, judging and judged" (60). Thus, the seemingly contradictory nature of Leticia's subjectivity is mobilized through a genre that activates contradictions. While Leticia endeavors to write to find how language, free of the father's control, can relay her subjective development, her very non-conformity to conventional forms is embodied in her silence. This is a crucial aspect of the female voice: voluntary silence is a language, and, in many cases, it speaks louder than words. But it is also the site of violence imposed upon girls and women through androcentric cultural supremacy. In Leticia's case, we must ask, what does her silence say?

The connection between Leticia's silence and the silence of the adults in Leticia's world, who are unwilling to discuss the tenets of desire, is noteworthy. However, Leticia's silence goes beyond an inheritance of adult-centric decorum and prudery. The paradox of her "highly verbal silence" is indicative of Kristeva's language of the semiotic. After the destruction of the stand-in

father, the symbolic castration of her real father, and her subsequent exile, Leticia, having exited the Oedipal drama, is situated again at the pre-Oedipal stage where language and its organization exist as Other to symbolic language. Terry Eagleton describes the semiotic as

> a kind of pulsional pressure within language itself, in tone, rhythm, the bodily and material qualities of language, but also in contradiction, meaninglessness, disruption, silence and absence. . .The semiotic throws into confusion all tight divisions between masculine and feminine – it is a 'bisexual' form of writing – and offers to deconstruct all the scrupulous binary oppositions. (163-164)

Contradiction, meaninglessness, disruption, silence, absence, as well as the breakdown of binaries are central to the text and the language Leticia uses to elaborate her sense of self. Leticia's silence on the page is political because it serves as a means for subverting the symbolic order and prevents the Oedipal drama from repeating. Through the destruction of the father(s) and his law, the fragmented text enables Leticia's subjective formation which both reconciles and contradicts difference and specificity, masculine and feminine, mind and body.

The subversion of binaries continues as Chacel authors a novel that resembles both a rewriting of the masculine seduction memoir and feminized diary writing. Portraying an 11-year-old girl who is activated through writing, the novel destabilizes masculine intellectual sovereignty, subverts the traditional conception of women in seduction literature, and creates apertures through which Chacel and Leticia can assume subject positions. Valerie Raoul tells us that "[t]he paradox of the private diary is that, in order to remain private, it should not survive. Yet a written record remains, until destroyed—like a message in a bottle which may evoke, years later, a barely elicited response unknown to the sender" (58). Chacel writes Leticia writing from exile while herself in exile. To do so, she uses a genre that is situated historically between the masculine and the feminine

and constructs a female protagonist who narrates her rejection of feminine temperament. This cements both her and Leticia's rebellion into the literary record. It documents a private transgression made public through the novel's publication.

Conclusions

"Intention: desire, authority-examine them and you are led right back ... to the father" (Cixous and Clément 64). Moving from Leticia's devastating activation to her father's castration, we see authority derailed. After her father's visit to don Daniel, Leticia watches as he makes his way back home. She remarks, "me pareció que en medio de su quietud estallaba algo como una pompa. Fue un pequeño estampido, lejano y tan breve" (Chacel *Memorias* 168). While the language here is not explicit, the implication is: don Daniel has committed suicide. Her surrogate father/lover is dead, and the authority of her real father, rendered impotent by her realized desire, is to be replaced yet again by his brother, Alberto, as Leticia is sent to live with his family in Switzerland. Alberto remarks to Leticia, "[t]ú no tienes la culpa de lo que ha pasado . . . el único responsable es tu padre por no haberte puesto desde hace tiempo en un ambiente adecuado" (171). His comments are important because they reflect the patriarchal ascendancy of the father who controls and orders, the deficiencies of Leticia's father in this role, and her uncle's assumption of the role of the new father. Yet, his comments additionally stress the primal behavior of blaming, and its centrality in understanding the conclusion of the novel. Millet explains that "[t]he large quantity of guilt attached to sexuality in patriarchy is overwhelmingly placed upon the female, who is, culturally speaking, held to be the culpable or the more culpable party in nearly any sexual liaison" (54). Leticia's age complicates blame, which functions as a tool of the patriarchy for enforcing a rigid scheme of morality. Blame is the basis for censure and the shifting of responsibility which helps to keep men out of trouble and women in it. But what about girls?

Millet informs us that women are considered more blameworthy when sexuality is present. Regarding *Memorias,* literary criticism has probed the question of whether Leticia is to be blamed for don Daniel's, and arguably her father's, downfall. Faszer-McMahon informs us that Leticia "denies victimization" (27), despite the protagonist's own belief that she "no merecía ser salvada" (Chacel *Memorias* 171). Leticia's self-estimation that she is undeserving of redemption as well as her refusal to accept her Aunt Frida's appraisal of her as "una buena chica", would suggest Leticia's awareness of having acted outside of this category. Her active rejection of femininity, her absorption of behaviors reserved for the male, and her intentional use of sexuality to bring about her passage into adulthood all subvert patriarchy's mandate and make her ripe for blaming. And yet, she is a child.

Here, we arrive at another significant difference between the fatal woman and the *niña fatal*. As an effective scapegoat to assuage masculine anxieties derivative of women acting outside of the patriarchal mandate, the *femme fatale* is an easy target for blame. Leticia, however, presents readers with an uncomfortable dilemma succinctly articulated by Lawless:

> Leticia cannot be dismissed as a passive victim, to simply say that she defeats Daniel is tantamount to saying that a child is responsible for an adult's behaviour . . . On the other hand, to say she is not the author of her own success is to deny her agency in her hard-won victory and to ignore the deliberate and conscious way in which she sets about destroying Daniel and all that he represents. (526)

This difficulty in reconciling what she makes happen versus what happens to her in the novel furthers her and the novel's ambiguity. Leticia is a *niña fatal* because she subverts the father's law and enacts his downfall, but also because she lays this trap for readers that calls into question discourses of childhood and femininity. Through the act of writing, Leticia produces a shift in the

modalities of signification that undergird a system that is supported by discrete, opposing differences in which God the Father, the *pater patriae,* and the *paterfamilias* are ascendant. Like Chacel, she takes control of the discursive approach to meaning-making by writing, a task that is exposed as insufficient due to the shortcomings of language itself. Instead of assuming her position in the binary make-up of hierarchal differentiation, the self of the novel opens "the possibility of encompassing, even embracing, opposite and contradictory positions in one's understanding of oneself in relation to the social world" (Davies 502). This aperture comes at the expense of abandoning the tidy reconciliation between these contradictions that discrete systems of categorization require.

To return to Kristeva, she asks us of the female who writes: "What will she write that is new?" ("Women's Time" 32) In the case of *Memories,* Leticia will write herself, a new subject and a new kind of subjectivity that is different in its specificity and specific in its difference, establishing her as perhaps the first instance of a *niña fatal* that "writes" her own story. In the case of Chacel, she will preemptively provide a "focal adjustment" that documents the adolescent's approach to understanding herself in the wake of a life-altering relationship with an older man, presaging later archetypal pivots recurred to by women creators. These novelties are remarkable because both are precursors to tendencies and cultural inquiries that arise later in the 20th century. In the case of Leticia, she provides a critical reflection on the intersection between age/gender and the formation of the self that acknowledges and resists the oppression implicit in the intersecting of female and childhood. To this end, we can consider Chacel and Leticia harbingers of feminist subjectivities in the later stages of feminism's development. These developments, which today are calling for the "muerte al patriarcado," are symbolically articulated in the novel through the death of the *paterfamilias*. Writing from and in exile, both Chacel and Leticia narrate their discursive

evolution beyond the boundaries of the father's land and law. Their invitation to us as readers necessarily implicates us in the act of abandoning patriarchal precepts to comprehend the *inaudito* nature of Leticia's subjective discursive formation, as well as Chacel's. Authority over that formation has shifted and is no longer in the hands of the father but rather in those of the woman who writes.

Chapter 3: The Inversion of Perversion: From "Niña perversa" to *Pater Perversus*

The term adolescence is perhaps more complicated than the individuals passing through it precisely because it is the invention of individuals who have passed beyond it. Catherine Driscoll explains this by stating that "adolescence is always retrospectively defined . . . [and] continues to be conceived as a disruption of childhood and prior to a projected adulthood" (6). Elaborating further upon this developmental stage, Katherine Dalsimer suggests that it "is a period of widened possibilities and of experimentation with alternatives, before the individual narrows the range of what is possible by making those commitments which will define adulthood" (5). As such, adolescence, and its retroactively recognized power stem from the mutability of a self-in-definition, who negotiates the bounds of difference and similitude of selves that are furnished by the discourses of subjectivity. In the throes of the transition of becoming, that self accesses and effectuates a variety of potentials before its curing that adulthood demands. The widened possibilities available to adolescents position them as versatile signifiers making their symbolic representation powerful given their ability to dialogue with the past of childhood, the future of adulthood, and that which lies in between.

In cultural production, adolescents often appear as allegorical expressions of alternative and widened possibilities of futurity.[77] In Isabel Allende's short story, "Niña perversa" (1989), the aperture for these alternative futures takes place through the sexual awakening of Elena, the story's 11-year-old protagonist, who illustrates and undermines the paradigmatic model of feminine adolescence. The target of her advances, Bernal, is a new guest at her mother's boarding house. He echoes the pattern of stand-in figures of paternal authority, which is created by the father's

[77] In the context of contemporary Latin American cinema, Geoffrey Maguire and Rachel Randall explain that teenagers "are employed to express and explore anxieties relating both to the present and to the impact of socio-economic and cultural changes in the near future" (11). Driscoll situates this forward-looking representation within Shakespeare's plays claiming that girls, more so than boys, were emblematic of the future, "whether as pastoral promise, social disintegration, or something more ambiguous" (22).

absence, previously seen in *Memorias* and to be seen in *La niña santa*. Elena subverts that authority and is exiled for the subversion. Acting as a *niña fatal*, she dupes her mother's boyfriend into nonconsensual sex, motivated by adolescent fantasy formation, and a mélange of voyeuristic and haptic emergence. This does not immediately result in his downfall, but the intimate encounter that is staged by Elena, ferments in his mind, cementing her adolescent body-in-transition as the unattainable, fetishized object of his desire which haunts him for years.

The haunting at work in this short story brings adolescence, femininity, and exile into dialogue, specifically through their alterity: adolescence is an othered phase of development, femininity is an othered social construct and exile is a state of otherness. It is through this otherness that we can examine the function of each using Foucault's concept of heterotopia or "spaces that are absolutely other" ("Heterotopias" 69). This concept situates us within the spaces of difference where heterogeneity reveals the potential for new meaning while unveiling the systems at work which would seek to eradicate or homogenize said difference. Existing as relationally other to the hegemonic discourses of adulthood, masculinity, and citizen; adolescence, femininity, and exile are discursively heterotopic as each retains in its signification a deviation and crisis with its normative counterpart.[78] This discursive otherness is reinforced in "Niña perversa" through the setting, the boarding house, a "nowhere" or "elsewhere" place that is spatially heterotopic ("Of Other Spaces" 24). Additionally, the narrative's space within the external frame reinforces the notion of heterotopia at work internally in the story: Allende, inspired by the virgin-bride and renowned storyteller, Scheherazade, writes *Eva Luna* (1987) whose eponymous character is similarly inspired by her source of inspiration. Eva Luna "writes" her stories in the short-story

[78] Citizenship and childhood are central preoccupations of Matthew Waites who examines the relationship between age of consent laws as a form of citizenship belonging to certain groups. He advocates for "a differentiated model of citizenship" claiming that "children's citizenship may take a different form to that of adults" (38).

collection *Los cuentos de Eva Luna* (*Los cuentos*) in which "Niña perversa" appears. This generic layering reinforces the world-within-world effect, suggestive of *1001 nights*.

With Elena, her developing subjectivity is mediated through her developing body which violates the conventions of traditional femininity through sexual precocity. Furthermore, her body is transgressive because it is in transition and thus belongs neither to girlhood nor to womanhood. In this way, the heterotopic and what Julia Kristeva terms the abject dialogue with one another in the story. Elena's body, which is heterotopic in that she is a woman-to-be and the girl-no-more, elicits an abject response from Bernal and the reader given that she "does not respect borders, positions, rules" (*Powers of Horror* 4). This places her at the entrance to the discursive realm of antigirl because she resides in "[t]he in-between, the ambiguous, the composite" (4). A similar phenomenon occurs with the exiled individual. Speaking to this individual, Edward Said explains that "just beyond the frontier between 'us' and the 'outsiders' is the perilous territory of not-belonging" ("Reflections" 140). The adolescent straddles the childhood/adulthood divide and shares with the exile, who belongs neither to the fatherland nor to the land of refuge, the characteristic of existing in-between. As women writers in exile, Isabel Allende and Rosa Chacel share this trait with their adolescent protagonists.

This liminality is compounded further by femininity, which is discursively connected to and simultaneously exacerbates these marginal states. Amy Kaminsky stresses the connection between the exile and women in patriarchal culture stating that they share the condition "of being invisible, of having their reality misinterpreted by the dominant group, of being marginalized, of having unwanted characteristics displaced onto them" (36). We can see a similar connection between women and children who have been discursively conflated throughout modern history. In the story, we see this connection grounded in the space of the heterotopia. This allows Elena to

disturb and defy masculine control over the "disembodied, disciplined female body" (Holland 31). Her defiance draws us closer to the place "where meaning collapses" (Kristeva *Powers of Horror* 2). Operating within the heterotopic body and self-in-transition, Elena corrupts the father's power through disruptive desire that is produced by embodied sexuality resulting from the awakening of her material self. To this end, she disrupts paternal sovereignty and initiates a reversal of perversion as it is Bernal who is revealed as perverse at the story's close. The same reversal that is underway in exposing the father's perversion is at work on the structural and thematic level in the narrative: instead of a fairytale that inspires terror in girls to behave properly, "Niña perversa" is a horror story of a girl behaving improperly which inspires terror in adults.

We are privy to Elena's awakening through Eva-as-narrator whose own adolescent development is traced first-hand in *Eva Luna*. It is notable that Allende, Eva, and Elena all exist in partial states of orphanhood in which the paternal void is filled by stand-in-fathers, occurring around the age of 12 for each. This results in marked changes in their lives, the immediate effects of which involve geographical uprooting. Consequently, Allende's literary creations echo the personal circumstances that bring her into maturity as a writer and comment on the socio-political conditions that impact upon these personal circumstances. For example, differing from Allende and Eva's nomadism deriving from the arrival of new benevolent father figures (Ramón Huidobro Domínguez and Riad Halabí), Elena's exile to the "internado de monjas" is subsequent to her sexual encounter with the *intruder* Bernal. The symbolic import of her developing subjectivity, her seduction of Bernal, and her exile can be read as the constitution of the adolescent feminine body as a site of resistance to the patriarchal body politic of the conservative military dictatorship of Augusto Pinochet (1973-1990). This is the same dictatorship that would prompt Allende's exile to Venezuela in 1987, and whose paternalistic and authoritative correction are resonant in the story

through Elena's move from the boarding house to the boarding school headed by nuns. Nevertheless, in the case of both Elena and Allende, this is the event that removes them from the stasis of the home environment and thrust them into a "territory of not-belonging," to recall Said. Their insertion into this territory complicates the spatial politics of the private/public spheres given that they are forced outside, to the periphery. This proves to be productive in Allende's case, as it stimulates her career as a writer. Through writing and, more specifically, through writing characters like Eva and Elena, Allende disturbs the foundational narratives undergirding the patriarchal framework.[79]

Impotence as impetus: Isabel Allende and Exile

The ripples of this disturbance are traceable to Allende's own family life. Born in Peru in 1942, Isabel Allende's first international migration to Santiago, Chile in 1945 resulted from her father, Tomás Allende Pesce, running out on their family. Following his departure, her mother, Francisca Llona Barros returned to her own father's house where she raised her children. Nine years later, she married the Chilean diplomat Ramón Huidobro Domínguez, prompting more migrations, this time to Bolivia and Lebanon. The family returned to Santiago again in 1958, where Allende would remain until the accession of Pinochet's dictatorship. She cites a series of events concomitant with the violence of the dictatorship which prompted her exile to Venezuela in 1975: "I discovered that a new friend was really an undercover agent of the feared secret police. A relative who worked for the government let us know that I was on a blacklist and could be taken at any moment. A person whom I had hidden in our house was arrested and I knew that if he talked,

[79] In her examination of romance and foundational literature in Latin America, Doris Sommer speaks to the national epics claiming that "[t]he romantic affair *needs* the nation, and erotic frustrations *are* challenges to national development" (50). With the pieces I explore in this investigation, I allege that there is a connection between their contents and the countries from which they hail. Nevertheless, the erotic desire that is presented within each is highly disruptive given the age and power dynamics between the "lovers." In essence, this unravels foundational narratives because erotic fulfillment frustrates the symbolic order that is championed by national development while preventing its restoration.

I was doomed. I needed to get out" (*Life Under Pinochet*). Initially alone, Allende's husband and her children would join her a month later when any hope of returning to her home country was extinguished. They would remain in Venezuela until 1988. That year in addition to writing *Los cuentos*, her marriage came to an end, and she moved, yet again, this time to California where she currently resides.

Consequently, from the time of her childhood into adulthood, the rhythmic uprooting of her geographical moorings set her spatial identity adrift. In recalling Siad's mention of displacement, Allende describes this process in her 2003 memoir, *My Invented Country*, "I write as a constant exercise in longing. I have been an outsider nearly all my life . . . I have been a pilgrim along more roads than I care to remember. From saying good-bye so often my roots have dried up, and I have had to grow others, which, lacking a geography to sink into, have taken hold in my memory" (xi). The recuperation of this identity following its deracination has taken place for the author via the act of writing, as she turns from the external to the internal world seeking fertile terrain to sow the seeds of self. This is a motif that appears in several of her novels, and is especially true of Eva Luna, the "author" of "Niña perversa" who challenges masculine supremacy codified in discourse thus "[reversing] the consequences of subordination by engendering her own Subject—through the power of self-language" (Rivero 153). However, Allende writes from the position of exile demonstrating the interplay of time and space in the act of writing: the present's impact upon memory, memory's manipulation of the present, and the retreat inward to compensate for the lack of outward stability. These tensions are thoroughly developed by Sophia McClennen who claims that exile writing "contains a series of dialectic tensions revolving around central components of the exile's cultural identity: nation, time, language, and space" (2). To these, especially with Allende and her writing, gender is a necessary addition.

In *The Soul of a Woman* (2021), Allende reflects on her feminism.[80] Unlike Chacel and Martel, she embraces the term for herself, tracing her awakening feminist consciousness back to her childhood where she intuited the disadvantages of the women in her life as compared to the men. She explains, "[m]y anger against machismo started in those childhood years of seeing my mother and the housemaids as victims" (5). At the age of 25, she began contesting the injustices stemming from the gender differences in her family and society through her satirical column, "A través de los impertinentes," and "Civilice a su hombre" which appeared in the feminist magazine *Paula* (1967-). She credits this magazine with unveiling the transformative power of writing that she claims gave her "the opportunity to transform into action the awful restlessness that had tormented me since childhood" (32). Nevertheless, 6 years after its creation, the magazine closed temporarily because of the military coup. Vanessa Tesada Sepúlveda describes the magazine's disintegration following its reopening, "Isabel Allende fue despedida y a Malú Sierra la detuvieron para interrogatorios militares; Amanda Puz incluso debió abandonar el país y en 1975 Delia Vergara fue reemplazada: *Paula* se había desintegrado" (*Mujeres* 41). The same year of Vergara's replacement, Allende fled the country. While living in Venezuela, she could not find a job as a journalist, and on January 8th, 1981, she received news that her grandfather was dying. The impotence resulting from her exile eradicated her potential future as a journalist. Nevertheless, exile and the resulting longing for the country that she left behind are the core elements that launched her career as a writer. The inability to return home to say goodbye to her dying grandfather led her to write a letter to him, which he never received but would eventually become her first novel, *La casa de los espiritus* (1982).

[80] Despite her identification as a feminist and her alignment with feminist philosophies, some critics have pointed to Allende's first novel as a failed attempt at portraying feminist protagonists. Emma Staniland succinctly identifies what has been considered the limits of the author's feminism stating that her characters receive "criticism for their failure to be radically forward-projecting in the sense of creating new identities as frameworks for reference" (87). However, she argues that Allende moves us deeper into an understanding of our own world and gender norms instead of projecting a new one.

In the face of her grandfather's death, Allende turned to writing as "a crazy attempt to recover what I had lost to bring it back to me. And the idea of putting it in [sic] paper and writing the story is a way of making it permanent, of saving it from oblivion" (*House of Spirits* 17:12 – 17:28). Her attempt at recuperating and reconstituting loss fosters a creative (re)turn in the author. Yet, it is worth noting that this turn predates her grandfather's passing. The absence of her father as a young girl stoked a rebelliousness in Allende as well as a growing sense of mystery which she states, "me alimentó la imaginación de niña. . . El misterio es lo que me alimentó la infancia y lo que alimentó la literatura" (*Isabel Allende* 03:40 - 03:54). Many of the protagonists who populate her work are adolescents that share with the exile the trait of existing-in-transition. In the case of Allende, Eva, and Elena, the absence of the father/fatherland, as well as this feature of transformation, create an aperture from which each renegotiates their place within the world. From this aperture, unconventional routes of subjectivation are revealed and unconventional subjectivities are rendered.

Nevertheless, the absence that kindled her awakening imagination and her early feminism also had negative consequences and were responsible for forcing her mother back into her own father's house. This move unveiled the injustice of Chilean society to Allende and provoked her fury while stoking the fire of her creative mind:

> Era esa niña rabiosa porque todo le parece injusto, todo le parece poco, todo le parece chato y gris. Y que tenía un mundo dentro de la cabeza de fantasía. En ese mundo de fantasía mío, que era un mundo de cuentos, yo nunca era la doncella, la doncella que era rescatada por el príncipe. Yo nunca era la Blancanieves. Yo era el príncipe o el caballo. Pero de ninguna manera, la doncella inmovible así esperando que llegue un tonto al darle un beso para despertarla, jamás. (*Isabel Allende* 06:33 – 07:10)

Her father's absence is the causal occurrence that paves the way, albeit a rocky one, for Allende's imaginative awakening, while her forced absence from the fatherland resulted in her authorial awakening. Nevertheless, Kaminsky cautions us to tread delicately on the prospective positives of exile given its complicated and painful effects on the exiled (39). In the case of Allende, I do not think it insensitive to consider her exile at once painful and productive. Through her displacement, she is situated in an alternative space which allows her to create alternative spaces in her writing. This creative endeavor carves out a new home in which the exiled self who exists outside can reside and flourish within the boundlessness of interiority.

The action of spatial disruption and creation is replicated by the *niña fatal* who similarly problematizes spatial politics by engaging in the act of resignification of the spaces she penetrates. This appears in "Niña perversa" as Elena penetrates Bernal's private quarters at the inn, interacting with his possessions in a way that signals their resignification geared towards the emergence of her own self. She is also sent away from the *pensión* to the boarding school where she can overcome and ultimately forget her sexual encounter with Bernal, moving on in body and in time. Kaminsky explains that the suffering women undergo in exile cannot be ignored, however, she suggests that "they may also have something particular to gain from exile as women, free of the oppressive sexism of the home culture. The rupture a woman experiences is not a rending from an always nourishing home, but a mitosis, a split not from but within the self, into two distinct beings—the self and the double—that can enable transcendence" (39). For both Elena and Allende, absence paves the way for this transcendence.

To this end, the author showcases the dialectic tension McClennen exposes as inherent in the exile's writing. However, given the overlap between woman and the condition of the exile, the contradictions that exile writing exhibits exist similarly in the writing of feminist authors who are

arguably inside-exiles within the hegemonic paternal cultures they inhabit. For Allende, before her forced departure from Chile in 1975, she was previously introduced to these tensions first via her girlhood and then her womanhood, laying the groundwork for the eventual contradictions that would emerge and coalesce with her condition of exile later. Thus, the basis of much of the analysis that is to follow can be traced to Allende's own experience as a woman, a writer, and an exile who grew up in a series of homes with stand-in fathers, much like the protagonist of her second novel, *Eva Luna*. In a way that is reminiscent of Rosa Chacel and *Memorias,* Allende speaks to this novel as a type of auto-fiction wherein Eva Luna the protagonist, "habla por mí. Ella dice todo lo que yo tenía ganas de decir sobre la vida, el hombre, la revolución, la literatura, la relación de las mujeres" (Riquelme and Rehbien 195). This doubling of author(s), Allende as author to Eva Luna who is author to herself, situates us within the multilayered narrative space of *Eva Luna* and *Los cuentos.*

The Narrative's Space: Eva Luna and Los cuentos de Eva Luna

As we have seen previously, Allende's subversion of the narrative conventions of mythic forms began at an early age. The world of fantasy constructed in her child's mind was one in which the typical gender roles were undermined. Acting as the prince (or the horse) rather than the princess, she initiated a revision of these forms by representing herself, a girl, as the active force in the stories, rather than the passive maiden waiting for the male prince to show up and revive her. Presaging her later tendency observable in "Niña perversa," Allende's subversion of the fairytale genre in her early years suggests one of the principal features of her writing as an adult: the reworking of familiar narratives or rhetorical models which produces something familiar but foreign, making use of the old to yield something new. Patricia Hart refers to this reworking stating that Allende's talents lie in her "bending tradition to fit herself" (104). The most controversial and referenced example of this is *La casa de los espíritus,* which has produced a litany of criticism that

often cites the novel as imitating, borrowing, or parodying Gabriel Garcia Marquez' magical realist novel, *Cien años de soledad* (1967). Like Hart, Beth Jorgensen explains that one of Allende's stronger points as a storyteller is her "success in adapting popular literary genres to new uses" (133). Thus, while the influence of certain elements of the graciamarquiano novel, and boom literature in general, are observable in Allende's canon, his androcentric worldview is not one of them. Instead, in *La casa de los espíritus* and *Eva Luna*, Allende's third novel, masculine protagonism cedes control over to the gynocentric as the literary worlds depicted in each are built upon and by the words of women.

These words and their transmission are tantamount in *La Casa de los espíritus*. The diary of Clara, the family Matriarch, provides her granddaughter, Alba, with the ability to recount the family saga. It is also through words and storytelling, at the urging of the spirit of her grandmother, that Alba survives the abuses and torture of Esteban García, a relative of Alba's and a representative of the military dictatorship that has taken over the country. The power of words to stave off death and despair is a literary theme recurrent in Allende which borrows from the mythic Scheherazade of *1001 nights*. A virgin girl recently wed to her murderous husband, Sahariyar, tells him stories to postpone her imminent murder, and the murder of other young virgins throughout the kingdom. This collection of tales plays a structural role in *Eva Luna* and *Los cuentos* as excerpts from the text frame both the novel and the volume of short stories, the latter approximating more closely the generic structure of the original collection. Additionally, the literary techniques and the motif of storytelling as a means of survival present in *1001 Nights* reappear in *Eva Luna*. Eliana Rivero stresses the connection between the Scheherazade, and the Latin American Eva Luna as "[weavers] of stories and [saviors] of lives" (144). Nevertheless, she suggests that the difference between the two is a matter of the body as Scheherazade births tales and children, and Eva "is not

primarily her body, but her language; her physical form is not supremely relevant, rather it is her words that liberate her" (147). She lives through her words and by them, as the act of storytelling is the discursive and economic bedrock which grants her independence and aids her in the constitution of herself. Through Eva's storytelling, Elena of "Niña perversa" is also brought to life. However, different from Eva, Elena's physical form in its corporeality and incorporeality, are protagonist elements in her liberation.

The language that liberates Eva and ultimately yields the novel's final form, is cast and crucible where the picaresque, the bildungsroman, the fairytale, and the romance genres coalesce. Following the life of the eponymous character through her own first-person account of its development, Eva Luna is a storyteller who makes a living telling stories. As a product of an unusual coupling between her virgin mother, Consuelo, who sexually revives Eva's absentee indigenous father after he suffers a snake bite, Eva's origins are mythic in their own right. She is introduced to the world of storytelling at an early age by her mother who shares with her the transformative power of words. Consuelo tells her that "[l]as palabras son gratis, decía y se las apropiaba, todas eran suyas" (*Eva Luna* 25-26). Despite the precarity which plagues Eva throughout the novel, her access to words is never restricted. Like her mother who made them her own, Eva finds a home and herself in the act of storytelling. Later in the novel, after her mother's death and several attempts at rehoming, Eva is found by the benevolent immigrant, Riad Halabí, and taken to a rural village far from the city center where he becomes her stand-in-father.[81] While there, he helps to shape her mother's gift of oral storytelling into the act of writing, a lesson that is concomitant with her development from a girl into a woman. Rivero highlights the relationship

[81] Like the *niñas fatales* that I examine in this investigation, Eva engages in sexual intercourse with Halabí. However, they wait until she has turned 18 and the coupling lacks the destructive overtones of the *niña fatal*. In other words, he is not destroyed or altered by their coupling.

between this development and Eva's storytelling: "the protagonist embodies a woman in transition who tells her own story to herself in order to create her own being" (152). The self-reflexivity of this exercise and its relationship to Eva's journey of subjectivation enmeshes the process of interior and exterior world-building in which Eva renders a portrait of herself as a subject in a politically unstable world that she has constructed for the reader through the act of telling.[82]

Understanding Eva and her literary persona is important because she also functions as the narrator/source of "Niña perversa." Susana de Carvalho speaks to her role as narrator in the volume stating that she "never distances herself from her story; there are few narrative anticipations, no authorial intrusions, and no implication of a narrator in the present looking back at a distant past . . . The intended effect of this narrative stance, closing the distance between narrator and characters, is to close also the distance between reader and story" (58-59). In this way, readers of "Niña perversa" are invited deeper into a tale that is embedded within a series of metaliterary frames, in a way that distorts those frames while bringing us closer to the text. This generic hall of mirrors and the narratorial layering invite us to consider "Niña perversa" and its contents within Foucault's heterotopia. In other words, the narrative space of the story juxtaposes the narrative space of the volume and of *Eva Luna* while still maintaining a relationality to both through the shared narrator who lingers above the stories as an unimposing source from which they flow.

This short story collection, then, is positioned on a literary substrate which, while functioning autonomously as a collection, is intimately connected to the novel. The motivation behind the volume stems from the relationship between Eva and her male lover and soul mate,

[82] The layering that results from this overlap between Eva the narrator who tells a story about Eva the storyteller reaches even deeper depths towards the end of the novel when Eva composes a script for a television show based on her life. Linda Gould Levine tells us that this script "coincides with the novel, *Eva Luna*, creating a literary hall of mirrors composed of words, stories, and images that mutually reflect one another" (67).

Rolf Carlé whose violent childhood under the iron fist of an abusive father interpolates Eva's recounting of her childhood. Both characters experience the violence of political regimes, Eva on the Latin American front, and Rolf on the European front in the form of Nazism.[83] Despite this violent past, the two find peace in one another at the close of the novel, and *Los cuentos* serves as a "gift of a talented storyteller to the man she loves who fulfills the dual role of spectator—that is, listener and receiver of her tales—and protagonist of one of her stories" (Levine 79). Like the novel, these stories begin with a nod to *1001 Nights*. Additionally, absent the murderous overtones in the case of Scheherazade and Sahariyar, *Los cuentos* is like this frame in that the implied narrator, Eva, is telling these tales to her lover, Rolf. This romantic element is replete in Allende's work and has moved critics to accuse her of anti-feminist tendencies for replicating normative gender constraints that the patriarchy imposes through conventionally "feminine" literary forms. However, in "Niña perversa," the romance on display is hinted at in the title of the story: perverse.

The story is second in a compendium of 23 stories, representing a generic shift for Allende who had previously published lengthier novels. This move accomplishes two things. Firstly, it brings us closer to the form of *1001 nights*, deepening Eva's connection with Scheherazade. It also situates us within the poetics of the short story. Farhat Iftekharuddin considers this the ideal form for speaking to "female body politics" given its open-endedness, its symbolic and metaphorical potential as well as its propensity for enigma (225). She claims that Allende makes use of the story "to incorporate feminine sensuality and explore the hermeneutics of the female condition . . . Allende's female protagonists successfully renounce this attribute by reere-establishingeir natural primacy, which reverses the male/female order" (226-227). The reversal of this order accompanies

[83] Written during her exile in Venezuela, critics consider the political activity on the Latin American front in *Eva Luna* to be concomitant with the Venezuelan political sphere. José Otero cites 7 decades of Venezuelan political history in the novel including "la dictadura del general Juan Vicente Gómez (1908-1935), 2) la de Marco Pérez Jiménez (1953-1958), 3) y la actividad de la guerrilla intensificada durante las presidencias de Rómulo Betancourt (1959-1964) y de Raúl Leoni (1964-1969)" (61).

an inversion of the traditional fairytale schema, on display in *Eva Luna* as well as *Los cuentos*. Emma Staniland explains the role mythmaking plays in Allende's response to the political landscape of Latin America in the 20th century, commenting that in *Eva Luna* "[t]hrough her reworking of the fairytale as a kind of story . . . she as once renders visible and inverts the normalization of a male-dominated world view and the subsequent historical accounts that can be manipulated into damaging grand narratives" (86). This reversal of the male order and the revision of mythic forms which (d)evolve into grand narratives are present in "Niña perversa," which subverts the fairytale to yield a horror story.

This turn to horror is not immediately apparent in the story, especially given the shared characteristics between the fairytale and the horror genre. Both make use of contained narrative frames which tend to recur to isolated places as the setting for the action. Moments of horror are frequent in fairytales, and they often serve as the catalyst motivating characters to heed the underlying moral of the story, which tends to reinforce patriarchal values. This moral demarcates good and bad into neat categories. Yet, when we move into horror, these categories are disrupted and left unclear. This imprecision teams up with fear and pulls readers into an emotional confrontation with the unknown. The move into horror in this story is evident in the upending of certain fairytale conventions. Instead of the *hombre lobo*, Elena is the liminal being who watches over the *pensión* with an omnipotent gaze. Bernal intrudes into Elena's "den" and falls victim to her after which her body is sent into exile. Nevertheless, it lives on in its liminality in his mind, repeatedly returning to presence despite her physical absence. While she returns years later a grown woman, he is locked into reliving contact with a body that no longer exists in the real, but which haunts him perpetually.

This haunting keeps the memory of the *niña perversa* fresh as forbidden knowledge of what is now known but what should not be. Bernal, like readers, is horrified by his desire. However, even more horrifying is that after having come face to face with the prohibited unknown, he returns to it compulsively, reviving that paroxysm. The horror of their sexual encounter is thus exacerbated by the horror of Bernal's perversion, which is triggered by this very encounter. In this way, he is rendered powerless in the face of perversion, becoming more perverse than the perverter. Therefore, horror supplants the patriarchal imperative of the fairytale, instead allowing this story, and Elena, to play with its dismantling.

So, while we have journeyed from the outside frame of *1001 Nights*, into *Eva Luna*, back to *1001 Nights*, and finally into this story within the collection of short stories, we have ended up on the reverse side of a traditional form with a protagonist who embodies the inversion of traditional femininity, thus eliciting abjection. Put differently, by traveling through the looking glass, we are situated in a heterotopic narrative space protagonized by a heterotopic body, that floats ghostlike through a heterotopic setting, the *pensión.* Danielle Manning says of heterotopias that they are "sites that undermine stable relationships, disrupt conventions of order, and negate straightforward categorization" (1). They are familiar and something wholly other. The dread and fear of the unknown cultivated by the horror genre find a home in the unhomely space of the inn where Elena's ghostly body disrupts the order of things, a process likewise underway in the genre itself. It is here where we turn to the *pensión* to examine its function within the story as a heterotopic space, home to Elena and accomplice to her fatal seduction of Bernal.

Spaces of Horror: Areas and Age of Passage

Space is critical to the *niña fatal's* fatality because it showcases her dimensional fluidity and represents the arena in which her seduction plays out. It is typically through her assumption

of power in and over a space, that she emerges victorious over the masculine. With Leticia, her spatial mobility and appropriation of the *despacho* are central to her seduction and overthrow of don Daniel. As we will see with Amalia, her spatial unrestraint and dominion over the Hotel Termas, a space of transition that houses guests in transit, renders it wholly penetrable to her pursuit of Dr. Jano. In "Niña perversa," the *pensión* functions similarly to the Hotel Termas in that it is a space of passage that problematizes the boundary between private and public. Like the hotel, the *pensión* offers private rooms but requires communal interaction in its "public" areas. As such, it is transitory and lacks the anchor of time and possession that are associated with more clearly defined spaces. In this way, the place that Elena calls home is heterotopic because it "[presupposes] a system of opening and closing that both isolates [it] and makes [it] penetrable. In general, the heterotopic site is not freely accessible like a public place . . . To get in one must have a certain permission" (Foucault "Heterotopias" 26). This feature of penetration is highly significant given that it opens the space to Bernal as he gains entry via the gatekeeper.

This gatekeeper is Elena's mother who owns and rigorously controls the *pensión*, laying down the law by establishing the rules and prohibitions for entering and existing within which are "más parecidas a las de un seminario de curas que a las de un hotel" (Allende "Niña perversa" 24). The individuals who are both at home and guests in the *pensión*, are students or "empleados de alguna oscura dependencia de la administración pública" (24). We are informed that they are "damas y caballeros de orden . . . personas de mérito, con una ocupación conocida, buenas costumbres, la solvencia suficiente para pagar el mes por adelantado" (24). Their admittance into this space is concurrent with their orderliness and their ability to follow the rules as dictated by Elena's mother whose choice of pensioners derives from her concern for her reputation as a widow. Despite the absence of her husband, presumably Elena's father, order still prevails. Thus, this

world within the world with its obedient guests is the setting for Elena's home, presided over by her mother who is described as having "un implacable sentido práctico y una noción muy clara de cuanto ocurría bajo su techo, sabía con exactitud qué hacía cada cual a toda hora del día o de la noche, cuánta azúcar quedaba en la despensa, para quién sonaba el teléfono o dónde habían quedado las tijeras" (24). She is the all-knowing sovereign from which the order of Elena's home life derives. Nevertheless, Elena herself challenges the knowable, undermining her mother's power in and over the space.

The relationship between Eva and her mother anticipates the relationship between Amalia and Helena in *La niña santa* and recalls the bond between Leticia and doña Luisa seen in the previous chapter. In the case of all three, there is arguably a necessary overthrowing of the mother which allows the *niña fatal* to arrive at the father and initiate his downfall. The mother is, in many ways, a casualty of the war waged by the *niña fatal*. Claire Lindsay speaks to the conflict between mother and daughter where it concerns Bernal stating, "[t]here is a vital form of conflict that keeps the 'lovers' apart that is characteristic of romance plots, first in Elena's own dislike and distrust of Bernal and then more significantly, in the obstacle of his relationship with her mother" (140). Nevertheless, Lindsay explains that given the "independence and sexual maturity" that Elena reaches at the close of the story, we are faced with a narrative that "is inherently a celebration of this dyadic mother-daughter relationship over and above the Freudian/Lacanian version of the female child's entry into the Symbolic Order" (144). The mother becomes, much like the *niña fatal*, a figure of ambiguous potential. Daughters are required to sever the oneness they share with her to develop selves separate from her. However, in the case of this story, a point which Lindsay speaks to, Elena's mother is the primary site of her learning and emulation of sexual difference in its material form. She is both a necessity acting as a blueprint for Elena's subjective and sexual

realization and eventually a redundancy whose influence is eclipsed by the *niña fatal's.* The result of this ambiguity is a subtle rivalry wherein the mother feeds the daughter tools and knowledge which end in her own displacement. This is evident at the close of the story given that the adolescent body of Elena emerges as the sole (perverse) object of desire in Bernal's mind.

While Elena supplants her mother at the story's close, throughout the greater part of the text she is a figure who is materially evanescent. Lindsay comments on Elena's haunting presence within the *pensión* stating that "[s]he lives a ghostly, incorporeal existence in the boarding-house" (128). Thus, unlike her mother whose presence is well established, Elena blends into the background, becoming one with the space:

> Pasaba desapercibida entre los muebles ordinarios y los cortinajes desteñidos de la pensión de su madre. Era sólo una gata melancólica jugando entre los geranios empolvados y los grandes helechos del patio o transitando entre el fogón de la cocina y las mesas del comedor con los platos de la cena. Rara vez algún cliente se fijaba en ella. (Allende "Niña perversa" 23)

Her ability to pass unnoticed and largely invisible to the guests reinforces her connection to the inn, given that she moves imperceptibly between the ordinary furniture and the faded curtains. The contrast here, however, is that even though she remains unseen, she sees all. This foray into espionage begins as a task from her mother, spying on the guests and keeping her informed as to any suspicious activity. The unintended result exacerbates her incorporeality: "[e]sos trabajos de espía habían acentuado la condición incorpórea de la muchacha, que se esfumaba entre las sombras de los cuartos, existía en silencio y aparecía de súbito, como si acabara de retornar de una dimensión invisible" (24). Her vanishing and reappearing are, indeed, ghostly and indicate her spatial fluidity between realms, one of the salient characteristics of the *niña fatal*. The overlay of

her haunting presence situates Elena as other given that she is invisible but highly vigilant. And while the guests treat the *pensión* as a transition from the public to the private without ever arriving there, Elena journeys deeper into the politics of space and can abandon presence entirely. Consequently, she demonstrates a different dimensionality of the spatial politics that the *niña fatal* problematizes which challenges the public/private divide. In her case, she takes this spatial unrestraint a step further by exploiting the boundary between corporeality and incorporeality. This anticipates her power over Bernal at the story's close whereby she is present in his mind, long after she has absented the inn.

It is worth noting that the hotel/inn/boarding house/pensión has been exploited by the horror genre because of the very characteristics which establish it as a heterotopia. As a liminal space that toes the line between private/public, the *pensión* offers itself only in part as knowable. Thus, familiarity is partial for those staying within its walls. This makes the space vulnerable given that any imposed order is easily disrupted by the interjection of the unknowable or unprecedented which arises from the confluence of guests who come and go, interacting in and isolating themselves within the space. In "Niña perversa," Elena and her mother introduce a layer of temporal permanence that is less ephemeral than that of their guests given that the space serves as their home and place of work and is maintained in an orderly fashion repelling the unprecedented. Nevertheless, the order imposed by Elena's mother is undermined when she "contradijo sus propias reglas" and accepts Juan José Bernal, nicknamed el Ruiseñor, into the *pensión* (25). Elena is surprised by this change of heart given that the guest, a singer who performs during the night and sleeps during the day, is unemployed, vegetarian, and has expensive hygiene habits which require 2 showers a day. His presence causes a marked shift in her mother and the orderly atmosphere of the inn, which are noticed by Elena who registers her mother using perfume,

applying makeup, and making a point to be present for Bernal's meals to listen to his exploits as an artist. These changes in her mother, which she connects to the new guest, are processed by Elena as observations that do not initially lead her to speculate regarding their relationship given the atmosphere of austerity and absence of the feminine masquerade which has prevailed in the inn since Elena's youth. She is unfamiliar with the behaviors of courtship that are showcased by her mother due to the absence of a masculine object of desire in the home environment. In the case of the space, one hot Sunday, when time appears to stand still, Bernal takes his guitar to the patio and begins to sing boleros and rancheras (26). We are told that "[p]or primera vez, desde que la niña podía recordar, hubo en la pensión un ambiente de fiesta" (26). This is a pivotal moment in the story as the change in her mother and the pensión extends to Elena as well, who is awakened to and by this intruder who has radically altered the established order of things.

Her awakening reaches its maximum expression with Bernal's musical performance, which is described in feverish terms and in relation to her corporeality: "Elena sirvió los vasos temblando, sentía las palabras de despecho de esas canciones y los lamentos de la guitarra en cada fibra del cuerpo, como una fiebre" (26). Instead of the ghostlike, disembodied being who blends into the background of the *pensión*, Elena's awakening is described materially and evokes the age-old comparison between desire and disease, similarly present in *Memorias* and *La niña santa.* Language and, more concretely, metaphor are used here to convey a bodily experience that is unknown to these girls who lack this experience. Instead, they look to the comparison between desire and illness, and their similar symptoms, to ground this new feeling in previously experienced signification. Sylvia Carullo tells us that this story serves as an "example of love as an illness, with references to· love-magic" and that as readers, we participate in Elena's growing "frenzy" as she turns her honed espionage into sensual voyeurism which takes Bernal as its object

(196-197). As we will, her voyeurism is enabled by the space which becomes an accomplice in the materialization of her changing body and its emerging desires which prove fatal to Bernal. In this way, the space and her corporeality/incorporeality are intimately linked, given that Elena is passing through the "crisis" of adolescence, thus making the *pensión* a heterotopia of crisis.

Bernal's performance and Elena's awakening are, like other elements in this story, unique to her evolution as a *niña fatal*. While Leticia and Amalia are engaged by don Daniel and Dr. Jano, Elena's shift to disruptive desire responds to the festive shift that Bernal initiates in the inn. In other words, she is not tactilely activated by him, but rather voyeuristically and aurally activated. It is worth noting that, of the three stand-in figures of paternal authority, Bernal is the closest to the discursive constructs of femininity. There is no suggestion of chauvinism in his person and the changes he initiates in the inn are through his powers of seduction rather than an iron fist. He is an eccentric who has impeccable hygiene habits, does not eat meat, and is musically inclined. He profiles a type of masculinity seemingly far removed from the toxic dictates that are imposed by the dictator who forces Allende's removal from her homeland. Nevertheless, the suggestion here reinstates the dread that the undercurrents of horror inspire throughout the story: no man is safe. Additionally, Elena's blooming fatality reacts not just to his performance, but the effect this performance has on her mother who "ondulaba como una sábana secándose en la brisa" (Allende "Niña perversa" 27). This layered performativity which begins with the turn to festivity and ends with Elena's altered attitude towards Bernal is the birthplace of her disruptive desire. The changes his presence have induced in her mother originally produce disgust in Elena. However, his patio serenade and her mother's corporeal response turn Elena to longing. This suggests that the passive feminine masquerade on display in her mother's updated appearance, makeup, and perfume, are not embraced by Elena as moving. It is with the response of her mother's body to Bernal's song,

however, that she is moved to desire a similar change. The absolute presence of her mother motivated by Bernal sets in motion Elena's own quest for presence.

Foucault's theorization of the heterotopia is most often applied to physical, geographic spaces or culturally demarcated places, as we see above with the *pensión*. Nevertheless, the terms space/place are, as Luke Whaley indicates, "slippery" and have been defined, and redefined by a host of disciplines in specific, similar, and diverging ways (23). Where it concerns this chapter, that slippage allows us to view the body, specifically Elena's body, as a place.[84] This is an important consideration especially when the overlay of sex/gender is applied, given that the female body is a site where the complex power relations of the patriarchy play out, as we saw in chapter 1 and will see in chapter 5. The "body-as-place" is further complicated by the "event" of adolescence which, I argue, yields a heterotopic body whose otherness is exacerbated further by the feminine overlay with its seeping, bleeding, secreting orifices. In other words, the adolescent female body is abjectly heterotopic. This point is aptly described by Sady Doyle who affirms, "[w]hether we turn our daughters into vampires, poltergeists, or something else entirely, we persist in finding something corrupt and horrifying and numinous in female puberty. A little girl is less a person than she is a portal. At any moment, she can crack open and *something else* can come slithering through" (14). Doyle's usage of the term "portal" for the girl is especially fitting in Elena's case, given that she straddles the boundary between girl and woman, but also the material divides between corporeality and immateriality which allows her to traverse between realms. Nevertheless, with the arrival of Bernal and the feverish feeling brought on by his performance, Elena's ethereality cedes passage to the haptic emergence of her physical form which abandons

[84] This consideration stems from Foucault's "Utopian Body," a radio lecture delivered in 1966 wherein he claims that the body is "the absolute place, the little fragment of space where I am, literally embodied [faire corps]" (229).

invisibility, becoming more present in the space and within itself. Thus, the *phantasma* returns to its semantic origins and begins the process of making itself visible.

This process is underway in the physical changes that are taking place in Elena's body, showcasing the physiological aspects of adolescence. The opening lines of the short story inscribe her body into the text through a contrasting description whereby her physical form is opposed to her interior self:

> A los once años Elena Mejías era todavía una cachorra desnutrida, con la piel sin brillo de los niños solitarios, la boca con algunos huecos por una dentición tardía, el pelo color de ratón y un esqueleto visible que parecía demasiado contundente para su tamaño y amenazaba con salirse en las rodillas y en los codos. Nada en su aspecto delataba sus sueños tórridos ni anunciaba a la criatura apasionada que en verdad era. (Allende "Niña perversa" 23)

The emphasis on her emaciated frame and visible skeleton which threatens to break through her joints reinserts us generically into the realm of horror and recalls Doyle's imagery of the adolescent girl's body as a portal waiting to crack open revealing a haunting image of what lies within. While the text takes care to highlight these changes that Elena is undergoing, they go unnoticed by her mother, as she is too busy running the operations of the pension: "Su madre, agotada por el calor y el trabajo de la casa, no tenía ánimo para ternuras ni tiempo para observar a su hija, de modo que no supo cuando Elena empezó a mutarse en un ser diferente" (23). Thus, not only is Elena unseen and unregarded by the guests of the inn, but the physical changes she is experiencing are also undetected by her all-knowing mother who demands that Elena assist her in knowing all about everyone else. With the ripples of disruption caused by Bernal's arrival, presence, and performance, Elena's transformation moves from the purely physical realm and begins its work on

her interior, where she retreats into a world of fantasy that takes Bernal as the object of her desire. We are told after witnessing a small exchange between Bernal and her mother that, "[d]esde ese día comenzó a espiar a su madre" (29). Elena becomes the panopticon of the *pensión* whose ephemeral surveilling leads her to observe Bernal and her mother engaging in sex. As is the case with Amalia, she is not a girl who is watched over but a girl who watches. Thus, she displaces the visual pleasure that is typically produced onto females via the voyeurism central to the male gaze, establishing her own as the transgressive site of the desiring subject.

The adult sex scene rendered by Elena's voyeurism causes a marked shift in her mood, which is finally noticed by her mother who attributes the change to "la cercanía de la pubertad, a pesar de que Elena era a todas luces demasiado joven, y se dio tiempo para sentarse a solas con ella y ponerla al día sobre la broma de haber nacido mujer. La niña escuchó en taimado silencio la perorata sobre maldiciones bíblicas y sangres menstruales, convencida de que eso jamás le ocurriría a ella" (30). This represents the first instance in the text where the changes underway in Elena are situated within the discursive, patriarchal construction of femininity and the "broma de haber nacido mujer" along with the prohibitions and maledictions this entails. It is significant that Elena's mother is the bearer of this message. In her analysis of horror films and what she terms the "monstrous feminine," Barbara Creed identifies the mother as speaking "for the symbolic, identifying with an order which has defined women's sexuality as the source of all evil and menstruation as the sign of sin" (14). In other words, her mother is the voice which situates female puberty into the realm of the abject. Nevertheless, Elena's reaction to her mother's homily is grounded in disbelief. Her introduction into the difference characterizing sex/gender socialization and sexuality which precedes this lecture is noted in different terms while she views the act of copulation between Bernal and her mother. Surprised by the fundamental differences between the

two, she considers "la naturaleza masculina" as "brutal," "rígido, torpe, de movimientos espasmódicos, un trozo de madera sacudido por una ventolera inexplicable," while her mother is compared to a round, pink sea anemone that is all "boca y manos y piernas y orificios, rodando y rodando adherida al cuerpo grande de Bernal" (Allende "Niña perversa" 29-30). She is repelled by and scared of the masculine yet forces herself to keep her eyes open and after a time observes the scene "para aprender de su madre los gestos que habían logrado arrebatarle a Bernal" (30). Thus, the lesson which impacts Elena is not her mother's remonstration of a girl/woman's bodily functions and place in patriarchal society, but rather the experiential knowledge of the female body's role in winning over the masculine.

Creed explains about horror that "that which crosses or threatens to cross the "border" is abject" (11). While Elena has not yet begun to menstruate, it is through a different fluid, vomit, that her interior self "comes slithering through." This ushers her body across the threshold of incorporeality into total materiality, and her fantasies into reality. After her mother's lecture, Elena enters the inn's pantry and gourges: "se devoró el contenido de tres tarros de arvejas, luego le quitó el vestido de cera roja a un queso holandés y se lo comió como una manzana" (Allende "Niña perversa" 30). Following this gluttonous episode, she runs out onto the patio and "vomitó una verde mezcolanza sobre los geranios" (30). To return to Kristeva's theory of the abject, she specifies that in vomiting,

> I expel myself, I spit myself out, I abject myself within the same motion through which 'I' claim to establish myself. That detail, perhaps an insignificant one, but one that they ferret out, emphasize, evaluate, that trifle turns me inside out, guts sprawling; it is thus that they see that 'I' am in the process of becoming an other at the expense of my own death, During

> that course in which 'I' become, I give birth to myself amid the violence of sobs, of vomit. (*Powers of Horror* 3)

The destabilizing power of the abject that brings Elena back into possession of herself, the pain in her stomach, and the acid on her tongue "le devolvieron el sentido de la realidad" (Allende "Niña perversa" 30). Her insides are turned inside out, and she emerges on the other end awakened to a reality that later proves horrific for readers and Bernal. The text highlights this crossing with imagery that recalls Elena's childlikeness, "Esa noche durmió tranquila, enrollada en su hamaca, chupándose el dedo como en los tiempos de la cuna" (30-31). She awakens, happy and helping her mother after which she sets off for school. We are briefly reminded in this return to infancy of Elena's age and the process of transformation which she is undergoing. Nevertheless, this awakening is more than it seems, as the girl that has emerged post-purging is a *niña fatal* whose previous phantasmagoric self is decided on bringing both her body and her fantasies over into the real, seducing her mother's lover who has roused her desire. However, for Elena, this move situates her and her future seduction within the abject, ultimately purging the discourse of innocence assigned to her girlhood.

Doyle comments that "[a]dolescence is one of the most frightening and protracted forms of liminality, a time when someone is neither a child nor an adult, but can seem like either, or both" (10). This liminality is particularly acute in girls because of the interplay between femininity and adolescence, which critics have consistently cited as competing, if not contradictory discourses whose objectives are at odds with one another.[85] To add to this contradiction, Sinikka Aapola

[85] See Driscoll's chapter "Feminine Adolescence" wherein she traces the feminine process of adolescence in modernity. Regarding the contradiction between femininity and adolescence, she specifies that "the difficulties with which girls negotiate adolescence have mostly been interpreted as the struggle for proper femininity, or the struggle to retain a sense of self in the face of expected femininity. Adolescence and femininity are thus seen as contradictory even though femininity is simultaneously presented as being formed in adolescence" (58).

reminds us that, "[g]irls are culturally defined by discourses of femininity and adolescence, which put them in a position of double 'Otherness' in relation to the culturally dominant discourses of masculinity and adulthood" (55). Existing both within (femininity/adolescence) and exterior too (masculinity/adulthood) this life stage, this is a layered otherness that is characterized culturally as a highly disruptive, transformative, ambiguous shift in which subjectivation is underway. The fact that Elena experiences these changes in a heterotopic environment that is marked by ambiguity is significant as she herself is heterotopic within this space. Perhaps for this reason, adolescent girls, like the hotel/inn/boarding house/pension, find a home in the horror genre. The unfamiliarity of a body and self in transformation situates us within the unknown, and the potentially monstrous, given that we do not know what that body/self will become or what that body/self will do. In Elena's case, she does not do what she is supposed to do. The discursive choices that are designed to guide her body and self into familiar and knowable frameworks are subverted by her desire and sexual awakening born of fantasies that trigger her haptic emergence.

The Phantasm that Fantasizes: Haptic Emergence and Inverting Perversion

Valerie Walkerdine tells us that "if we want to understand the production of girls as subjects and the production of alternatives for girls, we must take account of desire and fantasy" (*Daddy's Girl* 182). Her investigation is directed toward texts, particularly girls' comics, that lay the groundwork for girls' entry into heterosexual practices. Nevertheless, her conclusions are highly relevant to understanding Elena's subjectivation in "Niña Perversa," given that desire and fantasy are integral to this process. By examining the evolution of Elena's desire for Bernal and the corresponding fantasies which evolve in response to this desire, Elena moves from the invisible realm of silence and immateriality into a material emergence. To this end, the semantic origin of phantasm and fantasy, from the Greek *phantazein* meaning "to make visible," is important.

Through her body and desires, Elena becomes more visible, emerging as a *niña fatal*, perverting the intruder Bernal who has accused her of perversion. Yet through her fantasies and their impact upon the real, the problematic nature of fantasy in patriarchal culture is also revealed. The socially constructed fantasy of sexualized girlhood is challenged by *niñas fatales* given that it is not the masculine gaze that constructs them as sexual, but rather their own agential fantasy formation that creates objects of desire out of men, and more specifically men who represent the father's stand-in. These fantasies do not remain in the imaginary realm but are brought into the real. This shift in power and object-desired causes us to recoil in horror at their actions because they make objects out of the object makers. In Elena's case, this realization of her fantasies results in her exile to a boarding school run by nuns.

We are alerted to Elena's vibrant interior world from the outset of the story which, as we have seen, informs us of the contrast between her unassuming exterior presence and her interior which boasts "sus sueños tórridos" (Allende "Niña perversa" 23). This recalls the space of the pension itself which, on the surface, is modest but within whose interior brews a host of torrid encounters and feverish fantasies. This contrast continues as we learn that during Elena's childhood, she was "una niña silenciosa y tímida, entretenida siempre en juegos misteriosos, que hablaba sola por los rincones y se chupaba el dedo," and who rarely left the *pensión* (23). Her worldly excursions were limited to school or the market, and like Leticia, "no parecía interesada en el bullicioso rebaño de niños de su edad que jugaban en la calle" (23). Nevertheless, Elena taps into the world of fantasy which finds ample material within the walls of the inn since it lures exteriority into its interior with an array of guests whose lives she attempts to embellish "atribuyéndoles algún evento extraordinario, pintándolas de colores con el regalo de algún amor clandestino o alguna tragedia" (24). She, like Leticia and Amalia, engage in the narrative endeavor

of fantasy formation which moves from the realm of the narrative to the real. Elena's propensity for fantasizing predates Bernal's arrival but presages the contents of her fantasy featuring him which develops after his patio performance.

As indicated previously, this performance is a turning point for Elena and the act which transforms her profound detestation of Bernal into erotic desire through her voyeuristic and aural engagement with Bernal's song and her mother's dance. With his arrival, there is more work to do around the pensión given that his habits as a guest disrupt the observed timeframe for completing her chores. Her hatred for him is described in physical terms: "Le repugnaba su pelo engrasado con brillantina, sus uñas barnizadas, su manía de escarbarse los dientes con un palito, su pedantería y su descaro para hacerse servir" and she perceives his presence as overwhelming given that he "ocupaba todo el espacio de la casa y toda la atención de su madre" (26). As such, Bernal infiltrates a space that Elena has previously occupied in its entirety, albeit incorporeally. While her desire blooms, so do the illusions to her increasing material emergence and her fantasies of occupying the whole of the pension. Additionally, his occupation of the physical space is equated with the occupation of the space in her mother's mind which we are led to believe was previously reserved for Elena. In this way, he takes from her the little attention her mother pays her while forcing her to adjust to his routine. Elena's mother's shift in attention, which indicates her own engagement with fantasy formation, is noteworthy with regards to Elena's evolving fantasies given that she has long played a role in recognizing them as such: "tenía un instinto certero para detectar sus fantasías" (24). However, with Bernal's disruptive integration into the inn, not only is her mother unaware of the exterior changes her body is undergoing, but she also is unable to detect Elena's blooming sexual fantasies featuring Bernal. This allows for Elena's mind and body to roam free without adult intervention.

Lindsay describes Elena's relationship with her mother as one of dependence and relates Elena's solitary habits as a child back to this relationship (143). The narrative renders a more ambiguous picture which points to either an absent emotional bond between the two, or a total symbiosis which nullifies their need to converse: "Madre e hija trabajaban juntas en las múltiples ocupaciones de la pensión, cada una inmersa en su callada rutina, sin necesidad de comunicarse. En realidad se hablaban poco y cuando lo hacían, en el rato libre de la hora de la siesta, era sobre los clientes" (Allende "Niña perversa" 24). Either way, this silence is exacerbated when her mother's attention shifts to Bernal. The identification which characterized their relationship before his arrival is disrupted, and separation ensues. This is exemplified in the performance on the patio where Elena and her mother embrace: "Por un largo rato, Elena se movió siguiendo la cadencia de la voz de Bernal, apretada contra el cuerpo de su madre, aspirando su nuevo olor a flores, totalmente dichosa. Pronto, sin embargo, notó que la rechazaba con suavidad, separándola para seguir sola" (27). After she pushes Elena away, her mother stands alone, eyes closed and lost in her dance. This is significant because the movement away from Elena, as well as her "closing her eyes" renders her unable to see her daughter's interior and exterior transformations resulting from Bernal's interruption into the space. As is the case for Amalia, the entry of a stand-in father figure situates us within a negative Oedipal structure, whereby mother and daughter are drawn to the same man. Lindsay alleges that Allende "is clearly working within an established patriarchal Oedipal paradigm which she unsettles by foregrounding the marginal, that is figure of the young girl and the mother-daughter dyad" (145). Elena disturbs this paradigm further. Rather than the repression of her sexual desires, she crosses the threshold between fantasy and reality, effectuating the traumatic encounter with the impossible object of her desire.

Both the explicit and not-so-explicit lessons of her mother are central to Elena's realization of this crossing. This first lesson is the language of vision, as she encourages Elena's proliferating espionage targeting the guests, which eventually moves into voyeurism targeting Bernal. When he first arrives at the pensión, we are told that Elena registers his eyes on her mother's backside who carries his suitcases up the stairs to his room, all the while "disimulándose contra la pared" (Allende "Niña perversa" 25). In other words, she sees what he sees, the male gaze and its targeting of the female as the site of visual pleasure. She spies on the spy while remaining unseen. After she is activated by his performance, much like don Daniel's fondling of Leticia's hair, and Dr. Jano's street molestation of Amalia, her seeing begins to display the erotic hints which reinscribe Bernal's features in the text, not as characteristics she hates, but rather ones she desires: "Lo observaba de lejos, a hurtadillas, y así fue descubriendo aquello que antes no supo percibir, sus hombros, su cuello ancho y fuerte, la curva sensual de sus labios gruesos, sus dientes perfectos, la elegancia de sus manos, largas y finas" (27). Like the piecemeal dissection Leticia makes of don Daniel's body as she observes him in the *despacho*, Elena too observes Bernal's physical features, moving from one body part to the next, the erotic embellishment obvious in the adjectives used to describe them. However, she does this from afar, without being seen, replicating the male gaze that she observed in him previously which targeted her mother's backside. This is transgressive, given that the girl gazes at the man who has historically been the privileged gazer. The result is a blooming desire for physical proximity to this man and his body:

> Le entró un deseo insoportable de aproximarse a él para enterrar la cara en su pecho moreno, escuchar la vibración del aire en sus pulmones y el ruido de su corazón, aspirar su olor, un olor que sabía seco y penetrante, como de cuero curtido o de tabaco. Se imaginaba a sí misma jugando con su pelo, palpándole los músculos de la espalda y de las piernas,

descubriendo la forma de sus pies, convertida en humo para metérsele por la garganta y ocuparlo entero. (27)

Her visual excursion of his body parts initiates her desire for closeness to him which emphasizes the haptic, "para enterrar la cara en su pecho moreno," the aural, "escuchar la vibración del aire en sus pulmones y el ruido de su corazón," and the olfactory, "aspirar su olor, un olor que sabía seco y penetrante, como de cuero curtido o de tabaco." This suggests an awakening of her sensorial repertoire to accompany the growing desire which, born of observation, makes its way inside to become a sensual fantasy. Her final desire is to effervesce into smoke and penetrate him, occupying him entirely, much like his own presence in the inn. Here we have our first indication of the destructive nature of Elena's desire, which Carullo explains that "[w]ithin the evolution of Elena's sexual impulses, one can see her desire for control and total domination of the man" (197). Her desire for domination grows, and despite being unable to turn into smoke, she turns to invisibility to penetrate his space, inverting his presence's original omnipotence over the inn.

Fantasy is the interior space where desire is staged and rehearsed for its eventual emergence. Elena's spatial relationship to the pensión and her ephemerality allows her to exteriorize her fantasy in Bernal's room without being seen while he is absent. She taps into her ghostliness, "salía como un fantasma a vagar por el primer piso" to enter his room where she closes the door, opens the blinds and begins "las ceremonias que había inventado para apoderarse de los pedazos del alma de ese hombre, que se quedaban impregnando sus objetos" (Allende "Niña perversa" 28). Here, we again see Elena's blooming desire to take possession or dominate Bernal through a ritualized ceremony that penetrates his space and brings her body into contact with his via fantasy and a performed voyeurism, bifurcating her into two. This bifurcation suggests a

blurring that takes place in this space born first out of vision and finally haptic emergence, combining the two bodies into one:

> En la luna del espejo, negra y brillante como un charco de lodo, se observaba largamente, porque allí se había mirado él y las huellas de las dos imágenes podrían confundirse en un abrazo. Se acercaba al cristal con los ojos muy abiertos, viéndose a sí misma con los ojos de él, besando sus propios labios con un beso frío y duro, que ella imaginaba caliente, como boca de hombre. Sentía la superficie del espejo contra su pecho y se le erizaban las diminutas cerezas de los senos, provocándole un dolor sordo que la recorría hacia abajo y se instalaba en un punto preciso entre sus piernas. Buscaba ese dolor una y otra vez. (28)

Seeing herself in the mirror through his eyes, eyes which had previously regarded his own self in the mirror, her body comes alive with the pulse of sexual desire. Foucault privileges the mirror as a heterotopia and clarifies that "it makes this place that I occupy at the moment when I look at myself in the glass at once absolutely real, connected with all the space that surrounds it, and absolutely unreal, since in order to be perceived it has to pass through this virtual point which is over there" ("Of Other Spaces" 24). In her heterotopic body, Elena engages the otherness of the mirror to bring her fantasies featuring Bernal closer to reality given that she cannot engage him in the "real". Through the bifurcation of herself achieved via the heterotopic power of the mirror, she comes closer to Bernal, while her body becomes more present in the text and in her own awareness as she looks for the pleasure/pain she feels in between her legs repeatedly.

Her merger with Bernal continues, as her ritual moves from the mirror to his closet. She engages in a cross-dressing ritual and a sensual probing of his possessions, following which she initiates an autoerotic episode that brings her body into clearer focus via her own sexual and masturbatory exploration:

> Del armario sacaba una camisa y las botas de Bernal y se las ponía. Daba unos pasos por el cuarto con mucho cuidado, para no hacer ruido. Así vestida hurgaba en sus cajones, se peinaba con su peine, chupaba su cepillo de dientes, lamía su crema de afeitar acariciaba su ropa sucia. Después, sin saber por qué lo hacía, se quitaba la camisa, las botas y su camisón y se tendía desnuda sobre la cama de Bernal, aspirando con avidez su olor, invocando su calor para envolverse en él. Se tocaba todo el cuerpo, empezando por la forma extraña de su cráneo, los cartílagos translúcidos de las orejas, las cuencas de los ojos, la cavidad de su boca, y así hacia abajo dibujándose los huesos, los pliegues, los ángulos y las curvas de esa totalidad insignificante que era ella misma, deseando ser enorme, pesada y densa como una ballena. (Allende "Niña perversa" 28-29)

The expressions of tactility throughout this passage are highly erotic and showcase Elena's awakening sexuality that surfaces through touch. The mingling of hair, spit, and scent and the verbs, sucking, licking, and caressing, situate us within the sensual world of an adolescent whose fantasy is brought closer to the real via this ceremony. The eminence of Elena's body is presented here in similar terms as her mother's whose body she sees later in the sexual act with Bernal, hinting at the blooming rivalry between the two, albeit unbeknownst to her mother. The emphasis on her desire to be whalelike, growing big enough to fill the whole house with her swollen mass hints at the power of Elena's desire which moves her from the smallness and incorporeality characterizing her existence before Bernal's arrival, into a material corporeality which threatens to overthrow his pervasive presence in the inn. In this way, Elena's desire and fantasy are relational to her engagement with the spatial politics at work in the pension which had initially constituted her body as a phantasmagoric presence/absence. Her growing desire for Bernal is

commensurate with her growing awareness of her own body which, as her desire peaks, is brought into full view when she decides to make her ritualistic ceremonies a reality.

Lacan, borrowing from Spinoza, states that "[d]esire is the essence of reality" (7). Elena desires herself into being when she crosses the fantasy/reality threshold. After her abject episode, she emerges from the "realidad fantástica que reemplazó por completo al mundo de los vivos" that viewing Bernal and her mother having sex induced (Allende "Niña perversa" 30). Following her infant-like sleep, she sets off for school. Nevertheless, once there, she feigns a stomachache and is sent home. Instead of entering the home as a resident within its walls, however, Elena takes on the role of intruder: "se aproximó a la casa por la pared del fondo, que daba a un barranco. Logró trepar el muro y saltar al patio con menos riesgo del esperado" (31). She penetrates Bernal's room, much like he originally penetrated the space of the pension, and knowing its geography by heart from her fantastic ritual, she channels her years of incorporeality to make her way, undressed, next to Bernal's sleeping body. When there, we are told that the fear which had plagued her for the past days disappeared, "dejándola limpia, con la tranquilidad de quien sabe lo que debe hacer" (31). Yet clean, is precisely the opposite of the discursive qualification of Elena's actions which incur Bernal's condemnation. Louis-Paul Willis claims that the fatal girl child "is the impure and sexual opposite of the angelic and idyllic vision of asexual childhood" (9). By activating her sexuality, she shatters the proscription of innocence attributed to her sex/gender/age. In what follows, Elena reaches beneath the elastic of Bernal's boxers. He places her on top of him and begins to initiate "los primeros movimientos de amor" (Allende "Niña perversa" 32). Feeling the "fragilidad extrema de ese esqueleto de pájaro sobre su pecho" Bernal realizes that the body on top of him is not his lover, but rather Elena who, as a "gata melancólica," has finally trapped the "Ruiseñor" in her claws. Her mother's oversight in allowing Bernal into the interior of the pensión converts it,

ironically, into a "nido de pervertidos" where Elena, who has been transformed into a skeletal bird, initiates Bernal into the throes of perversion. He then hits her, throws her off him, and condemns her saying, "-¡Perversa, niña perversa!" (32).

Elena traverses the line separating reality and fantasy, and through her subversive sexual encounter with Bernal, her existence is cemented into the text, despite its being regarded as horrific by the masculine eye which condemns her as perverse. Willis reminds us that "the fantasy of girlhood and of femininity obfuscates the girls' actual existence" (8). Nevertheless, Elena, by engaging her sexuality, moves from object to subject, absent to present, which is horrific in that it defies the traditional discourses of emphasized femininity and childhood. As we have indicated, this movement is highly significant with regards to understanding the *niña fatal* as a literary trope, given that, like the *femme fatale*, her liminality and power of crossing render her difficult to read because she "[blends] one perception of her into yet another" (Hedgecock 23). This blending is heightened in Elena and the other *niñas fatales* of this investigation because of their age, which is accompanied by specific discourses of sexual purity that they undermine. Janet Holland states that "[w]hen women are able to take control of their sexuality in an active femininity, they can bring the social shaping of their material bodies into consciousness" (22). When girls take control of their sexuality in an active femininity that targets the father or his stand-in, they do more than bring their material bodies into consciousness. They additionally disturb and defy masculine control over the constitution of the very bodies that these girls have taken control over. Consequently, the father's downfall is initiated. In the case of "Niña perversa," Bernal's ruin occurs through the inversion of perversion, which brings generic concerns, the fairytale inverted, to dialogue with textual resolutions.

Unlike *Memorias* and *La niña santa*, this story gives us an epilogue of sorts in which the narratorial style switches in tone and focus. We are transported forward in time and see Elena return to the story as a woman. The text details this pasage of time stating, "Elena pasó los siete años siguientes en un internado de monjas, tres más en una universidad de la capital y después entró a trabajar en un banco" (Allende "Niña perversa" 32-33). Unlike her mother whose occupation had confined her to the home and the domestic duties this entailed, Elena's exile hints at the emancipatory potential— university and a career—that is generated by the release from the home environment, similarly experienced by Allende. Yet, her progression stands in stark contrast to Bernal's who has regressed into a pedophiliac perversion that was initiated by Elena's adolescent desire made a reality. This is where the fruits of her fatality ripen. While the main body of text describes Elena's developing fantasy featuring Bernal, this epilogue tells us that in his mind, "La imagen de la niña permaneció intacta para él, los años no la rozaron, siguió siendo la criatura lujuriosa y vencida de amor a quien él rechazó" (33). As he makes love to his wife, Elena's mother whom he has married and with whom he has moved to a house in the countryside, he has to evoke "meticulosamente a Elena, para despertar el impulso cada vez más difuso del placer" (33). Elena's adolescent body has displaced her mother by becoming the perverse object of desire for Bernal. Yet his pleasure, which is effervescing, stands in stark contrast to the blooming pleasure experienced by Elena during her ritualized ceremonies in which she penetrated his room at the inn.

Bernal's perversion does not stop there, however, but similarly evokes the haptic and the voyeuristic elements which also characterized Elena's emerging desire: "En la madurez iba a las tiendas de ropa infantil y compraba bragas de algodón para deleitarse acariciándolas y acariciándose," "Se aficionó a rondar las escuelas y los parques, para observar de lejos a las muchachas impúberes, que le devolvían por unos momentos demasiado breves el abismo de ese

jueves inolvidable" (33). Thus, his move into pedophilic desire exposes the underlying perversion of the father and his stand-in. Like don Daniel and Dr. Jano, Bernal, who originally resists the seduction of the *niña fatal*, ultimately falls prey to her perverse desire at the stories close. Yet, his is the true perversion whereas she is the catalyst for its surfacing. In this way, he activates her fatality, and she returns the favor by unveiling his corruption.

In this journey forward in time, we are faced with a temporal distortion whereby Bernal has remained fixated on a memory. The way this memory is recalled reverses us through the mechanisms which enabled Elena to come into existence in the text, the haptic and the voyeuristic. Additionally, prior to her return home at the age of 27 to introduce her boyfriend to her mother and step-father, Bernal has a moment with the mirror: "Se había mirado al espejo incansablemente, escrutando su propia imagen, preguntándose si Elena vería los cambios o si en la mente de ella el Ruiseñor habría permanecido invulnerable al desgaste del tiempo" (33). We have gone through the looking glass again, and are now faced with Bernal looking at himself, trying to envision how Elena will see him. But his mental image (desire) of Elena is that of the little girl she no longer is, and upon arriving, the narrator informs us that Bernal sees her in her womanhood and feels betrayed (34). His erotic fantasy of the adolescent girl is shattered by her womanhood and his desire, unlike hers, is prevented from entering the real. Rather than emergence, Bernal's regression is one of decadence. As the story ends, he corners her in the kitchen to apologize for hitting her and calling her perverse that one Thursday long ago, hoping that her forgiveness would return his sanity: "el ardiente antojo por ella lo había acosado sin descanso, quemándole la sangre y corrompiéndole el espíritu" (34). She has buried the memory and has no idea what he is talking about, suggesting the repression of an episode that time has revealed as traumatic. In other words,

while Bernal has repeatedly evoked this intimate encounter, Elena's own imposed amnesia has silenced it, refusing to allow it to surface.

The inversion of perversion, the switch from emergence to decadence, from realized desire to soul-corrupting fantasy, positions Elena as a *niña fatal* whose sexual awakening wreaks havoc on the father, showcasing him and his power as in decline. Helene Weldt-Basson says of Allende that in this story she "provides an ironic inversion of traditional stereotypes through an appropriation of them. She employs the stereotype of the female ruled by her passion for a man, only to invert it and create an obsessive male passion that translates into an unhappy life for Bernal" (128). This represents a turning of the tables given that Bernal's original intrusion into the pensión is disruptive—he is everywhere, and he usurps the attention, albeit infrequent, her mother once paid to her. However, it is Elena in her abjectly heterotopic adolescent body whose disruption is far more pronounced as she triggers Bernal's decline into a corruption from which he is unable to escape. The shift from niña perversa to perverse father, then, is effectuated through disruptive desire. Speaking to passive femininity and its effects on women's desire, Holland explains that "[w]omen are both sexually subordinated by men, and drawn into the constitution of heterosexuality as male dominated in part through the efforts they put into the constitution of passive femininity, which effectively silences their own desires" (27). While Elena is originally portrayed as a silent, ghostlike creature, her desire, and its move into the realm of the real, screams loud enough to shatter the foundations of this sexual subordination and showcases Bernal as the powerless, degenerating man whose own perverse desire has stagnated him in time. Elena moves forward while he stays back. The daughter moves into the future, making it her own, while the father remains anchored in the past, his power and influence decaying with the invariability and repetition of his perversion.

Conclusions

Of the three close readings in this investigation, "Niña Perversa" proves to be perhaps the most challenging because as readers, we are made aware of the after, the woman that Elena has become. We are not given the same preview into Leticia's or Amalia's futures. In this story, however, we are privy to the long-term effects of the *niña fatal*'s fatality which renews itself despite her move into adulthood. Thus, although Elena ceases to be a *niña fatal* at the story's close, the effects of her fatality do not wane with time. Additionally, Elena's boyfriend whom she brings home at the close of the story is in the military and despite her not accepting his marriage proposal, this relationship harkens us back to the authoritarian patriarchal discourse surrounding heterosexual normativity in females. This is perhaps one of the examples that critics who take issue with Allende's feminism point to as not going far enough. Nevertheless, there is something radical in the girlhood behavior of Elena which unveils a tension shared by girls and women: existing while not existing, being molded into women that exist without being seen. This was a primary objective of the body politic concerning girls and women during the Pinochet regime which sought to return them to the home, wifedom, and motherhood. Elena's exile, which results from her deviant femininity, is like Allende's exile in that they are both removed from the home environment and faced with alternatives for different futures.

Elena's subversive seduction, characteristic of the *niña fatal*, also brings her body and awakened sexuality into clear view making it impossible to unsee her. Yet, she is characterized by a heightened ambivalence derived from her heterotopic body which resides, like the exile, in the in-between. This increases her disruptive power given that she initiates a collapse in meaning as we know it through her targeting of the meaning maker, which is not only mutinous but monstrous. Readers are haunted by this textual phantasm of the *niña fatal* who disorders order through her

disruptive desire. Through his elaboration of the discursive potential of heterotopias, Foucault illustrates that they "desiccate speech, stop words in their tracks, contest the very possibility of grammar at its source: they dissolve our myths and sterilize the lyricism of our sentences" (*The Order of Things* xviii). Unlike Leticia and her words, Amalia and her prayers, Elena is not a speaker. Nevertheless, her material emergence shatters the symbolic order upon which words are winged. Thus, her subjectivity is brought into view outside of the father's law which demands proper gendered socialization. Instead of turning away from perversity, Elena turns to it. This induces another pivot whereby the father is turned to perversity. However, his emergence from it, unlike hers, is not successful, heralding his decadence.

Order is additionally threatened by the generic particularity of *Los cuentos.* The volume resides inside the creative universe of Eva Luna who is impacted by Scheherazade who similarly impacts the work of Allende. There are layers to the chain of signification here that privilege the gynocentric turn. By acknowledging the existence of other spaces, worlds within our world, which are free from the bounds of the authoritative correction of the father, the potential for new meaning and new ways of existing surface which embrace difference. In this story, difference is marked by contradictions and alterity as the discourses of adolescence, femininity, and exile probe the bounds of signification through their own dynamism. As such, in our journey down Allende's metaliterary rabbit hole, we become aware of the power of words, and the power which seeks to curtail them. And while Elena is not primarily her words, rather her abject adolescent body which disturbs and disorders, she opens herself up to a broader range of subject positions and self-definitions, activated through the perversion of the discourses of emphasized femininity.

Chapter 4: Profaning Patriarchy's Hierophany: *La niña* not so *santa*

For both *Memorias* and "Niña perversa," exile serves as a function of their plots and as a characteristic of their production. If the work of Rosa Chacel and Isabel Allende are testament to the potential of writing beyond from the beyond, director Lucrecia Martel and Amalia (María Alché), protagonist of Martel's 2004 film *La niña santa*, take us down a comparable path. However, unlike exiles who "cross borders, break barriers of thought and experience" (Said, "Reflections" 147), Martel plays with the fringes from within. While *Memorias* and "Niña perversa" deal with interiority in specific ways, in *La niña santa* our journey "inside" becomes more literal and increasingly complicated. Based in the northern Argentine province of Salta, the setting for the film moves us away from the country's metropolitan center, Buenos Aires, and situates us in the interior of the Argentine periphery: the inside of the edge. This motif repeats as we move further inside to the "domestic spaces of the 'interior'" of the decadent Hotel Termas (Russell), a public/private space, like the *pensión* of the previous chapter, whose rooms and service centers are home to Amalia, the film's *niña fatal*, and her single mother, Helena (Mercedes Morán). Martel's cinematic style participates in the exposition of interiority as well given the preponderance of close-ups and her framing techniques in which the cinematic frames are framed by architectural frames that invite us further "inside".[86] [87] Yet, instead of a clearer picture of spaces and processes, we are left with the impression that the camera has zoomed in too far and we are too close for comfort. Like the literary strategies of Allende and Chacel, this results in the blurring

[86] For more, see Holmes (2011) who details the construction of Martel's artistic and architectural framing that is present in the physical spaces of the film which "[defy] hegemonic aesthetics for the framing and definition of interior space" (133).

[87] Caroline Godart examines Bergon's concept of intuition, whereby a subject makes sense of the world from the inside, and how that provides spectators with an alternative to the process for onscreen identification typical of mainstream films (92). Godart explores *La niña santa* through this theory of interior processing whereby we enter the onscreen world and are challenged to understand Amalia as a character. Thus, while the interior is essential to Martel's aesthetic, Godart elaborates on it as a critical tool for understanding this aesthetic as well.

of boundaries and a growing claustrophobia that assists in the deconstruction of meaning so that the familiar is rendered strange and unrecognizable.[88] Amalia makes this estrangement worse.

Meaning and the structures that organize its expression are similarly challenged in the film through an intentional disruption of dichotomizing classifications. Deborah Martin supports this idea in her claim that the film "mediates" upon these dichotomies and intentionally seeks to blur "the social and cultural categories" that uphold their supremacy (*The Cinema* 54). Martel herself declares that the film is not concerned with "the Manichaean relation of good and evil but precisely in the place they become blurred" ("Vocational Education"). This chapter explores Amalia's role in that process of blurring and claims that acting as a *niña fatal*, she breaks with patriarchal prescripts responsible for encoding a socially acceptable and normative discursive formation in young girls. In her blossoming subjectivity, she distorts the illusory division between the good/evil polarity on her own divine mission, which is rooted in the religious rhetoric of perversion and saintliness, salvation and damnation. She is propelled on this mission after Jano (Carlos Belloso), a mature male participant attending a medical conference held at the Hotel Termas, presses his genitals against her backside. Her subsequent desire to "save" him is steeped in an erotic tension that destabilizes conventional configurations of religiosity and childhood sexuality. In this way, desire impacts upon adolescent subjectivity and allows Amalia the freedom to pursue this calling, which manifests through the merger of sexuality and spirituality.

This freedom is heavily influenced by environmental factors, both spatial and familial. Amalia's "home" hosts an ever-revolving door of primarily male guests, which recalls the ever-

[88] Dominque Russell (2008), Hugo Ríos (2008), Cécile François (2009), and Katy Stewart (2015) trace this prevailing sensation of claustrophobia to Martel's privileging of close-up shots. François adds that mirrors play an additional role in exacerbating the spectators sense of confinement: "La sensación de desorientación y de encierro viene reforzada por la presencia en el campo de espejos que no solo reconstruyen la imagen multiplicándola sino que contribuyen a subrayar la impresión de confinamiento."

revolving door of heads of government during the 19th century in Argentina.[89] The suggestion of the fleeting influence of male sovereignty is reinforced by the figures of longevity at the hotel who are, by-in-large, female. Additionally, the impotent or failing fathers in the film, indicating the waning of paternal authority, facilitate Amalia's distortion of binaries which would otherwise condition her normative socialization in the eyes of a conservative, classist, religious society. However, it is precisely through Amalia's eyes and her female gaze, that she disrupts the conventions of the male gaze, as well as the clinical male gaze. In the film's formal composition, Martel unsettles the privilege that is conferred onto vision, and instead of occupying a site of supremacy, Hugo Ríos tells us that "la visión ya no se somete a los demás sentidos sino que sirve para promoverlos" (2). So, while Amalia harnesses the power of the gaze, Martel's cinematic world creates an aperture wherein the senses and the body conflate with the power of vision to overthrow the patriarchal system of ascendancy/subordination in which vision has historically been situated as dominant. This motif repeats continually in the film as differentiated pairs are dismantled and their rigid demarcations blurred. Amalia is the motor of this blurring through which, similar to the previous chapter, the reality/fantasy, child/adult, masculine/feminine, and sacred/profane binaries are made ambiguous. Thus, the formally surveilled child victim in need of saving becomes the *surveillant*, the child victimizer who saves. This act of salvation, however, has hellish consequences.

This switch from surveilled to *surveillant* is significant because it reverses the 19th-century trend, of placing the child, their body, and their sexuality under the microscope. Instead, Amalia disrupts the "relations of power/knowledge" that constitute the discursive bounds of feminine adolescence via her haunting pursuit of Jano (Foucault, "Two Lectures" 99). Additionally, this

[89] Between the start of the Argentine Revolution in 1966 until 2003, the year before *La niña santa's* cinematic release, executive power changed hands 25 times.

reversal is two-fold because it evokes the military junta's reliance on the "salvacionista" discourse referenced in chapter 1, which categorized children and adolescents either as victims in need of saving or converted them into victims by torturing and/or killing them because they did not fit within the dominant discursive field carved out by the regime. This is not to say that Amalia is a symbol and the film is allegorical, and multiple critics have commented on "New Argentine Cinema's" (NAC) avoidance or frustration of allegorical interpretations (Aguilar 24).[90] Nevertheless, Joanna Page remarks that the unifying idea in Martel's "Salta Trilogy" is "la del 'desamparo', que significa literalmente la ausencia de protección o de refugio" ("Espacio privado" 166).[91] The abandonment present in these three NAC films dialogues with the legacy of abandonment and neglect of the Argentine state triggered by the "Proceso" (1976-1983). The rigid authoritarianism of the military regime operated through patriarchal absolutism, revering the nuclear patriarchal family and the ascendancy of the father while inverting the meanings of the sacred and profane. Martel responds to this legacy of moral abandonment by carrying out her own type of inversion and undoing the rigidity of dichotomizing classifications and social categories while pointing to the end of the father's reign. Amalia becomes a discursive tool that pulls at the thread maintaining these classifications in opposition. As this stitching unravels, the discursive hierarchies which saturate the sociocultural formation of *being in the world* lose their foothold. That is not to say that they cease to exist. For example, good is not annihilated, but rather it no longer exists as it was previously conceived. The same could be said for its opposite, bad, which is dethroned and instead enters the swamp of signification characterized by ambivalence and

[90] In *Crisis and Capitalism in Contemporary Argentine Cinema*, Page points to the presence of allegorical potential in *La ciénaga* and *La niña santa*. She alleges that this potential is not totally realized thus frustrating some of these interpretations.
[91] Labeled by critics as the "Salta Trilogy", Martel's first three feature films *La ciénaga* (2001), *La niña santa* (2004) and *La mujer sin cabeza* (2008), are set in her home province from which the "trilogy" takes its name. While this is not a "traditional" trilogy, each film is connected to its predecessor in particular ways. Martel herself noted upon the completion of *La mujer sin cabeza* that, "it is as if a circle has closed" (qtd. in García and Rojas, 10).

uncertainty. This results in the dissolution of the boundaries that maintain dominant discursive structures, forcing us as viewers to enter an unfamiliar discursive terrain that leaves us questioning what/how we know, and what/how we feel.

Postfeminist, Postcatholic, Posthistorical: In the Wake of the After

Born the same year of the self-proclaimed *Revolución Argentina* (1966), Lucrecia Martel is a revolutionary in Latin American cinema. Identified as a director in the NAC movement, Martel and her films expose untold realities expressed in unconventional cinematic forms.[92] Following the "Proceso," restrictions on the film industry eased only to be met with the Argentine currency crisis (1989) which ground the industry to a near halt. However, the 1990s saw the establishment of the Universidad del Cine (1991), the revitalization of the Instituto Nacional de Cine y Artes Audiovisuales (INCAA), as well as the New Cinema Law (1995). These endeavors along with the release of *Historias Breves* (1995), a film competition whose first release featured 10 shorts from directors that now characterize NAC, heralded this new movement that met the economic crisis of the late 90s in Argentina head-on.

Martel's contribution to *Historias Breves* was her feature short film titled *Rey muerto*. Awarded first prize at the Havana Film Festival, the short is characterized by its adherence to and subversion of US Westerns. This subversion arises from the reversal of gender roles wherein Juana, the battered wife of her abusive husband, decides to skip town with her three children in tow. The film ends with her contestatory response to violent male dominance as she shoots her husband in the head. This short, one of the only pieces of Martel's early career that she recognizes as worthy of commentary, is responsible for attracting the recognition of critics as to her promise

[92] For a more detailed critical examination on NAC as well as directors and their films which characterize the movement see Aguilar (2011), Andermann (2012), Falicov (2007), Page (2009).

as a filmmaker and hints at later tendencies in her oeuvre that undermine the conventions of gender stereotypes and behaviors. As such, critical interventions have tended to analyze her films through the lens of feminist theory and this chapter is no exception; however, Martel resists the term feminist for herself. She states, "[s]oy parte de todo lo que ha sucedido de toda la historia del mundo hasta ahora, y no estoy al margen de nada de lo que haya pasado. Admiro y valoro muchísimo lo que hizo el movimiento feminista. No participo políticamente del feminismo" (qtd. in Rangil 111-112).

The history of the feminist movement and what it has achieved for women filmmakers in Argentina is critically examined by Jessica Stites Mor, who traces a feminist discursive genealogy back to Maria Luisa Bemberg. Mor claims that Bemberg paved the way for the creation of an artistic and discursive space in which contemporary filmmakers like Martel are turning inward to interrogate the "proyectos de construcción de la memoria y la identidad, el acercamiento psicoanalítico a las resoluciones de los traumas sociales y personales y la noción de acción colectiva adoptada por la izquierda durante las décadas del 80 y 90" (138). Thus, instead of an overtly feminist message, we can return to the idea of interiorization and recognize, as Martel signals, the historic undercurrent of feminist discourses which inform the formal composition of her films. Nevertheless, Julia Solomonoff and Mor indicate that it is rather postfeminism rather than feminism proper that is more acutely articulated in the work of directors like Martel who are conscious of feminism's history, and intentionally move beyond that history to articulate new discourses on subjectivity of which gender is a concern, but not the only one. This is clear in *La niña santa* through Martel's cinematic language, which employs a disturbing alternation between the male, clinical gaze of Dr. Jano and the female gaze of Amalia. In other words, Martel does not limit herself to one or the other but incorporates both creating a layered and, at times, disorienting

cinematic experience. She does this thematically as well, contrasting the spiritual with the clinical, innocence with perversity. Thus, while the focus of the film is predominantly female, its overarching sensibility shares the same ambivalence with its onscreen protagonist. While it could be argued that the film is a feminist piece, that argument finds challenges at every turn. Rather, I think it is more productive to consider *La niña santa* an exploration of interpolation, which collides discrete categories and displays the consequences of the collision.

The move beyond appears again in Martel in her relationship with religion. She explains in her 2005 interview with Viviana Rangil that at the age of 15, after having received a telescope and commenced studies in astronomy, doubts about her faith began to surface. Two years later, at the age of 17, she clarifies, "dejé de creer definitivamente en Dios. Con mucho pesar, porque el esquema que produce la religión, . . . el esquema de conocimiento y percepción del mundo es muy fuerte, y cuando eso se cae vos tenés que volverlo a construir" (99). What is constructed and represented in her films beyond the definitive belief in God is, according to Eva-Lynn Jagoe and John Cant, post-Catholiscism. In their exploration of Martel's notion of post-Catholicism and its relationship to the body, Jagoe and Cant allege that the director unveils the need for cultural spaces in which discursive updates, like the move beyond Catholicism, can be adequately represented. They examine *La niña santa* and claim that Martel installs her post-Catholic vision in the film by privileging fluidity. This is achieved by reforming "la ideología de la cámara, alterar el equilibrio entre los espacios diegéticos, dejar abierto el relato, así como un montaje que no se centra en la continuidad narrativa" (189).[93] They additionally point to the director's move beyond feminism contending that, while female figures are protagonized in the film, rather than emphasizing gender

[93] Gerd Gemünden similarly stresses the importance of post-Catholicism in the work of Martel and identifies it as "a major theme that informs her work on many layers, manifesting itself as a profound epistemological skepticism that influences everything from the narrative to the mise-en-scène, the editing, and the handling of sound" (8).

dichotomies, Martel points instead to social cohesion. Yet, while not principally emphasized, these dichotomies (male/female) still play a role in the establishment of this social cohesion that Martel is constructing in the film. This is evident in the destabilization of the father's supremacy, which paves the way for the process of emergence beyond traditional discursive structures exemplified in Amalia.

Nevertheless, Andermann claims that the world Amalia inhabits has relapsed into "absolute determination" (164). He points out that the logic of tragedy and comedy gives way in *La niña santa* to a "strange, superstitious and fatalistic universe at the end of history" (164). This universe is characterized by accidents and miracles which he concludes are valid ways in which children experience their world. However, this validity is undermined by their contact with the adult world, where "they become forms of a disenfranchised mode of historical experience. . . They are . . . 'posthistoric' experiences of time" (164). By considering aspects of Martel's cinematic world as "posthistoric," Andermann unveils additional guiding principles inherent to the director's creative strategies which situate her in the beyond. He explains that the new cinema of the post-dictatorial era was "a *representation of history* that was simultaneously *marked by history*, in other words, cinema was prompted to find formal solutions for its own paradoxical non-simultaneity with the national present" (155). Andermann illustrates the difficult relationship between NAC directors and history given that they are a product of it, and as curators of culture, they are charged with producing representations that respond to it. Directors like Martel, however, instead of reproducing the metanarratives that characterize the modern consciousness, flee to the interior both in technique and in content.

In the case of the Salta trilogy, this is achieved through temporal ambiguity in which we are deprived of obvious signposts as to "when" we are.[94] Decadence, decay, and degeneration are evident, but this only suggests what was before – history—, without explicitly representing it. It is the process of the unfolding future that displaces the historical past that is championed in these films. Martel herself states, "[t]hroughout this process I came to understand a key factor in the construction of my previous films: what the future is" ("To Cast Doubt"). Additionally, by journeying inside Salta, a neglected region in the cultural register of Argentina, the Hotel Termas, a decaying remnant of the elite, and the patriarchal nuclear family whose head is rotten, Martel internalizes reflections on Argentine history and incorporates them into the atmosphere of deterioration that saturates the film. Despite this history not being immediately legible, it is a fiber that weaves through her aesthetic and the films that are produced as a result.

Because of the distinctiveness of this aesthetic, which is grounded in a sensorial approach, Martel has earned the title of *auteur*. In the case of Latin America, Jennifer Slobodian explains that "the auteur developed around and throughout . . . repressive regimes, linking the auteur concept to national identity" (162). However, in the case of NAC directors, their move into the posthistorical disrupts the traditional connection of the Latin American auteur to the concept of national identity. Gonzalo Aguilar describes the rupture between Argentine cinema of the 80s and that of NAC, stating that the latter rejected "los argumentos paralelos de lo político [y] de lo identitario" (23). Instead, these new films place the interpretive onus on the spectator who wrangles with a cinematic vision that has moved beyond the allegorical and into indeterminacy. The move from singular, self-evident readings into plurality and opacity, is a fundamental

[94] Deborah Martin suggests that Martel's films avoid concrete references to specific places (*The Cinema* 8). Yet it can be argued that Argentine natives possess the linguistic competence necessary to identify the Salteña accent. To the global audience, however, losing both "where" and "when" we are in the film is a realistic possibility.

characteristic of Martel's cinema. With *La niña santa,* the interpretive potential is seemingly infinite because of the deconstruction of the boundaries that uphold the conventional ways of knowing. Yet as spectators, we are faced with the paradox of attempting to understand that which lies beyond the known methods of understanding, thus the tone of uncertainty which pervades this work. It is here where Martel, an auteur who operates in the beyond, beyond feminism, beyond religion, and beyond history, invites spectators inside to join her in the wake of the after.

Journeying Inside: Spaces and Places

The interior, interiority, and interiorization are principal features of *La niña santa,* beginning with the genesis of the story itself. This should recall the layered origins of "Niña perversa" where the short story is situated within the greater creative world of *Eva Luna* that I analyzed in the previous chapter. Martel employs a similar technique in *La niña santa* and explains that the film "surgió por la canción que cantan los chicos en *La ciénaga*, 'Doctor Jano cirujano'. . . *La niña santa* es un cuento adentro de *La ciénaga*. O sea, no es el mismo plano de realidad" ("Un barco atraviesa"159). This tale within a tale anticipates the chain of interiority that unfolds in the mise-en-scène, firstly with the film's geographic referent: Salta. Martel describes this provincial capital in Argentina's northwest interior near the Bolivian border as "the most politically conservative, classist area of the country and has a large Catholic population. What's attractive about the north is that it also has a strong aboriginal culture; it's resistant to European influences" ("Shadow of a Doubt"). Elements borne of the province's colonial past –conservative, classist, religious–, its preservation of native culture, and its historic position as in-between Lima and Buenos Aires are the backdrop to the film's action, which is primarily carried out in the interior of the Hotel Termas. The ambivalence of the hotel as a private/public space echoes the province's historical ambivalence between European and Aboriginal influences. This ambivalence that

characterizes the spatial configuration of the film is reproduced internally by Amalia, a *niña fatal* who confounds spatial demarcations, moving freely throughout the spaces of the Hotel Termas, the city streets, Catechism classes, and her best friend Josefina's (Julieta Zylberberg) house.

Martel's intimate portrait of the daily life of Amalia in the decadent Hotel Termas alludes to a cinematic intervention in the private sphere which Joanna Page claims can "be read as a critical intervention, signaling the failure of a bankrupt, dysfunctional state and emphasizing the primacy of biological life in times of severe economic crisis" (*Crisis* 193). She points to the context of the Crisis in Argentina (1998-2002) as the provocation for a "collapse of distinctions," and maintains that this is present in the film through Martel's turn away from the allegory and instead, toward self-reflexivity (*Crisis* 189). This reflexivity conflates representation and referent, aggravating traditional processes of interpretation. Page goes on to explain that the implementation of the Hotel Termas in its decadent state suggests the erosion of former grandeur: "the place is in a state of disrepair, with flaking paint and plumbing problems. The hotel metonymically represents, therefore, the sharp decline of Argentina from the turn of the century, when it took its place among the richest countries of the world, to the economic ruin of the film's present" (184). This chapter zooms in a degree further, however, and reads the decadence of the Hotel Termas as dialoguing specifically with the decline of the nuclear patriarchal family, which, as has been discussed previously, is linked to the State and society. The decay of one implicates all three into that process, disrupting discursive supremacy by destabilizing the regimes of power and truth that are maintained by these institutions. This decadence and destabilization are equally showcased in the guests of the hotel, doctors, and clinicians who are in attendance for a medical conference. These guardians of knowledge and custodians of science are situated on morally reprehensible ground and the male clinical eye that is charged with healing the body instead perverts it.

Martel's privileging of interiority allows us to move deeper into representational strategies and consider the deterioration of the home and its move away from a place of refuge to a space that actively participates in the destabilization of hierarchies, and hierarchical supremacy. The Hotel Termas functions as a liminal, transitory space between the public and the private and exposes the dangers (who can penetrate this space) and potential (who can exit it) of that very liminality. Martel explains the intimacy of hotel rooms which do not "belong to anybody but at the same time it's a very intimate place. And I think there are close links between the space you are in and your perception of your own body" (quoted in James 19). As we will see in the film, this intimacy characteristic of the space is vulnerable to external intrusions, much like the body.

Upon arriving at the hotel, Jano is informed that he will have to share a room with Vesalio (Arturo Goetz), a gregarious, *machista* doctor who aggressively pursues the hotel's female staff.[95] Their room is regularly penetrated by the women workers of the hotel, and the spatially unrestrained Amalia, who repeats this act of penetration when Jano is moved to his new room, although she waits until he is asleep to do so. Like Leticia and Elena, there is no space to which she is denied entry, and, like Elena, she moves freely through seemingly private spaces. Similar to Elena's ritualistic ceremony with Bernal's possessions, when Amalia enters Jano's space, she fondles his toiletries rubbing some of his shaving cream on her shirt collar, which she continues to smell in various scenes in the film. In this way, Martel brings the tactile and olfactory into the stimulation of Amalia's desire. Helena's room is another space, seemingly private, which functions as a site of congregation throughout the film. Amalia, Helena's brother Freddy (Alejandro Urdapilleta), the children who run wild through the halls of the hotel, and Jano all enter and occupy

[95] Vesalio's antics occur largely offscreen, leaving viewers to wonder about the harassment he has inflicted on the female staff of the hotel. It is worth noting that Vesalio's behavior is one of many scandals that occur in the film. Jano's street assault on Amalia, Josefina and her cousin's incestual relationship, and Jano and Helena's courtship all stand out as more scandalous than the transgression of Amalia's pursuit of Jano. In other words, this pursuit is arguably less "controversial" than any of these scandals, and yet it is precisely the one that unsettles us the most.

this space, displaying different iterations of intimacy and its rupture. It is in these private spaces where privacy is penetrable that Amalia, "manifiesta audacia sobre su deseo" (Suárez 119). Her boldness exposes the potential of a private sphere that cannot be considered wholly private and where women, as opposed to men, run the show.

This destabilization of the norms that undergird the composition of the patriarchal nuclear family is made manifest by the hotel-as-home motif. The hotel is an unhomely home and Amalia's family residing within its walls is an unfamiliar family. Headed by her divorcée mother, Helena, who is "assisted" in running the hotel by her divorced brother, Freddy, Amalia is surrounded by individuals whose failed marriages have removed them from the normative familial framework. The foil to Amalia's familial organization is that of Josefina and her traditional family. Josefina's mother shares her thoughts on the hotel-as-home problem, saying of Amalia that, "[e]sa chica necesita una casa un hogar, no se puede criar . . . Helena se crió en el hotel para ella es muy normal" (*La niña santa*). Later, in response to her son's late arrival to their *normal* home, Jose's mother says, "[e]sto no es un hotel, esto es una casa de familia. Hay una gran diferencia y eso ustedes no lo ven." The normative idea of "una casa de familia" pitted against the ambivalence of the hotel as heterotopia, or a non-place, to use Marc Augé's term, belies traditional configurations of the space in which families inhabit. Augé's term non-place "designates two complementary but distinct realities: spaces formed in relation to certain ends (transport, transit, commerce, leisure), and the relations that individuals have with these spaces. . . non-places mediate a whole mass of relations, with the self and with others, which are only indirectly connected with their purposes" (94). The Hotel Termas as opposed to the familial home is anonymous and resists identification and historical relationality. This idea is intimately related to and overlaps with Foucault's concept of heterotopia and the analysis of the *pensión* that Elena inhabits.

In the case of this film, the assumption is that a normal home will generate or maintain a normal family which in turn will foster normative development in its members, who will go on to establish a normal home that will generate a normal family which will foster normative development in its members, and so on. . . Martel breaks this cycle via Amalia's non-traditional family and family environment while exposing the spuriousness of this assumption. We see Josefina engage in an incestual relationship with her cousin. The closed-in nature of Josefina's traditional family is echoed in her transgression, which originates from *inside* the family itself. Martel elaborates upon this phenomenon in her films stating, "whenever social classes are so closed in on themselves, incest becomes a sort of key—it's as if they are in love with themselves" ("Shadow of a Doubt"). Differing from her friend, Amalia engages in a pursuit of Jano which originates external to her immediate family structure and is facilitated by the ambivalence of the hotel as home. Martin echoes Martel's comments on the hotel as a public/private space in the film, claiming that it exhibits a "spatial doubling of inside and outside, familiar and unfamiliar, stasis and transit" ("Wholly Ambivalent" 67). This doubling functions as the spatial and symbolic framework that underscores the blurring of binaries taking place and is indicative of an emergent (dis)order that exists onscreen. It additionally opens an escape route for Amalia, who is not restricted, confined, or contained within the bounds of the closed-in traditional family framework headed by the *paterfamilias*.

Deconstructing the Nuclear Patriarchal Family: Falling Fathers and Flawed Matriarchs

The (dis)order materializing in the film emerges in the wake of waning patriarchal control mobilized through the motif of decadence. Page's connection of the hotel's materially decadent state to the decline of the Argentine state is reaffirmed by Martel, who states, "I think of decadence as a positive value, especially if one thinks of the previous order as confining and exclusionary.

The sooner the demise of the values that organize the world, the better. That's what we're living through in Argentina. It's like the triumph of decadence and therefore an interesting period" ("Vocational Education"). The demise of the values that she references is touched upon by Suárez who hints at the "disintegration of the family" and the decline of the pillars of patriarchy in films like *La niña santa* (115). She situates this decline in the degeneration of the home and the emasculation or lack of authority in the male characters (119). The Hotel Termas as a non-place, with its ranging functions and porosity, aids in this degeneration in that it disperses the center of authority. The material erosion of the hotel complements the breakdown of the traditional nuclear family and the waning power of the *paterfamilias*. This is achieved by subverting the historical privilege and visibility of the normative family, which occupies a peripheral position in the film. The heads of these families are men in a morally, and arguably physically, decadent state, and their power is displaced through the female character's control over control.

As normative families lose their normative status, it follows that the men who head these families lose their privileged status as well. In the film, we are presented with three fathers who appear, by and large, removed from their families: Jano, Vesalio, and Freddy. Helena's brother Freddy is a medical school dropout who often seeks refuge in Helena's room where she reminds him to brush his teeth, helps him dye his hair, combs it, and picks through it to make sure he does not have lice or rashes. Lamenting the state of his life as they lounge in Helena's bed, he complains that "[y]o necesitaría que mis hijos me ayuden, Helenita. A mí que La Chilena se haya llevado a mis hijos me hizo mucho mal" (*La niña santa*). Helena responds by advising him that he should call his children, which he finally gets around to doing on the pretense that he needs "help" with the hotel. Stating "la familia es la familia," he struggles to figure out what time it is where his children live. While he phones a friend to ask the time in Chile, he also asks Helena for the number

to call “La Chilena”. Notwithstanding the late hour, he decides to call anyway because it is an emergency. “La Chilena” answers and Freddy passes the phone to Helena so she can hear “esa voz”. Then, he hangs up, laughs, and so concludes his only onscreen attempt at fathering.

The phone becomes both an object and sound that is a staple feature of the landscape of Amalia’s “home” environment and bolsters the distance of the nuclear family from the central focus of the film while contributing to the destabilization of visual supremacy that is characteristic of mainstream cinema. In other words, the nuclear family is not seen or is only seen marginally. Like the hotel-as-home motif, this disperses the central authority that is conferred onto the patriarchal nuclear family by reducing its protagonism and consigning it to the fringes. The phone has the potential to make the relations of the family heard. However, that is denied in the film or rendered absurd, as in the case of Freddy’s attempt to reach out to his children. Amalia’s father, Manuel, only “appears” via phone calls which Helena refuses to answer. He initially calls to inform her that his new wife is pregnant with twins. His repeated efforts to speak to her are met with consistent negation. Helena refuses his on-screen appearance in the diegetic register. He is present only in his absence. So, Amalia, like Leticia, is not wholly fatherless, but their fathers reside in the realm of impotence. In the case of Amalia, the ringing phone suggests his presence, however, neither he nor the power codified in his role ever materializes.

Ana Forcinito comments that the phone and its ringing are “repeticiones que acompañan el sentido de incomunicación de los personajes” (126). This motif surfaces at the start of the film when Jano’s family tries to call him. He is interrupted by Vesalio’s entry into the room they share. Later, he answers a call from his family in a phone cabin. As he speaks to his daughter about delaying their trip to the hotel, we first hear and then see Amalia climbing the stairs. Jano’s family eventually does arrive; however, their union is interpolated with Amalia’s lurking presence, first

in her emergence from the pool where Jano's children play, and later in her entry into the room where they have just exited. Stephen Hunter comments on the proliferation of miscommunication that arises from "the disconnect between what is said and what is heard" and claims that the film is a "farrago of missed communications, sometimes humorous, sometimes tragic, always dispiriting. Is that the voice of God or random noise?" ("The Holy Girl"). Hunter signals an important connection between the preoccupation that Amalia has with hearing and understanding the *call* of God (the Father) and the preponderance of sound in the film, including phone calls from family members, particularly fathers. The chain of disrupted or distorted communication that stems from these calls, including the divine, is never resolved because Martel denies communicating the final denouement of these accumulated episodes of miscommunication. As spectators, we can only guess how the action will play out in a similar way that we can only guess what the individuals on the other end of the phone line are saying. Thus, the relay of information suffers from the same disease of decadence that plagues the hotel, the nuclear patriarchal family, and the father's supremacy. This conveys the decadence of the interpretative cycle of discourse resulting from the proliferation of miscommunication. In other words, the traditional source of meaning and its method of relay are actively breaking down, put on hold, or hung up on in the film. The result of this disintegration opens alternative modes of understanding, which allows Amalia to receive and answer God's call through her own interpretative lens.

Finally, the figures of Jano and Vesalio physically embody the theme of decadence. They are made to occupy the same room at the start of the film and share familial proximity: their children go to the same school. Both engage in sexually inappropriate behavior that puts their paternal authority at risk. In describing Vesalio, Aguilar comments that he "circles the hotel like a satyr pursuing nymphs. In addition to embodying a typical masculine obsession, his attitude leads

him to be expelled from the conference" (99). Despite his bacchanalian pursuits, Vesalio's actions are the only thing akin to a satyr. His appearance, like that of the hotel, is anything but Adonic. After his expulsion from the conference, Freddy breaks the news to Helena and Jano. As he explains to them how Vesalio has potentially ruined his career, Jano asks, "¿Mi carrera?" (*La niña santa*). Freddy corrects him, "No, no, no, la carrera de él. Es una eminencia en lo suyo, pero es muy tentado. En todos los congresos hace lo mismo. No se puede resistir." To which Helena asks, "¿Quién?" Freddy again must reinforce that he is talking about Vesalio. Both Jano's and Helena's questions indicate their confusion, and that of the viewer, about whose behavior is out of line, given Jano's street molestation of Amalia. Vesalio's exile from the conference, Jano's impending disaster, and Freddy's paternal ineptitude present a clear message in the film: the ascendancy of the Father is waning. This is the environment that surrounds Amalia and conditions her development as a *niña fatal*.

In the father's lack, women preside over a social order that privileges the mother as an ambiguous site of confluence between the ideal and the material. Given that there is no primary male figure to condition Amalia and instruct her in the adherence to the law of the father, she is permitted to roam spatially throughout the hotel and cognitively in her reading of tenets of the faith. Inés (Mía Maestro), the young catechism teacher, is the first to instruct Amalia and proclaims, "[d]ios nos llama y eso es la vocación. Nos llama para salvar y para ser salvados. Y eso es el sentido único que tiene que tener nuestra existencia." Like Amalia's home environment, Inés presides over the catechism class as the source of authority. However, her instruction produces confusion among the girls who ask questions about what this vocation looks like. They have *heard* Inés, but they do not *understand* what she means. She responds, "[n]o creo que alguien pueda

confundirse algo feo con algo lindo, algo que te llena de felicidad con algo repelente." This seemingly impossible confusion saturates the action and the relationships between characters.

The shortcomings of language, especially as they relate to experience, underscore Amalia's and Helena's relationship as well as their pursuit of Jano. Martel informs us that in the film's construction,

> what interested me was precisely the impossibility of separating a corporeal experience—an experience of the senses—from an experience of the mind, from fantasy. Often one makes the separation through language, and that's why the dialogue in the film is important—and why it fails over and over again. The dialogue reflects on the desire to separate what is, finally, inseparable. ("Vocational Education")[96]

Her problematizing of the cartesian duality that privileges the mind over the body, complicates knowledge and knowing, as well as the tools that are used to get there. In obscuring the Western philosophical precepts of rationality, and in extricating the *paterfamilias* from the fundamental role of establishing the rules of culture and the language which codifies sexuality, we instead arrive at a land of liminality. Here the body and the mind, sound and sight, evil and good, perversion and desire are brought to the fore, not as easily demarcated categories but as inseparable elements that allow the spectator to "[see] that things in the world are *not* as reason dictates" ("Lucrecia Martel") This entanglement is evident in the mother/daughter relationship between Amalia and Helena.

Martin speaks to the preoccupation with the mother present early in *La niña santa*, stating that the "mother-daughter rivalry is explicitly figured as a further site of the uncanny" ("Wholly Ambivalent 67). Referencing the triad of mother/daughter dyads present—Amalia/Helena,

[96] Dialogue/communication reveals itself as insufficient regarding desire because it attempts to separate corporeal experience from the experiences of the mind. Phone calls are a mediated mode of communication where corporeal presence is limited to the sonorous and aural. This increases the chances of misunderstanding, which results in innovative ways of understanding. We see this in the film as well with the call of God (corporeally absent) that Amalia tends to, demonstrating an alternative understanding born of a misunderstanding of conventional Christian dictates.

Jose/Her mother, Miriam/Mirta—she underlines their problematic nature and disturbing exchanges. Focusing on female language takes us further into the destabilization of hierarchical formulations and helps us to understand the complicated nature of the mother/daughter relationship. Amalia and Helena are the pair that figures as the central dyad and, of the three, is the most blurred due to the fluctuation between extreme intimacy and detachment, "both homely and unhomely" (68). This unhomeliness appears in their language exchanges, which are often framed in negation or through inversion. Sitting by the pool, Amalia, who spies on Jano, who correspondingly spies on Helena, begins to recite the "Litany of the Blessed Virgin Mary". Helena enters the pool, and Amalia's recitation ceases, replaced by the ringing sound of Helena's tinnitus. As she makes her way back to Amalia, the litany can be heard again. Helena demands to know why Amalia would memorize such a thing to which she responds, "Mamá, no grites" (*La niña santa*). Helena tells her, "no me hables así" and asks if she would rather learn a Spanish Romance. She starts reciting "La Infantina Encantada", which details a gentleman's lost opportunity at love with a young, enchanted girl because he fails to act in the moment. The contents of Amalia's recitation reinforce the motherly, virginal, queenly nature of Mary, mother of God. On the other hand, Helena's attempt at recitation, which fails after two lines, features a young girl. Amalia reveres the mother, and Helena, the child.

Jano enters as a target for both Amalia and Helena's interpolated reverences. For Amalia, he embodies the child in the arms of the mother in need of salvation. Not surprisingly, Martel has commented on his infantile air stating, "Jano es una especie de niño agigantado que no puede manejar todo" (quoted in Enriquez). For Helena, he is the man who "se parece a Papá, antes de enfermarse." Amalia and Helena's consideration of Jano complicates their positions in the mother/daughter relationship. Amalia seeks a child to save, while Helena searches for her father.

Helena's pursuit of Jano is, on the surface, less problematic for the viewer because its relation to normative femininity is more recognizable.[97] Slobodian explains that "Helena inhabits the standard position of desired female, often dressing in form-fitting, backless dresses, and Jano's desiring look corresponds to this fetishized depiction of the female form. This interaction is the only relationship in the film that represents the masculine/feminine binary" (172). Her desire for a man that bears a likeness to her father reinforces the Oedipal myth and seemingly sustains the symbolic order. However, Helena's fetishized female form is orchestrated and her to-be-looked-at-ness is rehearsed. We see this when Jano says to Helena, "Yo pensé que usted era actriz", and in her assumption of the role of the patient in the final performance conducted by Jano (*La niña santa*). In preparing for this role, Helena demands to rehearse with him, and she invites him to partake in her masquerade. She asks his opinion on which dress she should wear, but when he fails to respond, she banishes him from her room. In another instance, as she dances in her room overflowing with children, Daniel Magal's "Cara de Gitana" plays. A young girl and boy stand near Helena. The girl looks at her and mimics her dancing while the boy remains still in the doorway and gazes at Helena's gyrating. She brings her finger up to her eyes to mime the words of the chorus and he smiles. The young girl has stopped looking at Helena and instead looks at herself in the mirror, all the while dancing. This performance for her young audience introduces the voyeuristic principles of the male gaze where Helena "holds the look, and plays to and signifies male desire" (Mulvey 19). The young girl can be said to have entered the narcissistic stage of female spectatorship and mirrors Helena's to-be-looked-at-ness. This episode, however, is cut short by Mirta (Marta Lubos), the salty matriarch who repeatedly condemns Helena's frivolity, ushering the young children away

[97] Helena is also more recognizable to Argentine audiences given Mercedes Morán's prolific acting career. She is a welcome sight who invites us and her guests into the prospects of hospital familiarity. Spectators are comfortable with the erotic image of Helen which unfolds before us because it adheres to the rules of the game we know well. This is a trap, and this tradition of classic spectatorship is challenged. María Alché, the actress chosen to play Amalia, had not appeared onscreen before the film. She opposes Morán's familiarity and comfort and instead signifies the unknown.

from the room. The air of condemnation is thick and showcases the disapproval of Helena's influence. This is not how mothers behave.

Yet, Martel provides the viewer with a range of mothers who illustrate the multifaceted, performative nature of motherhood at work in and exterior to the film. In true middle-class fashion, Jose's mother seems more concerned about her housekeeper's hygiene habits than her own daughter's incestual relationship. Mirta's concern over the day-to-day operations of the hotel as well as her censure of her daughter's career aspirations hint at the puritanical, tyrannical mother. Helena's frivolity and the import placed on her appearance suggests the same levity about mothering. We see this in one of the few instances of motherly concern when she expresses fear for Amalia's dry hair, telling her not to use the shampoo at the hotel. By focusing on the mother/daughter relationship and eliding the father, Martel highlights the potential for discursive reform wherein it is female knowledge that becomes the privileged organizer of cultural experience, however trivial that experience may be.

Yet, this is not a matriarchal haven, and, as indicated, these mothers are not without their problems. This harkens us back to Martel's postfeminism and allows us to consider this panoply of flawed matriarchs not as an ideal alternative to patriarchal absolutism, but rather to explore the continuity between mother and daughter which coincides with the theme of fluidity, plurality, and interdependence at work in the film. Carl Jung tells us that "[e]very woman extends backward into her mother and forwards into her daughter. This participation and intermingling give rise to that peculiar uncertainty as regards *time*: a woman lives earlier as a mother, later as a daughter" (209). Jung's reflection helps to visualize the inversion underway in the relationship between Helena and Amalia, as well as their pursuit of Jano. Yet, this pursuit which positions Jano as a shared object of their desire does not push them into antagonism, but rather stresses the interconnectedness of

their relationship and their desired position within the triad: Jano father to the maiden Helena, Jano son to the mother Amalia, Jano lover to both. This relationship not only disrupts the supremacy of the paternal order but also provides a blueprint for temporality which, as opposed to the rigid conception of an arrow marching relentlessly onward, champions circularity whereby the girl looks to her future as mother and the mother looks back to her past as girl.[98]

The preoccupation with the mother in *La niña santa*, directly connects to and interrupts Amalia's understanding of the "llamada de Dios" while representing a central theme in the storytelling that takes place amongst the girls. The catechism class is the site wherein most of these interruptions occur as the girls try to navigate the word of God that Inés relays. As spectators, we see Inés' lessons frequently interrupted by Jose, who turns to Amalia to whisper sexually charged gossip about their teacher in her ear. As a figure of spiritual authority, Inés is undermined by her association with carnal knowledge that is relayed through an erotic form of storytelling contrasting with the religious. Forcinito comments on this interruption stating, "[l]a sexualidad interrumpe al discurso religioso y, al mismo tiempo, la religión sirve de contexto a las exploraciones sexuales" (123). Inés' attempts at keeping order in the class are subverted by this interruption and the interpretations of the girls who are wrangling with understanding the mysteries of faith.

The vocation that they are instructed to be on the lookout for is interpreted through their developing identities, which impacts upon language and its production. This is evident in the photocopies which the girls bring to class.[99] These photocopies become a source of paraphernalia

[98] The patriarchy foundationally supports and feeds other systems of ordering and organization. Such is the case with time, which is arguably gendered. Julia Kristeva explains, "female subjectivity would seem to provide a specific measure that essentially retains *repetition* and *eternity* from among the multiple modalities of time known through the history of civilizations" ("Women's Time" 16). The disruption of linear time in the film aids in the decline of patriarchal supremacy because we turn instead to "women's" time which is highly cyclic. This turn to circularity, also visible in the return of the Gothic curse mentioned further on in this chapter, reinforces the waning patriarchal control happening onscreen.

[99] The photocopies are reliclike. Josefina initially goes to her grandmother's house to pick up the photocopies, which are sitting on the altar of Mary facing her grandmother's bed. This is the same altar that witnesses the incestual coupling between the cousins.

for them, recalling the erotic and its censure, because they assist in the reproduction of apocryphal stories which they accuse each other of writing.[100] This is significant as it shifts the authorial primacy of biblical texts over to the girls, further complicating authority codified in the Word. Like Leticia as storyteller, Amalia dabbles in the art as well when she brings a story to class, the contents of which put motherhood, salvation, and the divine plan into conflict with one another:

> [e]ntonces vi al Señor que tenía en brazo un enemigo mío que estaba muerto, y para que yo había rezado. Me dijo aquí está nuestro hijo, a quien amas más a mí o a nuestro hijo. Yo respondí que amaba más a nuestro hijo. Es decir que prefería sufrir en este mundo por la salvación de un alma antes que estar en la gloria con nuestro Señor. (*La niña santa*)

The text produces confusion in the group and Inés reprimands Amalia and Josefina for bringing materials to class without a proper source. The topic of vocation continues to generate confusion as the girls ask, "¿Pero el plan divino no es el plan de salvación?" and "¿Pero una madre no es una vocación?". These questions go unanswered, and the scene ends. In Amalia's story, this preoccupation with the mother and the act of salvation supersedes the love of the father as well as his supremacy.

The Breaker of Binaries

In speaking to Martel's prowess in confounding traditional demarcations, Page explains that the director "problematizes distinctions between the profane and the sacred, or the material and the spiritual, as the girls in *La niña santa* try to relate the religious instruction they receive to

[100] One such story is told to Jose and Amalia by an unnamed friend, while on a bus ride into the countryside: "Una noche, un hombre iba en una camioneta y antes de cruzar al puente, salió una mujer desesperada pidiéndole ayuda. La mujer se acerca a la ventanilla y le dice. Acá acaba de haber un accidente, un auto se cayó a la cuneta. Hay una pareja muerta, pero hay un bebé vivo. Por favor, llame a los bomberos. Hay que salvar al bebé. Llegan los bomberos y con cadenas sacan el auto de la banquina y lo dan vuelta. Los bomberos encuentran a la pareja muerta, pero la mujer tiene un bebé vivo en los brazos. Y el hombre de la camioneta se da cuenta que es la misma mujer que le había pedido ayuda en la ruta" (*La niña santa*). This story is mentioned several times during the catechism class, much to Inés' dismay. It is a foil to the canonical stories of sanctioned motherhood and shows the fine line between the dreadful and divine nature of the miraculous.

their own experience" (*Crisis* 189). This conflict between instruction, which is infused with these demarcations, and the lived experience of these young girls is a discursive conflict. In the throes of adolescence, they battle with the discourse of femininity. From the position of femininity, they struggle with the changes that accompany adolescence. For Amalia, the traditional narratives of innocence, containment, and domestication that are associated with the child are substituted by decadence, fluidity, and displacement. The passive, submissive, object is replaced by an active, dominant subject.[101] By reading and interpreting the mysteries of faith through her own lived experience, Amalia confounds traditional religious and social ideologies and is other to the paternal order. This has important consequences for viewers in that conventional morality loses its footing, and we find that we "no juzga al hombre 'pervertido,' y tampoco a la niña santa poseída por el deseo, sino que hay una crítica implícita de una sociedad patriarcal y religiosa que intenta reprimir y castigar formas de sexualidad fuera de lo que ella acepta" (Shaw 211). From there, the moral ambivalence film elicits becomes palpable: we are not given an outright denunciation of the behavior of Jano or Amalia; instead, we are left with an ambiguous sense of catastrophe that is traceable to this agential girl whom we are trained to believe should not have this level of agency, because of her age and her gender.

Amalia goes beyond challenging the contradictory discourses of femininity and childhood/adolescence. She additionally brings the spiritual and the carnal into an uncomfortable embrace. Martel employs a similar confrontation in the film with the scientific which comes face to face with the religious. This layering and enmeshment of these polarities exacerbate the atmosphere of ambivalence in the film. Shaw claims that this ambivalence, or "queer sensibility" in *La niña santa* is born out of "múltiples espacios de deseo que se escapan de la regulación

[101] Martel's selection of María Alché to play Amalia emphasizes this substitution: "she was unusually strong physically—as swimmers tend to be—and that undercut the notion that this kind of young woman is frail and weak." ("Vocational Education").

científica-social . . . y la regulación religiosa" (208).[102] The social scientific regulation is exemplified by the doctors who gather at the Hotel Termas for the medical conference, while the religious regulation is most visible in Amalia's catechism classes. The film opens with a scene from this class, and Amalia stands in a sea of girls, all startlingly serious, fixing their eyes on something just beyond (behind) the camera. We discover later that the sound that we hear as well as the focal point of the girl's attention is Inés. The hymn she sings underscores the interrogative nature of Amalia's quest for a mission to serve God and hints at the underlying eroticism of this future mission: "¿Qué mandáis señor de mí? ¿Qué queréis señor de mí? Pues del todo me rendí" (*La niña santa*)[103] Amalia occupies the central axis of the shot, further emphasized by the red of her sweater. Her eyes approximate meeting the viewer full on and are penetrating and disquieting. Martel says of the actress that plays Amalia that, "there's something fascinating about her gaze—a space between her pupil and her lower eyelid, as in religious paintings. It's associated with adoration. You also see that type of look in nineteenth-century photographs of madwomen" ("Vocational Education"). This is a poignant remark, especially when considering that the first visual we have of Amalia is backdropped by Saint Teresa's hymn, a harbinger of the blurring between the spiritual and the erotic which continues throughout the film.

Martel's comments are indicative of the destabilization of the male gaze occurring both in the film and for the spectator. Her critical insights into looking at women looking, inform the constitution of the female gaze in Amalia. As spectators, we spend a lot of time looking at Amalia looking at Jano, who has become the central object in what she understands to be the calling of

[102] Shaw builds her claims from Rosalind Galt's assertion that "contemporary global art cinema is characterized by a recurrent queer sensibility" (qtd. in Shaw 208). Concerning *La niña santa*, Shaw explains that this queer sensibility is not localized in non-normative sexual or gender representation, but rather in the perverse and unconventional desires that surface in the onscreen characters as well as the narrative strategies of Martel which question normative frameworks (Shaw 208).

[103] The hymn is a poem penned by Saint Teresa of Jesus (Teresa of Ávila), whose spiritual vision of a seraph penetrating her body with a gold spear was the inspiration for Bernini's sculpture, the *Ecstasy of Saint Teresa*.

God. Her objectification of the man who had initially objectified her disentangles the female from the visual pleasure that is produced via the voyeurism of the male gaze. Amalia's eyes signal the tenuous line between adoration and hysteria. Clément refers to the figure of the hysteric as a figure of inversion who "introduces disorder into the well-regulated unfolding of everyday life" (5). Disorder is the result of Amalia's dangerous and transgressive gaze, as Forcinito calls it, which is activated through Jano's inappropriate touching (122). The threat of her gaze emerges in its rebellion. It does what it is not supposed to do and seeks what is forbidden to it. In this way, it inverts the normal order and introduces and induces disorder.

Amalia's potent gaze and her agentive and active looking oppose the male gaze which flourishes under patriarchal supremacy and "cosifica a la mujer y la convierte en un signo que proviene de las fantasías masculinas" (Shaw 208). These masculine fantasies are not absent in the film, however, as Jano's initial molestation of Amalia, as well as his and Helena's recognizable courtship reinforce them and invite the male gaze to coexist alongside the female gaze onscreen. However, Forcinito points out that the film "produce un juego entre la objetivización y la subjetivización del mirar (y del deseo a través de dos sujetos de la mirada: el médico y la niña santa)" (121) The game, like any back-and-forth match, moves from Helena's traditional objectification achieved through Jano's male gaze to Amalia's new subjectivation predicated on the objectifying of Jano, establishing the female gaze.[104] Her looking stands in stark contrast to Jano's male clinical gaze, not only because of the switch from male to female, but because Amalia calls on the religious as a means of salvation instead of the scientific. As viewers we enter Martel's symbolic framework through the alternating of these gazes and spectatorial identification, the

[104] Critics have repeatedly called on Jano's namesake, the two-faced god of beginnings and ends, as representative of Jano's dual nature. Suárez claims that his "autoridad médica contrasta con sus avances sexuales hacia Amalia" (119). This manifests in the duality of his gaze, which is both male and clinical.

effect of which is disorienting. Yet, the anxiety-producing potential of her cinematic language peaks when we are confronted with close-up frames of Amalia facing the camera and whose gaze produces in viewers a *who, me?* effect. This is achieved through the positioning of the camera in a way that it occupies spaces near or next to Jano, the focus of Amalia's gaze, which creates visual confusion. As we oscillate between subject/object positions, Amalia's penetrating stare increases our unease. That is to say that whether we are looked at by Amalia, or identify with her gaze, we enter unfamiliar and uncomfortable terrain. This is in part because, as Laura Mulvey explains, "the masculine is taken for granted as the place from which the spectator looks", in which case we identify with Jano (34). Thus, we are literate in the tenets of the male gaze because of its supremacy and its corresponding familiarity. We are less comfortable with seeing through the female, and arguably less so through the female adolescent in pursuit of a markedly older man.

Because the female gaze is enacted through Amalia, there are repeated instances when we identify with her. This produces disquiet because it situates us as desirers of Jano, which we understand to be wrong given our own entrance and acceptance into the symbolic order. Additionally, because Amalia is neither familiar nor recognizable to us through her violation of the discourses of femininity and childhood, our identification with her becomes a source of tension, intensified by the frictional contact between the body and the church's politics of morality. Additionally, Martel's filming ensures that Amalia must be looked at because, as Katy Stewart points out, she "turns the same active gaze directly upon the spectator for sustained periods of time, linking the diegetic disempowerment of Jano's gaze with that of the spectatorial gaze" (215). We see this towards the end of the film when Jano's family has arrived at the hotel and his daughter, who seems close in age to Amalia, is in the pool counting aloud. Jano checks on his son, who has been stung by a bee. The camera returns its focus to the pool and Amalia emerges from

below the water's surface occupying the central axis of the close-up frame in which the space between her eyes is the focal point.[105] She gazes on just past the camera, which flashes to Jano who, like the spectator, is visibly disconcerted at her emergent presence. Total identification with any onscreen character becomes unsustainable like the binaries whose contact, conflation, and collapse situate us on unstable terrain. In this way, we exit the familiar and comfortable realm of certainty that traditional meaning frameworks afford us, instead entering the realm of discomfort that is produced by problematic identification and the inability to make out the confines of good or bad, saintly or perverse. Like the film's characters, we as viewers are exposed to the fluidity of experiential reality, which is released from the discursive bonds serving to regulate it. We are both subjects and objects who look and are looked at, who desire and are desired. Given Amalia's lurking and spatially unrestrained presence, however, this looking and desire are not optional. Thus, in the plurality of this subject/object positionality, Amalia surfaces as the ultimate crosser and breaker of boundaries.

This presentation of Amalia as a confrontationally visible character to the spectator is notable due to the contrast in the representation of other on-screen characters. This is partially present in the diegetic sound register or shown through shots of their fragmented bodies as seen in the extreme close-ups of ears or backs. Aguilar cites the repeated presence of characters' backs as a filmic strategy of Martel's and mentions the central catalytic event in the film that also "sucede de espaldas: Jano, detrás de Amalia, se apoya sobre la adolescente y la toca" (55). As she stands in the street in a crowd of people with Jano's body pressed against her back, Amalia's eyes swivel

[105] Martel speaks to her fascination with water as something that "permeates everything. It's neither good nor bad. A glass of water is good, but a tsunami is bad" ("The Nature of Water"). Karen Horney speaks of the "Dread of Woman" and its connection to water saying that "it is water (representing, like the other 'elements', the primal element 'woman') that swallows up the man who succumbs to a woman's enchantment" (134). Water serves as the before and after element that frames the denouement of the film and is representative of the primordial chaos which Amalia induces.

back and forth. Her face bears traces of confusion as she works out what is happening to her. She turns to confront her assailant, the sky clears, and Jano abruptly leaves before their gazes connect. Josefina looks back at her while Amalia looks forward toward the camera and smiles. She becomes aware of "lo que tengo que hacer" through Jano's inappropriate touch, which potentiates spectatorial confusion between the more inappropriate of the two: Jano's touch or Amalia's pursuit. His "immorality" is vulnerable to being eclipsed by Amalia's defiance of the proper ways of acting as a girl. Amalia assimilates this initial encounter, which happens from behind, into her pursuit of Jano and correspondingly approaches him from behind. Laura Marks informs us that "perception is already informed by culture" (145). Thus, as an audience still operating within the confines of patriarchal logic, we perceive Amalia as more problematic because she appropriates subject positions, born out of the acts of looking and touching, which are denied to her sex and her age group. As is the case with Leticia and Elena, this generates ambivalence regarding the agency of girls who are discursively constructed as lacking agency. This returns us to the discursive trap of the *niña fatal* and the tension between the discourse of childhood and femininity. While Leticia and Elena play with this tension in the literary realm, Martel's cinematic language, which actively destabilizes spectatorial identification, exacerbates this tension and our discomfort.

Deborah Shaw explains that the success of *La niña santa* lies in Martel's ability to "abrir las posibilidades de la identidad sexual a través de una mirada queer de una adolescente católica y provinciana, y en situar los deseos de Amalia y de su 'victima,' el doctor Jano, dentro del panorama complejo de la sexualidad humana" (211). This aperture, achieved through Martel's queering of the cinematic gaze, disrupts traditional configurations of childhood and feminine purity, exposing the perverse as part of the spectrum of childhood sexuality and femininity. We see this on various occasions throughout the film. Jose and Amalia's relationship suggests sapphic undercurrents as

the two kiss and drift in and out of intimate proximity. Their relationship introduces another site of erotic desire, also taboo under patriarchal logic, which threatens the already problematic heteronormativity replete throughout the film. Additionally, Jose's incestual coupling with her cousin indicates her proclivity for interfamilial desire, and at the film's end, after she removes her outer garments and jumps into the pool, she tells Amalia that she is her family. The suggestion of lesbian incest takes us deeper into the destabilizing power of desire that saturates the film.

In another scene, Amalia makes her way from the pool into her (hotel) room. She climbs into bed, removes her bathing suit, and presumably begins to masturbate while turning her back toward the viewer. This recalls the porosity of the hotel whose intimacy is penetrable as we are granted access to this private scene of pleasure. We are allowed into the room and become aware of what is happening through the layers of fragmented visual shots and Amalia's heavy breathing. With her back towards us, the camera replicates the positionality of Jano-behind-Amalia's molestation. Marks' work on haptic visuality in intercultural cinema is a staple in critical approaches to Martel's cinema due to the sensorial registers the auteur introduces into her films, which destabilizes visual supremacy. Differing from the previous chapter, which focused on Elena's haptic emergence within the literary, Marks stresses spectatorial participation in the completion of onscreen images (163). She informs us that "olfactory, tactile, and other nonvisual bodily knowledges make many participants uncomfortable" (118-119). In this haptic scene, sounds and images suggest more about Amalia than they reveal of her in the process of discovering the knowledge of self-pleasure. This knowledge of the senses, and through the senses, undermines the supremacy of intellectual knowledge and produces discomfort. This occurs on several levels as we shift from the precepts of rationality to the unregulated principles of feeling as a site of meaning-making. Additionally, given the intersection of her sex/gender and age, and our violation of the

politics of space, this is a lesson in learning that we *feel* we should not be witnessing as it moves us into the realm of the voyeur.

We intervene again in the private realm of Amalia's room several scenes later. Following this exploration into self-pleasure, the camera moves to the well-lit dining room of the hotel where doctors congregate and Amalia sits with her mother eating breakfast. Jose joins them and comments that Amalia has a fever, which Helena confirms. This remits us to the link between illness and desire also present in *Memorias* and in "Niña perversa," where both Leticia and Elena describe their growing desire as feverish. Amalia's fever does not subside, however, and Mirta and Helena decide that it would be best to call a doctor. The doctor who enters Amalia's room to care for her feverish body is arguably the very source of her fever when read as desire. Amalia lies on her back as Jano enters. She then turns to face him. He begins feeling her neck while the camera focuses again on the back of his own. While Helena and Mirta whisper about food in the background, he issues Amalia a series of commands, which are charged with eroticism given the building tension between the two. Sit up. Open your mouth. Stick out your tongue. Take a deep breath. At the mention of breath, the clinical gaze and intellectual knowledge as embodied in Jano are subverted by Amalia's next utterance, which she whispers in his ear: "[a] veces cuando usted se duerme se queda sin respirar por unos segundos, se puede ahogar" (*La niña santa*). Jano, altered by the remarks, abruptly concludes that it is just a little fever, and she will be fine. His probing and care of her body are halted by her subversive version of probing and care, which suggest her own voyeuristic habits, surfacing through her spatial unrestraint. While doctors have been traditionally charged with looking after bodies, Amalia takes the reins of "looking after" by penetrating his private space and watching him while he sleeps.

Experiencing the throes of her burgeoning adolescent sex, Amalia transgresses social and religious conceptions of the normal. She pulls Jano and the viewer into a carnal vortex that, more than condemning either, criticizes the structures that reify traditional Christian and patriarchal norms. Her transformation from prey to predator, armed with a perverse Catholic mysticism, problematizes the victim/villain construct as well as ideas on sexuality and youth. Jano's initial molestation of her shifts her into the position of victim and object, but her pursuit shifts her into that of victimizer and subject. In this way, she mimics the behaviors that had previously served to objectify her. This is problematic, as she essentially deconstructs the master's house using the master's tool. But given Martel's play of the oscillation of gazes, the ambiguity that is induced by her arrival as subject and her resistance to objectification is also productive. Hugo Ríos details the interruption between subject/object relationality in the film stating, "Con la de-centralización, se fragmenta la imagen y se interrumpe el tránsito de identificación entre sujeto y objeto" (13). Thus, in the transition from object to subject, victim to victimizer, Amalia is removed from the realm of the knowable, and her signification becomes problematic. As a result, instead of visual pleasure, Amalia produces horror.

Martin situates this film in "playful and subversive" dialogue with Freud's theories of the uncanny and the horror genre ("Wholly ambivalent" 61). Stewart continues this commentary and explains that in this genre "secure male identification is threatened, but ultimately restored, in its objectification and control of woman's unsettling otherness. In Martel's films, the restoration of the secure male gaze is impossible, and therefore a sense of dread and unease is induced" (216). Stewart's note on the impossibility of restoration is central to conceptualizing Amalia as a *niña fatal*, given that she is not contained, or destroyed in the name of restoration, and thus patriarchal order is not restored in the film. The loss of the male gaze's secured, and privileged status, as well

as any prospect of its restoration to power also helps us to understand the atmospheric unease that saturates the viewing experience. Much of this unease stems from Amalia herself, who repeatedly emerges as the site of dread in the film due to her destabilizing potential derived from the intersection of her age and sex/gender, which activates her ability to blend and break binary conceptions. We saw this above with subject/object positionality, the victim/victimizer divide, good/bad, saintly/perverse, etc... An additional site of dread stems from Martel's layering of diegetic sounds off-screen as well as the forgoing of establishing shots, leaving the viewer unprepared for what is to come. This situates us in an emotional aesthetic that pulls from the Gothic tradition. This is especially the case when we consider the pervading sense of mystery in the film which is twofold: we are unaware of where the action will take us, or how it will play out. Additionally, because Amalia's interpretation of the sacred mysteries is saturated with eroticism, mysticism, and ecstasy move into perversion, causing spectators to join Amalia in her crossing of borders. We are afraid for and yet are fearful of Amalia.

In this way, we are not just viewers but rather feelers of a cinematic experience in which we are actively inserted via Martel's anthropomorphizing of the camera. She states, "[f]or me, the camera is like another character . . . For that reason, I place my character in a position where realistically a person could be. Whether you like it or not, you always have the feeling as a spectator that you are part of the action" ("Shadow of a Doubt"). This sense of *feeling* like a participant in the action is created through the confluence and divergence of senses in which sound is fundamental given that "[i]t is the only way in which the cinema physically touches the spectator" ("Lucrecia Martel"). This synesthetic remark recalls Marks' theories on haptic visuality: "[h]aptic looking tends . . . not to distinguish form so much as to discern texture. It is more inclined to move than to focus, more inclined to graze that to gaze" (162). Sound, as Martel conceptualizes it,

similarly grazes. Yet unlike visuality, which brings us into material contact with the image, sound confounds demarcations, a point Russell highlights: "the paradoxes of sound, with its confusion of materiality and immateriality, its sensuous elusiveness, as well as difficulty of interpretation is central in the narrative of *La niña santa."* And yet sound distracts us from the narrative itself, as we saw with the case of the telephone, given its preponderance of layers in the film, which mimic the lived experience of the onscreen characters. Ríos explains this stating that we are forced to "escoger qué fragmento de conversación va a seguir, arriesgándose a perder parte del diálogo" (8). The threat of losing part of the dialogue is a threat to the narrative itself which evokes the threat Amalia poses to the undoing of patriarchal structures and modes of structuring. We receive this threat, both in content and in form.

Returning to Marks, her work allows us to see how senses are enculturated. In a film where aspects of culture are on the chopping block, appealing to the senses complicates constructions of supremacy. Instead, Martel turns to that which culture has neglected and invalidated. Yet, she goes a step beyond challenging our relationship with the senses and exhibits ways in which the senses challenge each other. She makes use of the privilege traditionally afforded to sight to destabilize this same privilege: the onscreen source of sounds is not always present in our visual field. In other words, we cannot always see what we hear. This results in the strange sensation that what we hear seems to emerge from behind us or just outside our field of vision. The sounds from behind us that we cannot see coupled with Amalia in front of us, whom we cannot look away from, heightens our unease. This is the tone that is set from the film's opening. In this way, Martel's cinematic style exacerbates Amalia's potential to provoke discomfort. While already an uncomfortable figure, Amalia's fatality is winged by Martel's destabilizing cinematic conventions. What Amalia undoes in the film is potentiated by what is being undone by the film. This is clear in a later scene, where

we see Jano approaching a crowd on the street, which looks onto a theremin performance, which underscores the conflict of looking and touching taking place within the film.[106] Amalia forms part of the crowd and the camera focuses on her framed asymmetrically, just left of center. Her face stands out in the sea of the backs of heads and we look on while she faces the camera and stares for 15 seconds where we can only assume Jano has decided to stand. The camera never clarifies the confusion. The theremin music in this scene is not immediately clear but at the halfway mark in the film, the music, and Amalia's intentions become obvious.

When the action returns to the streets and the theremin once more, the camera again moves to a close-up of Amalia. She stands in the middle of two girls conversing and laughing but stops when she sees Jano approaching. All the while, the theremin plays the highly recognizable song, "The Habanera," from Bizet's *Carmen*.[107] The move into cultural familiarity here is not a welcome comfort, firstly because the song is played on the alien-sounding theremin. Secondly, the song's cultural ties to Carmen, the original *femme fatale* and a figure of sexual excess who threatens the symbolic order, alert us as to Amalia's intentions in this scene. The camera moves to a medium-wide shot of the crowd, which she enters from the periphery. Seeing Jano insert himself into the crowd, she moves closer to the center of the frame and stands directly in front of him, inviting his touch. He again presses his genitals against her backside, recreating their first encounter. This time, however, it is Amalia who has orchestrated the contact. She tries to embrace his hand and turns around, their eyes finally meeting. Jano sees his previously faceless victim. We see her eyes, but we only see the back of his head due to the over-the-shoulder shot. He tries to run away but is held

[106] The theremin is a musical instrument that is controlled without the presence of physical contact. The sound it produces is otherworldly, with ethereal whines and ululating tones, and is a staple in science fiction and horror films.
[107] The Carmen of Bizet's opera sings "The Habanera," or "L'amour est un oiseau rebelle," in her first appearance onstage in which a throng of men surround her and beg her to pick one as her lover. Instead, she throws a flower to Don José who ignores her. The song portends the nature of Carmen's love and hints at the danger Amalia poses to Jano: "mais si je t'aime, si je t'aime, prends garde à toi!" (Bizet).

up by various doctors who have become engaged in the musical performance. As the music plays on, the camera returns to Amalia who, in the sea of forward-facing faces, singularly looks towards the camera. Amalia's connection to the *femme fatale's* legacy (Carmen) and her establishment as a *niña fatal* is reinforced as she actively takes center stage, making herself seen and felt, while the music thematically backdrops her actions.

As the film makes its way to what seems to be an inevitable confrontation, we see Josefina and her cousin's incestual coupling in their grandmother's bed, which is discovered by her parents. Attempting to assuage her guilt and distract from the obvious breach in "proper" behavior for young ladies, Jose confesses that Amalia had been molested by a doctor at the hotel. She shifts the site of outrage from incest to pedophilia and the revelation of this scandal alleviates her shame. Next, the camera moves to what portends to be the culminating moment between Jano and Amalia. As his family exits his hotel room, his son desperately chases the bees which have made their way inside, presaging another intrusion. All but Jano leave and shortly thereafter, a knock is heard at the door. He opens it and we see in the armoire's reflection that Amalia has entered. Threatening to reveal everything to her mother, Jano sits on the bed in despair. She sits next to him, informs him that she wants to tell him something, and whispers inaudibly in his ear. He shakes his head. She embraces him and begins to tell him "[u]sted es bueno" to which he continually shakes his head in denial (*La niña santa*). She tries to kiss him; he puts up his hands and she lays back down on the bed covering her eyes with her hands. He asks if he has hurt her, she sits up, smiles while he gets up, and grabs his coat. End scene.

In what follows Jano visits Helena in her room. What he is determined to tell her is cut short as they awkwardly kiss and he leaves flustered, commenting on the insanity of the situation(s). Josefina's parents arrive at the hotel to oust the molester. The medical congress is

proceeding with its final performance featuring Jano and Helena. Instead of a neat resolution to the impending reveal that will surely prove disastrous for Jano, the camera takes us back to the pool, where Amalia is swimming serenely. Jose joins her and they swim on their backs with their faces upright, the water playing on in the background along with their barely discernible vocalizing of a song. The siren who emerged from the water has returned to the water. The effects of her actions, however, are as ambiguous as the resolution in the film and we are left wondering if Jano has indeed succumbed to Amalia's sinister enchantment, as well as the consequences of the impending reveal of improper behavior. The silence surrounding both events, through their elision, problematizes what we think we know, our access to knowing, and what knowing does to pacify our discomfort in the face of the unknown. Instead, all we can go off of is what we think happened or rather, what we feel happened. Yet, the film has, until this point, been adeptly turning up the volume on our unease. The lack of resolution intensifies that unease because, as is characteristic of the *niña fatal*, order is not restored. Like Leticia who deliberately elides speaking of her amorous encounter with don Daniel, and the missing clarification of his suicide, the film denies access to the "cataclysmic, more likely catastrophic than cathartic, exposure of Jano" (Andermann 158). This suspends the viewer much in the same way that Amalia and Jose are suspended in the water in this final scene. Martel's disordering of classical cinematic language, and Amalia, the *niña fatal* that destabilizes the onscreen world order, direct us to the processes of decay, destruction, and elision as generative sites for the construction of innovative ways of speaking, looking, hearing, touching, and ultimately knowing.

Conclusions

Amalia's unbearable to-be-looked-at-ness, her activated adolescent sexuality, and her pursuit of Jano in the name of a perverse understanding of the divine will of God combine to create

a *niña fatal* who, by weakening the old order, potentiates something new, although what that is and how that looks remains to be seen, much like her own future beyond girlhood. In speaking of the fatal girl child Churchill explains that she "is both child and woman, innocent and depraved, violated and triumphant: she embodies the transitional" (9). Amalia's transitional nature vacillates between desire and dread, traditional and unconventional, history and future. By blurring these demarcations, the repressive mandates of the patriarchal order are threatened. This is especially evident in Amalia's monstrous femininity which, like Leticia's and Elena's, is borne from her dreaded sexual excess. Traditionally, girls must learn to be passive objects onto which men perform *their* sexuality, as is initially the case with Jano and Amalia in the streets of Salta. The streets where Amalia's personal space is violated function as the site of activation for her pursuit of Jano within the intimate spaces of the Hotel Termas. However, as Martin points out, Amalia's initial passivity is replaced by activity and Jano becomes angered and disturbed, when "she actively turns the tables on his desire" ("Wholly Ambivalent" 66). Instead of the young girl who must be safeguarded against the external dangers and perverse desires of the world, Amalia becomes the dangerous desiring subject that must be safeguarded against.

In recalling cinematic responses to the military dictatorship which use the child as a symbol of "innocence, hope and the future of the nation", Martin asserts that Martel "refuses the symbolic potential, the futurity of the child" ("Wholly Ambivalent 70).[108] While Amalia may not represent the hope and optimism of a bright future, she embodies the power of the changing of tides. She does so by rhetorically recalling Argentina's violent past and the attempted absolution through the

[108] Not coincidentally, the dictatorship began when Martel was 10 years old. At the same time, she visited a hotel like the one seen in the film. In various interviews, she has stated that she views the eye of the camera as the eyes of a child. More specifically she explains, "I always try to make the camera see like a ten-year-old child. I do that consciously, because in that way I can observe things without prejudgment, with more curiosity, without condemning" ("Lucrecia Martel"). And again, "To me, all those elements are easier to place—the elements of desire, of curiosity, of lack of judgment—if I think of the camera as a 10-year-old child" ("Shadow of a Doubt").

"discurso salvacionista". Amalia inverts this discourse, drawing from the ideological register and inverts its structuring: instead of a child to unfit parents in need of saving, Amalia "saves" the unfit father, enacting *his* destruction. Martin claims Amalia "signifies the return of society's repressed elements: the child, feminine sexuality" ("Wholly Ambivalent" 64). She dialogues with the monstrous in that she heralds the gothic return of the ancestral curse. In the immediate unfolding of the action, Jano's past immoral actions are coming back to haunt him. This is a recurrent theme in Martel's films which speaks to the ancestral curse endemic to Argentines: "[i]n Argentina, my country, I see people that still carry the weight of the really bad stuff that they did not denounce back when it happened under the dictatorship. A lot of people decided they didn't want to see, they didn't want to know what was happening" ("Shadow of a Doubt"). Martel resuscitates this curse through Amalia and her unconventional reading of the mysteries of the Catholic faith. She recalls the operative rhetoric of perversion and salvation used by the military junta and corrupts it. Through her sexual activation, she defies the social and religious norms of feminine sexuality provoking an atmospheric quality of perturbation. But instead of looking away, Martel's cinematic technique directly implicates the viewer in the process of bearing witness, in seeing and acknowledging the very things that provoke this unease.

Thus, through blurring the binaries that undergird patriarchal ideology, Amalia (and Martel) creates an aperture. In this space, Martel plays with dichotomizing categories in ways that reference the perverse past of Argentina and the Catholic Church and their relation to childhood. Amalia becomes a figure of convergence that potentiates new readings on Catholic and cultural ideologies. These new readings, while uncomfortable and unfamiliar, move away from polarity and instead emphasizes fluidity. Motivated by social frameworks in decay which have historically curtailed the development and full realization of the desires of girls and their subjective

development, Amalia suggests new ways of seeing the world and new ways of existing in it. Propelled by desire, which reads to viewers as taboo or prohibited, she brings us face-to-face with the decline of the *paterfamilias*. In his demise, the prohibited potential of feminine futures where girls have access to power, and self-definition becomes possible. Martel alludes to the power of desire saying that it "is always above the law, beyond limitations. Desire is precisely where we see that the world can be anything" ("Lucrecia Martel"). Within the context of Argentina's modern-day decadent society, the director resuscitates an ideological history that flows beneath contemporary cultural expression. The desire to see a world where the values underscoring this history are challenged is articulated in Amalia, whose developing adolescent subjectivity shakes the foundations of the pillars of patriarchy, as well as our complacency and comfort in its ordering framework.

Chapter 5: By Way of Conclusión: "Yo no soy una princesa, soy una guerrera. Y voy a ser la mujer que me da la gana de ser."

Until now, the focus of this investigation has largely centered on the symbolic potential of a cultural trope, the *niña fatal*, and her challenge to patriarchal discourses in the representational realm. Much of this challenge comes from her ability to bring binaries into uncomfortable contact. The perverse and the saintly, the bad and the good, the victimizer and the victim are no longer discrete designations when she is involved, but rather converge into a gray zone that complicates our desire to delineate. This uncomfortable contact is also echoed in each of these pieces through her sexual pursuit of stand-in fathers whose initial contact, in the case of Leticia and Amalia, activates this pursuit. The suggestion of adolescent sexual agents targeting older men who enter their lives as the representatives of patriarchal power is disconcerting. Yet, I argue that our alarm as readers and viewers does not stem solely from this suggestion of man/girl relationships, but from the discursive trap laid by the *niña fatal*. We cannot decide whether we should blame her as a female for the seduction, or whether we should crucify the man for violating his duty to protect the child. We return to the idea of uncomfortable contact, only this time it is between the discourses of femininity and childhood, which shape the subjective formation of girls.

As a destabilizing figure, the *niña fatal* initiates a destabilization in ideology and institutions, like the nuclear patriarchal family, and dictatorial and social discursive practices. She interrogates discourses and reveals our own internalization of them. Through this interrogation, the tenuousness of the cultural divide between women and girls becomes clearer. The behaviors that catapult these girls into the category of woman, the bearers of blame, recall the tribute that females pay to enter this category, the blood of menstruation, and/or of virginity. Yet, these are not the only sanguinary rites of passage that plague the female. Another blood marks the girl's

entry into the throes of womanhood, making her conscious of the risk that comes with her sex/gender.[109] This is her lifeblood, spilled through femi(ni)cidal violence, on the altar of the patriarchy.[110] These fluids condition the development of girls as subjects. When femi(ni)cidal violence comes into contact with the tension between femininity and childhood, discursive violence also ensues.

The politics of representation plaguing traditional mediatic discourses reporting on gender violence and its most violent end, femi(ni)cide, have tended to emphasize the sex/gender of femi(ni)cide victims and as such, implicate them in their own killings. This is evident in the case of the Alcàsser femi(ni)cides that claimed the lives of three teenage girls in Spain in 1992. As I will show, their victimhood was undermined by discourses that suggested that they were partially to be blamed given that they were acting beyond their girlhood. In an attempt to curb this sentiment, active efforts were taken to recenter their age and corresponding vulnerability. This, I argue, is a deliberate representational strategy that extends beyond this case and serves as an antidote to traditional mediatic discourses that often shift blame onto female victims. While the Alcàsser crimes precede efforts in Spain and Latin America to name the phenomenon of femi(ni)cide, they showcase the tension underway in the representation of girls. This is a similar tension that we see with the *niña fatal*. However, it must be stressed that unlike the *niña fatal* who weaponizes her sex/gender against the stand-in father, for these murdered girls, their sex/gender is weaponized against them via discursive and physical violence. Yet, in the case of both, their

[109] Eva Giberti expands upon these three bloods in her analysis of the femi(ni)cida Ricardo Barreda. She states, "La sangre es un capital de las mujeres, ceñido al ciclo menstrual y a la pretensión del himen virginal. Se establece entonces el isomorfismo entre la sangre que producimos las mujeres y el derramamiento mortal del femicidio. El tratamiento que el femicida otorga a la mujer la define como carne sexual que sangra" ("Femicidios en Argentina").

[110] There is theoretical conflict surrounding the terms *femicide* and *feminicide*. Rosa-Linda Fregoso and Cynthia Bejarano explain their position: "usamos la palabra feminicidio para distinguir nuestras contribuciones discursivas y materiales como pensadoras feministas transfronterizas desde el Sur global (América) en su redefinición" (4). This discursive choice is important because it reveals the feminist task of engineering meaning-making frameworks by women, for women, free of patriarchal *and* colonial overlay. This conflict provoked by words and word usage is symptomatic of the feminist struggle to name experiences, which language cannot successfully synthesize without eliding differences. To reconcile this tension, I am using the term femi(ni)cide.

girlhood troubles the default response of victim blaming. This is not to say that women are unable to challenge this response to female victimhood, rather the overlay of age and gender allows for the mobilization of girlhood as a counter-discourse to this response. Several other connections that stem from the resistance to patriarchal dictates between *niñas fatales* and real girls make this pivot from the representational realm to the real relevant to this study. These connections are particularly evident when we turn to the femi(ni)cide crisis in Spain and Latin America and evaluate the politics of representation of girls in the femi(ni)cide resistance.

Both the *niña fatal* and the girls of the femi(ni)cide resistance are powerful figures of unbecoming because they capture specific tensions that exacerbate the anxieties of adults and the systems of power/knowledge which replicate oppressive discourses. Additionally, both problematize the patriarchy's binary ordering system, with the girls participating in the femi(ni)cide resistance illustrating a specific tension between the girl as an activist and as a victim. Importantly, this tension pervades the iconographic realm and enters the real becoming a characteristic of girls in the fight against femi(ni)cide. In other words, girls are participating as activists, combatting their inevitable victimhood, while their representation as activists often recurs to their vulnerability as victims. As we saw with the *niña fatal,* this tension is productive as it suggests a process of unbecoming whereby patriarchal discourse succumbs to the power of girls seeking autonomy over the processes of subjectivation. For girls in the real world, it also represents the potential to eliminate the spilling of the third blood which looms over their present and future.

It serves to note that girls as agents are complicated because they are under a constant threat of victimization from individuals who perceive their agency as a move beyond their discursive positioning as children.[111] This is clear in the remarks on Twitter of the former professor, Jason

[111] Many examples of adults criticizing the girl-child activist have surfaced in recent years as more girls have donned the mantle of activism. Regarding Greta Thunberg, the now 18-year-old activist who began protesting climate change at 15, adults have reacted

Murphy, regarding Greta Thunberg's influence on climate awareness: "Not even being provocative but if you think Greta Thunberg has the maturity to guide global policy-making then you cannot object to Jeffrey Epstein paying 16-year-olds for sex." Murphy demonstrates the failure to recognize the victimhood of girls when that victimhood is perceived as a derivative of their agency, which we will see with the femi(ni)cide victims of Alcàsser. They were not patriarchy-approved victims because the logic of this ordering system maintains that bad things do not happen to "good" girls. His comments also indicate the overdetermined emphasis on the sexual maturity of girls which "cannot" be separated from their political agency. According to Murphy's logic, if a girl wants to be a political subject, she must be prepared to be a sexual subject as well, never mind her age.

It is difficult to name a scenario in which a girl or woman can be construed as wholly victim under the patriarchy's logic, especially in the case of male-to-female sexual violence. Her victimhood would render the masculine subject open to scrutiny, which jeopardizes the legitimacy of male supremacy. To be considered a worthy victim, this demands that her victimhood be functional and beneficial to the patriarchy. Otherwise, she cannot be a victim, or her victimhood must be questioned, doubted, and contrasted against the possibility that she was "asking for it." In her analysis of femi(ni)cides in Chile, Jimena Silva Segovia explains that contractualism undergirds the sexually based inequalities which symbolically position women as a delegitimated collective. She adds that "El contrato social . . . trae consigo el contrato sexual: son cara y cruz de la misma moneda y fundan respectivamente la esfera pública y la privada. El contrato sexual es ante todo un pacto entre varones, que regula la modalidad de acceso al cuerpo de las mujeres pautada por reglas ordenadas de reparto" (13). This pact between men excludes girls and women

to her with varying degrees of criticism ranging from condemnatory tweets to a hanging effigy of the then 16-year-old from a bridge in Rome to X-Site Energy Service's depiction of her rape on a company decal.

from the elaboration of the terms of social and sexual contracts. Regarding their participation in these contracts, they are not subjects but rather subjected. To this end, one could argue that the determination of patriarchy-approved victimhood is two-fold. Firstly, it depends on the degree of violation of this man-to-man pact by the perpetrator, and secondly, on the female's violation of the discursive confines of the sanctioned behavior of "authentic" womanhood, or how far she strays from the *ángel del hogar* standard. It should be emphasized that females who exist outside the hegemonic, idealized representations of this womanhood – poor, racialized, homosexual, etc. – are already outside the realm of legitimate victimhood under the patriarchy. The same could be said for similarly marginalized males. Their ability to violate the man-to-man pact is heightened due to their peripheric identity markers.

In the case of girls, when they *are* patriarchy-approved victims, they are discursively less complicated because their victimhood eclipses their agency, and instead works to solidify the regimes of control and protection that perpetuate the cycle of victimhood. This cycle carves out a space for men to act as the guardians, protectors, or avengers of the violated female. The patriarchy decrees that we need female victims to have male heroes. As a result, we are *more* comfortable with girls as victims than as agents. When girls move into agential awareness and action, the tension between agency and victimhood is problematic for the adult due, in part, to the rupture of the barrier separating the world of adults and the world of children, whereby the former constructs and molds the latter. Their agency is additionally problematic regarding gender because they are no longer emulating the traits of self-abnegation and passivity that are associated with "authentic" womanhood.

In evaluating the resistance to the killing of girls and women, the representational protagonism of girls becomes clearer. This is an important focal adjustment in the tendency to

aggregate girls into the category of woman, obscuring them in favor of an essentialized feminist subject situated in the fully formed adult woman.[112] By turning to Spain, Argentina, and Chile, several important insights relating to girlhood, representation, and resistance are rendered. Firstly, in the case of the Alcàsser femi(ni)cides, the undertone of culpability projected by mass media demonstrates how traditional discourses of victim-blaming and girlhood deviance are enacted onto victims of femi(ni)cide.[113] Importantly, the Argentine, *#niunamenos* (NUM) and the Chilean "Un violador en tu camino" performance (2019), are resistance movements that respond to the media's patriarchal leanings, decrying the tendency to victim-blame while moving culpability back to the offender and the institutions that uphold fem(ni)cidial violence as an inevitable consequence of patriarchal culture. These movements are instrumental in our examination of the girl because they refocus her victimhood rejecting the overlay of patriarchal culpability, while potentiating her agency outside of the traditional confines of patriarchal discourses. This happens through her attending and self-representing at public protests where she enters the "masculine" public sphere as a contestatory subject. Additionally, this agency is activated in the representational realm with icons like Enriqueta, a girl-child cartoon from the Argentine caricaturist Ricardo Siri (Liniers), who became a symbol of protest of the NUM movement. Thus, unlike the *niña fatal*, these girls are not agents through their characterization as victimizers, but rather because they participate in

[112] We see this in the original definition of "femicide" popularized by Diana Russell. In 2001, nine years after the publication of *Femicide: The Politics of Woman Killing*, Russell changed her original definition of the term from "the killing of women by men because they are women" (*Femicide* xiv) to "the killing of females by males because they are females" (*Femicide in Global* 13).

[113] Not analyzed herein, but of extreme relevance are the femi(ni)cides of Alto Hospicio in Chile. Both Verónica Quense's documentary, *Santas Putas* (2012), as well as Rodrigo Ramos Bañados' novel, *Alto Hospicio* (2008) unveil the social and institutional responses to the recurring disappearances of girls (13-38 years old) in the peripheric and impoverished northern region of Chile in the Atacama Desert. There are indisputable patterns between these responses and the mediatic responses to the Alcàsser femi(ni)cides, however, in the Chilean case, the addition of the identity marker of "poor" suggests a more acute dismal from power-wielding institutions, that refused to investigate these disappearances despite pleas from the girl's family members. Silva Segovia indicates: "En el caso de Alto Hospicio, las instituciones que ejercen el poder, quedaron largo tiempo en una posición de autosatisfacción ante las desapariciones. En su imaginario las adolescentes pertenecían a una clase caracterizada por su desenfado sexual, promiscuidad, ligereza, inconsecuencia y adhesión al sexo y al mal" (17).

self-representation and resistance in spaces to which they have been historically denied access. Consequently, these movements have wrought change on the local and global scale through cross-generational solidarity, which is creating apertures for girls to be whatever and whoever they want in a future they are helping to shape.

In chapter 1, I spoke briefly about Lolita's "curse," identified by Michael Maar in von Lichberg's original story, "Lolita," which I claimed was an allegory for the curse of the patriarchy that I identified as femi(ni)cide. My interest here is to examine how real girls are resisting this curse and the discursive and physical violence to which their sex/gender is subject. This allows us to view how girls in the lifeworld are fighting for the freedom to realize themselves as subjects in/of their own making. While the process of how this is achieved varies between the fictional and the real, the desire for self-determination regarding subjectivation remains the same for each, as does the ambiguity of being positioned between discourses. I allege that this is a fitting end given that we are situated at a similar juncture, alluded to in chapter 1, and that laid the foundation for the *niña fatal's* emergence: the contact between cultural representations of idealities, as seen in the *femme fatale* and the *ángel del hogar*, with the authoritarian embrace of the discourses codified in these cultural representations. The degree to which one influenced the other leads us to an important, yet perhaps unanswerable question: how can we measure the influence of influence? In other words, what is the effect of the protagonism of girls in these movements of resistance? To what extent does the influence of resisting femi(ni)cidal violence impact the subjective development of girls? These questions are relevant herein because they showcase, yet again, the power of girls to bring us back to the unknown.

Representing Girls in the Femi(ni)cide Crisis: Terminology and Numbers

The lethal result of girls' and women's deliberate or perceived challenge to male supremacy is "femicide," a term whose history and impact are important to clarify before we continue.[114] Distinct from the supposedly neutral, homicide, "femicide" instead focuses on sex/gender as the motive behind murder. Jill Radford expands upon this by clarifying that "femicide" is an umbrella term under which many diverse types of "femicide" can be situated (7). Subsequent definitions have taken care to capture girls alongside women as victims of this phenomenon, while others have expanded upon its original signification. One such semantic change acknowledges sociocultural forces absent in Russell's term. In her translation of Radford and Russell's 1992 volume, Marcela Lagarde transforms "femicide" into *feminicidio.* While her original definition corresponds to Russell's, in 2005 Lagarde amplifies its meaning to reflect the complicity of the Mexican government and police in causing and continuing the murder of girls and women through inaction and impunity (223).[115] In the Latin American context, *feminicidio* is a crime for which the State is a co-conspirator. This revision of meaning demonstrates the malleability of feminism's discursive tools as well as the reality of the femi(ni)cide crisis in the Spanish-speaking world, where patriarchal conventions inform responses, of the lack thereof, from state institutions. In this way, violence is reproduced at the institutional level through the failure to investigate femi(ni)cides, to prosecute perpetrators of femi(ni)cide, and to legislate on the topic of femi(ni)cide, which ensures the protraction of femi(ni)cidal violence in society.[116]

[114] Russell first used the term in her testimony before the International Tribunal on Crimes against Women in Brussels in 1976.
[115] Lagarde states that the first mention of "girls" in the Mexican penal code appears with the passage of the Ley General de Acceso de las Mujeres a una Vida Libre de Violencia in 2007: "de esta forma quedó una ley que sí tiene ya un sistema nacional de prevención, protección y asistencia, y erradicación de la violencia contra las mujeres y las niñas; ninguna otra ley dice "y las niñas" en mi país" (223).
[116] Russell is not the originator of the term which dates to 1801, nor is Lagarde the creator of the term *feminicidio*, which appears in the 1980s in the Dominican Republic in the campaigns of female rights activists (Pola Zapico 246). While she did not originally criticize Lagarde's update, over time Russell became more defensive of the semantic changes that accompany Lagarde's definition. Russell alleges that the term is not global because in certain instances "femicides" are prosecuted which implies that they cannot be considered *feminicides*. She also claims that the term too closely resembles femininity, which she considers oppressive. Finally,

These conventions have produced violence in both material and ideological ways as the bodies of females are the site of a power struggle that is rooted in the sex/gender system in which she represents both the offering and the entry for man into a position of supremacy. In elaborating an approach to understanding the language of femi(ni)cide, Rita Segato, whose theories serve as the bedrock of the "Un violador en tu camino" hymn, emphasizes that the female body is the site, or territory, upon which masculine violence is made visible and legible. It acts as the blank page onto which the murderer writes his message of virility (23). Thus, this violence is expressive and serves as a communicative act that is highly discursive (31). Segato tells us that within this discourse, the reality of the femi(ni)cidal subject, "se inscribe como identidad y subjetividad y, por lo tanto, se vuelve rastreable y reconocible" (31). There is, then, a dialectic between the discursive act of femi(ni)cide which reinforces the subjectivity and legibility of masculine supremacy, and the snuffing out of female subjectivity through this act. To that end, the violence of femi(ni)cide is discursive and the institutional and mediatic discourses that respond to femi(ni)cide by implicating girls and women in their own murders perpetuate this discursive violence ideologically. The resistance of girls and women to femi(ni)cidal violence responds to this dialectic, whereby their material bodies, as well as their digital embodiment, become protagonists of this resistance.

When we turn to NUM, and "Un violador en tu camino," the spatial politics of these movements is enhanced by platform performativity, bringing us face to face with this digital embodiment.[117] Defined by Théo Lepage-Richer as "the influence of digital information and

and ironically, the femicide/*feminicide* distinction has prompted conflicts between academics who advocate, at a detriment to solidarity, for the use of one over the other ("The Origin and Importance of the Term Femicide").

[117] The use of platform performativity here refers to the interactive aspects of online social media platforms that digitally embody what the corporeal body would or could do in virtual spaces. For example, the ability to like, share, and comment on a post demonstrate performative elements of the user interface. While social media activism has been criticized for its overdetermined performative character, NUM and "Un violador en tu camino" demonstrate the viral potential of movements that make use of platform performativity as well as life-world performance via protest.

technologies on the way subjects both experience the world through their bodies and experience themselves as bodies," the digital embodiment arising from these movements is contestatory and collective. Girls and women are commandeering control over the subject position and naming the violence written on their bodies that makes the message of virility visible. This is evident in the multitude of hashtags, or *Femitags*, that have developed to digitally testify to this violence: *#niunamenos, #yositecreo, #hermanayositecreo, #cuéntalo, #noestassola, #niunamas*. Regarding *#cuéntalo*, a project that archives tweets containing the hashtag into a publicly accessible database, Guiomar Rovira-Sancho and Jordi Morales-i-Gras state that among the testimonies are "5 thousand tweets about femicides, many of them giving voice to the dead: 'I tell it because she can no longer tell it'" (3). The digital realm and the performativity of platforms like Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook, allow for horizontal communication that privileges the testimony of girls and women. The function of the collective simultaneously provides a voice to the voiceless, whereby girls and women are able to narrate the experience of gender and femi(ni)cidal violence, by detailing their own testimony as well as the testimony of "disembodied" victims reinserting them as participants in the resistance.

The work happening digitally is complemented by new forms of messaging in the life world with protestors writing on their own bodies, making them a part of the landscape of artivism by using themselves as canvases to symbolically testify to femi(ni)cidal and gender violence.[118] This performative element in which the body actively speaks and resists, pervades the "Un violador en tu camino" performance, with participants mimicking the positions assumed by victims of state violence. To this end, space and the body's relationship to it is central to the femi(ni)cide

[118] Female's deliberate use of their body as an artistic medium and site of protest is not new. Lea Vergine's 1974 publication, *Body Art and Performance: The Body as Language*, documents the rise of the Body Art movement and its relationship to gender. The 1990s punk band, Riot Grrrls and the Ukrainian-originated feminist activist organization FEMEN provide contemporary examples of how the body can be used as an embodied billboard of protest.

resistance. The occupation of combined spaces by the voices and bodies of women whose voices and bodies have been the target of *machista* violence, reveals the collective trauma that girls and women are subjected to while showcasing the appropriation of the discursive reins which names that trauma and inscribes it into collective memory.

It is important to signal that the reproduction of ideological hierarchies that reify masculine supremacy and feminine subordination, begins with the family, which is also the ground-zero institution wherein the sexual division of labor is created. As we saw in chapter 1, the family served the authoritarian regimes of Franco, Pinochet, and "El Proceso" as the ideological bedrock upon which the nation enacted "official" discourses of normative gender socialization. The nuclear patriarchal family is consequently targeted by the *niña fatal*, who corrodes it from within. The naturalization of ideologies, which reinforces the domination/submission hierarchy, happens first in the home and then is replicated and reconstituted at the level of society. This is consistent with the majority of femi(ni)cides in Spain, Chile, and Argentina that are committed by intimate partners, former partners, or family members of the victim.[119] Intimate partner violence (IPV) is a cornerstone of the legislation naming femi(ni)cide borne from the demands of these movements to recognize and criminalize the phenomenon. Nevertheless, despite being the leading form of femi(ni)cide, IPV is not the only one. This has been a critical point in the fight to incorporate this term into legislation whereby activists have demanded that penal codes recognize that femi(ni)cide

[119] In the case of Chile, the first law incorporating "femicidio" into the penal code was a response to intimate partner violence (IPV) and would not be expanded until the femi(ni)cide of Gabriela Alcaíno Donoso (17) by her ex-boyfriend in 2018, and the subsequent social unrest her murder provoked. On March 4, 2020, Chile established what is commonly referred to as "Gabriel's Law," law 21.212, amplifying the concept of femi(ni)cide. The term was officially introduced in 2010 with Law 20.480, which responded to deficiencies in Law 20.066 dealing exclusively with IPV. Argentina finally incorporated "femicidio" into its Penal Code in 2012, two years after the lesbicide of 27-year-old Natalia "Pepa" Gaitán by her stepfather with Law 26.791, which modified Article 80 to criminalize specific forms of aggravated homicide. Femicide appears in items 11 and 12. Unlike Chile and Argentina, Spain's Federal Penal Code does not use the terms femicide or *feminicidio* but does include a measure penalizing gender-based violence. Spain's *Ley Orgánica de Protección integral contra la Violencia de Género N 1/2004*, passed on December 28th, 2004. The law has been criticized because of the weight it puts on intimate partner violence. Nevertheless, in May of 2011, Spain ratified the *Pacto de Estado* which expanded the language in the *Ley 1/2004* to include cases where no prior relationship existed between the victim and the aggressor.

does not just happen in the home, but rather the risk of being killed for being female is everywhere and is a defining feature of the landscape of what it means to be female.

It follows then that femi(ni)cide and its definitions are deeply entrenched in the notion of gender. Julia Monárrez Fragoso illustrates this in her definition of femi(ni)cide, stating, "[e]l feminicidio sexual sistémico es el asesinato de una niña/mujer cometido por un hombre, donde se encuentran todos los elementos de la relación inequitativa entre los sexos: la superioridad genérica del hombre frente a la subordinación genérica de la mujer, la misoginia, el control, y el sexismo" (11). In the case of girls, their discursive construction as vulnerable, passive, and subordinate to the adult *and* male, as well as their lack of economic independence widens the gap between dominance and submission. This construction preconditions the existence of girls before they come into existence. Once alive, precarity and vulnerability team up to create a system of dependency that leaves girls particularly exposed to risk. This heightens their potential victimhood due to the intersection of vulnerabilities that arise from their age, sex/gender, environment, and social and economic standing. They are corporeally and economically vulnerable because of their programmed immobility and economic destitution. As a result, girls experience an increased dependency on institutional and interpersonal structures, such as the family and the state, to mitigate their exposure to risk. Yet, as Lagarde indicates in her revision of the term femicide, institutions themselves are complicit in the femi(ni)cide crisis (223-224). Thus, their victimhood intensifies as they are insufficiently prepared to defend themselves from interpersonal and institutional harm.

A key success in the growing pressure from social movements protesting femi(ni)cide has been the establishment of state reporting agencies that categorize a variety of identity markers of victims – including age – which serve to individualize their presence within this collective

phenomenon. This was the second demand of the NUM movement, issued in their June 3, 2015 manifesto: "Recopilación y publicación de estadísticas oficiales sobre violencia hacia las mujeres incluyendo los índices de femicidios" (3 de junio 2015). The importance of state reporting agencies is central to the femi(ni)cide resistance because historically, the lack of official recognition of femi(ni)cide in name and numbers has occluded the problem and allowed the state to avoid responsibility in understanding, investigating and acting against the phenomenon. In theory, institutions cannot ignore the problem if the problem is named and the numbers are provided. Yet, this has been met with resistance from some institutions that refuse to recognize or qualify certain femi(ni)cides as such, which has given rise to grassroots reporting agencies that combat the inadequacy of official statistics.

These agencies have helped to cultivate a representation of difference between the victims of femi(ni)cide, of which girls form part. In Spain, Feminicidio.net began documenting femi(ni)cide numbers in 2010. It refers to the femi(ni)cide of girls under the age of 16 as "Feminicidio infantil" and over the course of 11 years has registered 56 girl-child victims, 4.7% of the database. In Argentina, the "Registro Nacional de Femicidios de la Justicia Argentina," maintained by the *Oficina de la Mujer, Corte Suprema de Justicia de la Nación (OM-CSJN),* has tracked and released annual reports on femi(ni)cides in the country since 2014. Since its inception, it has reported around 164 murders of girls aged 0-17, which accounts for roughly 10% of the official femi(ni)cide numbers in the country.[120] The *Red Chilena contra la Violencia hacia las Mujeres* has been reporting on Chile's femi(ni)cide crisis since 2010.[121] From 2010-2021 the organization registered on its "Registros de femicidios" the murder of 89 girls aged 0-17, which

[120] The reporting changed in 2017 to capture 17-year-old girls in the category of adolescent where it had previously (2014-2016) grouped them with adults, thus indicating the instability surrounding social consideration of childhood and adulthood.
[121] In their 2020-2021 dossier, the *Red Chilena contra la Violencia hacia las Mujeres* published the discrepancy between their case reporting and the *Ministerio de la Mujer y Equidad de Género (Sernameg*), which for the past 11 years has on average classified 15 more murders of females as femi(ni)cide than the institutional organization.

amounts to 7.4% of femi(ni)cide cases.[122] One of the startling features of these statistics is the relative uniformity of girl femi(ni)cides in each country. In other words, each year in Spain and Chile about 5 girls are murdered because they are female, whereas in Argentina that number jumps to around 23. Consequently, despite the biological, behavioral, and psychological developments of girls as well as the sociocultural and legal discourses that have traditionally marked them as separate from the adult world, they are victims of the same phenomenon that claims the lives of adult women as evidenced by their inclusion in femi(ni)cide reporting.

Yet, it is important not to lose sight of the fact that their vulnerability is exacerbated by a series of factors that marks them as distinct in their victimhood. The same could be said for any individual subjected to factors that result in their heightened risk of violence due to the enmeshment of systems that structure our reality, e.g. patriarchal capitalist violence. In other words, girls "need" to be protected by institutions because of the system of subordination wrought by patriarchal ideology, which positions them as more at-risk in their girlhood. Additionally, female subordination is codified in the institutional structure that is responsible for protecting them. This exacerbates the vulnerability of girls who sit at the intersection of age and gender, making their victimhood an inevitability. With the advent of social media and the legacy of feminist theory and resistance, the 21st century has witnessed a series of movements that challenge the unavoidable victimization of girls. The language of resistance combating femi(ni)cide in Latin America and Spain has embraced the female-as-group identity, as seen in slogans commonly appearing in protests across the Spanish-speaking world that consistently employ the first person plural, and the feminine gender: "Tocan a una, tocan a todas"; "Somos el grito de las que ya no están"; "Vivas nos queremos"; "Nosotras somos la manada", and those that reference biological

[122] None of the listed statistics considers the children left orphaned by the impacts of femi(ni)cide, although they add a dimensionality to victimhood that would be useful for future consideration.

sex directly: “No nací mujer para morir por serlo”; “Mujeres unidas jamas seremos vencidas”. In the case of girls, they are recognizing their future as women, and acknowledging the patriarchal violence that conditions and condemns them to being at-risk subjects. Still, they are combatting the regimes of education that have normalized the blood rite of initiation into womanhood by reclaiming the agential right to make decisions as to what their future looks like. In some instances, they are doing this while rejecting the discursive confines reserved for them. These boundaries set up by discourse have historically represented the safe/dangerous polarity for subjective development in females. Put differently, girls who embrace(d) the passive role of *princesa* were/are safer than those that stray(ed) into the dangerous realm of the *guerrera* (Figure 1). This should recall the *ángel del hogar / femme fatale* opposition.

Figure 1 “El derecho a elegir," photo by Flora Tristán and showcased in the collection, “El lugar que no debemos ocupar.” The image formed part of a photographic installation in the Instituto de Formación Docente (IFDC) in Sante Fe, Argentina in October of 2018. Reproduced with the permission of author.

The embrace of the counternarrative of *guerrera*, as well as the demand to “ser la mujer que me da la gana de ser,” are powerful acts of resistance that suggest the notion of unbecoming that we have been dealing with throughout this investigation. Firstly, the physical participation in

contestatory actions moves these girls beyond the historic processes of limited subjectivation and "passivation," which have positioned the female as subordinate to the male. Their inclusion in the resistance problematizes their victimization given that it situates them as active participants in the elaboration of new discursive structures and behaviors that combat the erasure of females while potentiating their right to a future that is of their own making. In this way, they are exacerbating the tension that doubles them as both victim and resister. This tension is a salient characteristic of girlhood involvement and representation in the fight against femi(ni)cide. Much like the ambivalence that characterizes the *niña fatal*, it is productive as it exposes a changing of the tides whereby girls are making the public a space to construct themselves as confrontational and critical rather than passive, waiting to be molded by menstruation or man. Additionally, despite the essentialist undertones of the femi(ni)cide resistance, which reasonably recurs to the female as a universal subject of identification for the movement at large, the statement, "voy ser la mujer que me da la gana de ser," is compelling given that it begins to erode the divide between essentialism and constructionism, suggesting that girls can be any type of woman they want to be, thus detonating a semantic bomb on the discursive restrictions which have long dictated what a woman is and what girls can become.

"El caso Alcàsser": Representation Gone Wrong

The road to this agential awakening in girls is a rocky one, littered with the memories of girl femi(ni)cide victims whose murders have served to reify traditional discourses of victim-blaming and girlhood deviance. The same year that Radford and Russell published their volume on "femicide," mass communication networks in Spain were busy engaging in a more nefarious representational endeavor. On January 27, 1993, 75 days after they were kidnapped, a beekeeper stumbled upon the buried remains of Antonia Gómez Rodríguez (Toñi, 15), María Deseada

Hernández Folch (Desiree, 14), and Miriam García Iborra (14). Dubbed the "niñas de Alcàsser," these girls became the center of a nationwide media uproar that began shortly after they were kidnapped in November of 1992.

The result of this uproar, as Nerea Barjola has pointed out, undermined the several-decades-long battle of feminist groups to undo the ideological and institutional harm wrought by the Franco regime. The years leading up to the end of the dictatorship, as well as the years of the Spanish Transition (1975-1978) to democracy saw a quickening of feminist activity which was stoked by the sexual revolution happening in the States. With the end of the dictatorship, countercultural movements such as *La Movida* and punk, which were highly multimediatic, thrived in a Spain that was reinventing itself and its relationship to homosexuality, sexual and reproductive rights, secularism, and feminism. Institutional and academic feminism at the time sought to tackle the ideological and behavioral impacts of the patriarchal dictates upheld by the dictatorship, expand women's rights legally, and increase the cultural consciousness of patriarchal (sexual) violence and its effects on the curtailing of women's rights (Barjola 58). Similar to the Women's Liberation Movement in the U.S., which unveiled domestic violence as a political issue, not just a personal one, feminist activists in Spain moved the private violence, often sexual, suffered by women in the home into the public eye.

The progress of women's rights achieved during the Transition and beyond was jeopardized by the sensationalism of the Alcàsser femi(ni)cides. Barjola explains that the tale of "sexual terror" wrought by the media "es una respuesta violenta a la libertad que, por y desde el feminismo, se estaba consolidando para las mujeres" (62). The horror of the crimes committed against Toñi, Desiree, and Miriam was met with the media's horrific response to Fernando Garcia's (Miriam's grieving father) desperate attempt at keeping national focus on the search for

his daughter and her friends.[123] As a result of this persistent focus, an escalating sensationalism in the mainstream reporting on the case capitalized on the discourses of victimhood and culpability of the three girls while feeding on the grief and shock of the girls' families and the citizens of the small Valencian town. This unleashed a toxic cycle of consumption whereby the media reproduced the grief of the families and the horror of the crimes to a population that fervently consumed this grief and horror. This cycle of consumption continues today and is evident in the sustained interest in this case, which Netflix capitalized on in 2019 with the 5-part docuseries *The Alcàsser Murders*, directed by Elías León Siminiani. The documentary alleges that it provides an "up-to-date analysis" of the case. However, it fails to recognize its own role in the cycle of consumption that reproduces the narrative of "sexual terror" exposed by the media in the 90s. While this case does not belong to the realm of fiction, public interest in it recalls Diana Aramburu's remarks on the crime fiction genre as "a site where the debate over the politics of female visibility becomes clear; since its inception in Spain, it has been motivated by how the delinquent female body is read and staged" (7). The representation of Toñi, Desiree, and Miriam in cultural products like this Netflix documentary, and the reading of their bodies and behavior as delinquent conditions the politics of female visibility in the public sphere. The result of their consumption is the production of a narrative that tells girls and women not to go looking for trouble and instead stay within the domestic realm, where no harm can befall them.

Regarding the politics of representation, Patricia Murray, an English journalist living in Spain at the time of the femi(ni)cides, assisted the families of these girls in the recentering of their girlhood, opposing the criticisms that were circulating at the time with the underlying message of

[123] Like other instances of governmental shortcomings regarding investigating the disappearance of girls and women, such as in Ciudad Juárez, Mexico, and in the United States regarding Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Fernando García took on the task of publicizing the case in the hopes of finding his daughter and to hold detectives and police accountable to their duty to investigate the disappearance of the girls, which he still maintains was a botched job.

"lo han buscado." She initially convinced the families to switch the photos which had been featured in several newspaper publications, for ones in which they appeared "más niñas, más inocentes, *y no niñas traviesas que pudieron haberse escapado por allí*" ("Missing"; emphasis added). Murray's suggestion is telling as it succinctly articulates the discursive framework harnessed by the media, and which exploited the tension between the innocence/deviance polarity, a polarity which the *niña fatal* also problematizes. Nevertheless, despite this switch and these updated images, which appeared on more than 5,000,000 posters and postcards throughout Spain before the discovery of the victims' bodies, the media instead continually returned to the narrative of the "niñas traviesas" that Murray saw reflected in the original images. The emphasis on the girls' actions before their kidnapping, specifically hitchhiking to a nightclub after dark, shifted the responsibility back onto them and their behavior, implicating them in their own abduction and murder. Barjola importantly remarks on this move to blame the victims, and claims that "[l]as representaciones, significados y discursos que componen el relato de Alcàsser son una fuente de información que nos muestra toda la estructura social. Por lo tanto, estudiar los discursos a partir de los cuales se construyó la narrativa arroja luz sobre la estructura —régimen— a partir de la cual toda la sociedad posibilitó la creación de un episodio de terror sexual" (22). Within this discursive framework of "sexual terror," she identifies the media's discursive reliance on the *mujer pública* or females who violate the convention of the separate spheres. In other words, any woman who leaves the home is at-risk and knowingly accepts that risk for not being where they "should" be. She explains that the result of this construction is the inevitable creation of a binary that divides women into two categories. The patriarchy-approved category is associated with the woman who submits herself to masculine protection: "La construcción de la mujer pública da significado a la protección masculina y al cuerpo público; existe para salvaguardar el derecho adquirido de los

hombres sobre el cuerpo de las mujeres y para justificar la violencia sexual. El régimen sexista parece proporcionar únicamente dos vías: o se es mujer pública, o se es mujer protegida" (179).

The acquired right of men to the bodies of women should recall Segato's sentence that women's bodies are occupied territories. In the case of this crime, the circulating discourses which reified traditional configurations of femininity, limiting girls and women to the domestic sphere, extended beyond the victims, and infected girls and women throughout the country with "sexual terror." Instead of addressing the core social issues that produced this sexual terror, the victims were made to be blamed for what happened to them. Writer Carme Miquel explains that "[e]l relato que los medios conforman viene a decir: 'cuidado a las mujeres. Tenéis que estar en el sitio que os han otorgado. No salgáis de vuestro espacio porque sino ya veis lo que pasa'" ("An ending"). In the face of sexual aggression, the media situated the nuclear patriarchal family and sexual conservatism as mainstays for females looking to stay alive. Subsequent creative pieces that proliferated in the wake of the crime have cultivated a representational tension in their portrayal of Miriam, Toñi, and Desiree wherein their victimhood, linked to their age and positioning as *niñas*, is contrasted against their behavior. Portrayed as acting beyond their years, they were judged as incarnating their future as women too early, further entrenching them in culpability. This should recall the trap laid by the *niña fatal,* who awakens protectionist discourses through her age but who "invites" blame through her gender.

The discursive tension between innocence/deviance results from the age of the victims and their "masquerade" or qualification as "public *women*," not girls. Barjola cites a 1993 article from the newspaper *El País*, which paints a picture of the nightclub, Coolor, where the three girls were headed stating that, "[s]onaba la música de Nirvana y de Guns N'Roses. Su pandilla —niñas que parecen mujeres ataviadas con vaqueros y zapatones—las esperan, como otras veces, al lado de

los bafles" (qtd. in Barjola 160). She alludes to the Lolita effect which imbues the newspaper's description of the girls who were dressed up as women and argues that there is a subtle message of provocation here which "devolvía la carga de la prueba a las chicas, que volvían a ser, en cierto modo, culpabilizadas" (160). Put differently, if these girls acted like (good) girls, they would still be alive. The message: good girls do not wear jeans. They do not wear heels or kicks. They do not hitchhike, and they certainly do not leave the protective confines of the home for a bit of fun. Vicente Rodriguez Ortega claims that this is a strategy that retains power over the bodies and behavior of girls and women by implementing "technologies of control" that curtail hard-earned freedoms (109). The media's move from portraying the girls as victims to implicating the girls as the cause of their victimhood showcases the utility of victim-blaming in shifting responsibility from the femi(ni)cidal subject back onto the victim. Thus, the attention is placed on the girls' culpability, which originates from their deviation from prescriptive gender norms that stress docility and obedience, and the submission of girls to the law of the father and the protection he provides. This has the circulatory effect of reifying these very norms.

Yet, this is not a new phenomenon, a fact that Silvia Federici points out in her prologue to Barjola's publication. Referencing the murder of 16-year-old Argentine Lucía Pérez and moving into the Spanish "La Manada" rape case, where the 18-year-old victim's personal life was put under the microscope instead of the aggressors', Federici turns the focus to feminist resistance and states, "sí pusieron en primer plano el discurso feminista frente al terror sexual" (14). This resistance is similarly touched upon in *The Alcàsser Murders*. While this docuseries is just one of the many cultural productions to return to the case, it reevaluates the investigation and spotlights the behavior of broadcasting personalities such as Nieves Herrero and Paco Lobatón who capitalized on the grief of the victims' families, turning the case into a nightmare reality show for

the sake of ratings. Nevertheless, Rodríguez Ortega alleges that the series "fails to critically scrutinize the technologies of control that have historically organized women's bodies and practices" (109) and that it falls into the same exploitative practices that kept national attention on the case in the 1990s. He sees the docuseries' final turn toward modern feminist movements such as "Me Too" and 8-M as both hasty and ill-timed. To this end, despite its tone of condemnation, *The Alcàsser Murders* appeals to the very cultural drama and cycle of consumption enacted by the media's portrayal of events that commodified the femi(ni)cides of these "niñas". This pattern of commodification wherein victims enter an eternal cycle of fetishized objectification and consumption, is interrupted however, when the discursive reigns are reappropriated and the territory of girls and women's bodies are resignified via their active participation in resistance. This is clear in the case of the NUM movement.

From Bloodshed to Watershed: a Femi(ni)cide that Launched a Movement

Similar to Spain in the 1980s, Argentina was on its own path back to democracy. With the general election of 1983, the country turned from the "Proceso" to constitutional rule, electing Raúl Alfonsín as President. Still, the patrimony of violence that was cultivated by the dictatorship did not cease. Regarding femi(ni)cide, Fregoso and Bejarano cite the repression and violence of dictatorial rule in Latin America during the 20th century as a precursor for growing femi(ni)cidal violence, which they claim "harks back to this era of state terrorism, when security forces and death squads resorted to brutal repression as a common practice to terrorize the populace by subjecting them to torture, arbitrary detention in death camps, extrajudicial execution, and disappearance" (13). This genealogy is similarly traced by Selva Almada in her 2014 nonfiction novel *Chicas Muertas*, in which she makes visible the femi(ni)cides of María Luisa Quevedo (15), Andrea Danne (20), and Sara Mundín (20), all of which occurred after the Argentine transition to

democracy and all of which remain unsolved. Regarding the femi(ni)cide of María Luisa Quevedo, which occured in the city of Sáenz Peña in the Chaco province, Amada writes that the "falta de resultados inmediatos en la resolución del caso, la feria judicial en ciernes, un juez de instrucción de turno, el doctor Díaz Colodrero, juez comercial sin experiencia penal, y una policía con los vicios de la dictadura empantanaron el caso todo ese verano y fueron la comidilla de la prensa que, a falta de novedades, acababa basándose en rumores, chismes, presunciones de los vecinos" (151-152). Thus, while the dictatorship might have ended, the residual effects of its "*vicios*" remained at large in state institutions where their impact dramatically informs the responses of these institutions to femi(ni)cides. These responses range from botched or absent investigations and the early release of convicted *femi(ni)cidas* to the transfer of blame back onto the victims.

Nevertheless, if we can trace a genealogy of violence back to the dictatorship, it follows that we can also trace a genealogy of resistance, specifically feminist resistance. Arguably the most pronounced instance of this resistance, which makes use of gender as an identity marker through the reclamation of the role of mother, are the 14 mothers who gathered in the Plaza de Mayo in Buenos Aires in 1977, calling themselves "Las Madres de la Plaza de Mayo." Their positionality and protest from the social situation of mothers were instrumental to their political success. Demanding the return of their "disappeared" daughters and sons, the grassroots organization's resistance to the regime and the violence which had motivated them to act, radically redefined the landscape of protest culture in Argentina. Marcelo Bergman and Mónica Szurmuk explain that "El ejemplo político ofrecido por las Madres de la Plaza de Mayo, así como otras organizaciones de derechos humanos, tales como las Abuelas de la Plaza de Mayo, sirvieron para modelar nuevas formas de resistencia y también para informar al público sobre distintas formas de entender la opresión" (256). Their influence is visible in feminist protests throughout Latin America today,

such as the original green bandanas worn by *Ni una menos* protestors and *Marea verde* participants who also wear green scarfs. These scarfs are an update to the white scarf of *Las Madres*.[124] Additionally, the culture of sloganeering which synthesized *Las Madres'* mission, "Resistir es vencer" y "Ni un paso atrás," is a recurring motif in protest against (gender) violence in Latin America and beyond. The activities of *Las Madres* did not end with the end of the dictatorship but rather resulted in yearly marches on the 24th of March to condemn the insufficiency of the Alfonsín government's investigation into the kidnapping of thousands of Argentine children, along with the official narrative that many of the disappeared or murdered were terrorists. This is one of the lasting effects of *Las Madres* on the femi(ni)cide resistance, which similarly decries official reporting, demands transparency with regards to the systematic processes for bringing perpetrators to justice, and opposes mediatic and institutional responses which vilify victims.

The influence of *Las Madres* continued throughout protest culture in the 90s in Argentina. One notable instance where this influence is evident is the femi(ni)cide of María Soledad Morales (17). Murdered in Catamarca on the 8th of September of 1990, the *Marchas de silencio* that began in the wake of her murder remonstrated the institutional corruption of the investigation. These marches caught the attention of the nation. Numbering over 50 in total with some registering more than 30,000 participants, the protests were nourished by the legacy of *Las Madres.* They waged a discursive war against the institutional systems that attempted to cover up the femi(ni)cide and sully the victim's image. These marches were often headed by Sister Martha Pelloni who led young classmates of María, dressed in their school, uniforms through the streets in silence. In this way, María was reinserted into her girlhood through the public actions of her cohort who displayed their

[124] The use of the green scarf is representative of solidarity with the reproductive justice movement especially as it relates to uninhibited access to safe abortions. While its origin dates to 2003, in 2018 it became the foremost symbol of reproductive protests throughout Argentine leading to the passage of *Ley 27.610* on December 30, 2020, which legalized abortion within the first 14 weeks of pregnancy.

own girlhood as a spectacle which served, in turn, to emphasize María's innocence while heightening public indignation regarding the violation of that innocence.

> Esta figura era opuesta y yuxtapuesta a la imagen de ella como prostituta que tanto Luque como Tula habían tratado de establecer insatisfactoriamente. No es una coincidencia, entonces, que Martha Pelloni siempre se refiriera a ella como *la nena* y que sus compañeras insistieran en utilizar el sobrenombre "Sole" cuando hablaban con periodistas. De las marchas, la figura de María Soledad surgió como la de una adolescente, que debía haber sido protegida por la ley en vida y que debía ser tratada con respeto después de su muerte. (258)

The politics of representation surrounding María's victimhood and girlhood on display in the Marches of Silence, and the resulting indignation they inspired are repeated over a decade later in the case of the murder of Chiara Páez. This indignation, however, was stoked further by the development of the power of virality of the internet and social media platforms.

Differently than the murders of Miriam, Toñi, and Desiree, which reveal the non-intimate face of femi(ni)cide, 14-year-old Chiara Páez was slain by her boyfriend who beat and buried her alive in the patio of his family's house in Rufino, Santa Fe, Argentina. Pregnant at the time, forensic experts found traces of abortive drugs in her system, leading to speculation that her murder was related to the pregnancy. The femi(ni)cide that claimed the life of Chiara and her unborn child was brutal, but the response of individuals in Argentina to her murder was nuclear. On May 11th, 2015, a day after Chiara's body was found, the journalist Marcela Ojeda tweeted a rallying cry that reverberated through the cyber sphere. 23 days later, over 300,000 people gathered in front of the Congressional Palace in Buenos Aires and other cities throughout the country protesting *machista* violence and its most deadly end. Unlike the "caso Alcàsser", the NUM collective lashed out

against mainstream media and decried their "coverage of femicides as a form of symbolic violence itself that reaffirms their disciplinary effects" (Fuentes, "#NiUnaMenos" 178). Unlike the precedent upheld by mainstream media wherein girls and women were subjected to the discursive violence of "sexual terror", the result of Chaira's femi(ni)cide was a grassroots, watershed movement where girls and women, via social media and the hashtag *#niunamenos*, were able to take discursive control. This allowed these social actors to move the narrative from the traditional path of sensationalism wherein victims found themselves at fault for their own murders, to a language of resistance which unveiled the cause and motive behind the violence.

Born as a social response to the State's disregard for acknowledging, tracking, and prosecuting gender violence and femi(ni)cides, the NUM collective came together on March 26, 2015, to protest the escalating violence being committed against girls and women in Argentina.[125] However, it was not until Chiara's murder and the outrage it inspired that the movement organized its first march. This mounting outrage, I argue, was related to the increasing number of femi(ni)cide cases, with Chiara's case eliciting acute indignation because of her girlhood, her pregnancy, and the brutality within which both were ended. Many of the tweets and Facebook posts naming her femi(ni)cide employ the terms *chica*, more frequent, and *niña* to describe Chiara.[126] I consider this a deliberate representational strategy that, contrary to the "terror sexual" of traditional mediatic responses to femi(ni)cide which shift the blame back onto the victim, highlights the vulnerability

[125] NUM is intimately linked to the Green Tide in Argentina and the reading marathon which took place on March 26, 2015, had its beginning in a similar event that occurred the year before. This event, also held at the Museo del Libro y de la Lengua, featured a series of readers advocating for the legalization of abortion in Argentina.

[126] This is clear in the case of Almada's previously mentioned book, *Chicas Muertas*. It's worth noting that Almada figured alongside other authors, poets and journalists such as Valeria Sampedro, Marcela Ojeda, Mercedes Funes, Ana Correa, Micaela Libson, Ingrid Beck, Florencia Etcheves, Marina Abiuso, Hinde Pomeraniec, Florencia Abatte, who helped issue the rallying cry that would lead to the June 3rd, 2015 march. In a later interview with *infobae*, Ojeda recalls the feelings leading up to her defining tweet which synthesize the question of youth and affective indignation: "Ni siquiera estaba cubriendo la desaparición de Chiara, pero ese mediodía escuché que habían encontrado el cuerpo –otra vez una piba jovencísima– y lo tuiteé con esa adrenalina rarísima de cuando ves una situación violenta que te da ganas de llorar. No lo hice sabiendo que alguien lo iba a leer ni que iba a tener la repercusión que tuvo" ("Así se gestó").

of girls and the violation of that vulnerability by the perpetrators. Calling attention to the girlhood of victims elicits heightened indignation from the general population because it appeals to the protectionist discourses that we have internalized and that have been violated. As such, girls are representationally powerful because this representation is performative in that it is productive.

Marcela Fuentes tells us that movements like NUM "effectively galvanize indignation into collective action, turning ambient affiliation into sustained participation" (*Performance Constellations* 90). To this end, Chiara's femi(ni)cide was a pivot(al) point for many Argentines whose anger, stoked by the crucible of outrage brewing on viral platforms, needed an outlet of expression in the lifeworld. The first site of unleashing occurred on various social media sites including Twitter and Facebook, where a crescendo of voices denounced this violence while fueling the flames of action and empowerment. Gina Chen explains that social media and tools such as hashtags that facilitate its use "enable women to define their own protests, give voice to their social movements, and to circumvent traditional media in a drive for political and social justice" (212). Therefore, the undermining of the institutional and mediatic pathways of communication is fundamental to the undermining of traditional discursive structures that historically codified similar femi(ni)cides as irregular, or the fault of the victim.[127] Additionally, by moving from the protest from the online world to the life world, which materialized as the June 3rd march, these users appealed to a hybrid paradigm of political activism and involvement whereby the invisibility of these crimes and females was challenged. Castells terms this challenge, "counterpower", and claims that it is the "reprogramming [of] networks around alternative

[127] By irregular I am referring to a phenomenon identified by scholars of femi(ni)cide that paints the perpetrators as something inhuman, a monster whose crimes are abnormal. Radford and Russell clarify, "The misogynist motivations of these killings are often ignored by the media, which may blame the women or deny the humanity, and therefore the masculinity, of the killer, who is frequently portrayed as a beast or an animal" (4). This "monsterfication" undermines and obscures the frequency with which these crimes are committed, as well as their motives.

interests and values" (9). These values were articulated in front of the Congressional Palace in Buenos Aires along with 9 demands which served as NUM's first manifesto.

The space that the 2015 NUM march provided for young voices was complemented by the representational protagonism of girls. Consuelo Moisset de Espanés notes the absence of illustrations featuring adult women used in rallying online support for the protest. Instead, "en todas estas representaciones simbólicas de las mujeres se recurre a imágenes de niñas o de jóvenes aniñadas" (178). The most iconic image that is associated with this movement is Liniers' Enriqueta, which was shared widely before the march and featured on a multitude of protesters' signs. Liniers' comments about the drawing illustrate Enriqueta's representational power that rests on the discursive tension of the girl as an activist versus the girl as a victim:

> este dibujo cada vez que lo veo es más una cachetada, no algo que me pone contento. Enriqueta tiene un osito en la historieta y yo quería que contraste lo violento de la marcha, de que tengamos que hacer una marcha con esto, con un personaje que siempre lo vemos en un contexto mucho más amable y que todas esas chicas que mueren por femicidio fueron Enriqueta: eran niñitas. (Siri)

The drawing features Enriqueta with her eyes closed, standing with a teddy bear in her lowered right hand, while the other is raised to the sky with a closed fist. The drawing evokes a powerful social response because it integrates these tensions, which Liniers speaks to in referencing the contrast between the girl child, teddy bear in hand, who simultaneously raises her fist in the symbolic gesture of solidarity and action. The girl carrying out this juxtaposing gesture is intimately familiar to Argentine audiences, and as such, she produces disquiet by challenging the adult viewer to wrangle with a series of contradictions born from the frictional encounter between discourses on childhood. She is innocent, but she resists. She is familiar to us as a beloved figure

in the happy world of Macanudo, but strangely unfamiliar in the violent context of femi(ni)cide. Enriqueta moves us to say: children should not have to fight; they should be enjoying their childhood. But she also tells us that children cannot do this while girls and women are being murdered with impunity. Accordingly, Liniers appeals to the tension between the discourse of childhood innocence and the harrowing reality of children as femi(ni)cide victims while demonstrating that girls have political agency despite their age. The participation of the youth in these protests as well as their representational protagonism is central to understanding the danger that plagues all females, even those of a young age. It also conveys the internalization of this understanding by female youth that violence is a rite of passage particular to their sex. Almada illustrates this by stating that, "Yo tenía 13 años y esa mañana, la noticia de la chica muerta, me llegó como una revelación, la casa de cualquier adolescente, no era el lugar más seguro del mundo. Adentro de tu casa podían matarte. El horror podía vivir bajo el mismo techo que vos" (15). Yet, instead of the fear and "sexual terror" which has historically accompanied this reality, figures like Enriqueta demonstrate the resolve to fight against this rite of passage. Any attempt to exclude girls or render them invisible neglects the reality of this crisis which does not respect their vulnerability or innocence but rather exploits it.

Unlike the traditional values stemming from the notions of docility and obedience, the first NUM march and subsequent social media reverberation created an aperture for girls and other young folks to resist this ingraining before its curing. Florencia Abbate comments on the aperture formed by the protest, highlighting the increased participation of "adolescentes y jóvenes y la originalidad de sus intervenciones" at the following year's march (148). More concretely she explains that "[l]a subjetivación política de las y los adolescentes tuvo que ver con asumirse como sujetos capaces de comprensión y redefinición de nociones que formaban parte del 'consenso'"

(150). The political subjectivation of young actors in the public protests against femi(ni)cide positions them in the public realm as *speaking* agents combatting their infantilization and the systems of surveillance which separate them from the world of adults. Instead, children in their various stages of development actively participate in the construction of a discourse of resistance rather than being silenced because "están hablando los mayores" or because these are "cosas de mayores." This participation was evident in various schools throughout Argentina that made space for "reflexión y acción," allowing girls to engage in the process of resistance while being educated on the social reality and root cause of the protest. This supports Abbate's remarks regarding the political subjectivation of Argentine youth and indicates a reciprocal relationality between making visible a cultural crisis that affects girls and girls that are visible as actors who are making visible a violent phenomenon that targets girls like them and women like they will become. Consequently, the street and the cybersphere, which become alternative classrooms, team up with actual classrooms, where children are equipped with the competencies to understand the femi(ni)cide crisis, and where they are given the opportunity to do something about it.[128]

"Un violador en tu camino" – Parodic Resistance

The legacy of violence in post-dictatorship Argentina is echoed in Chile where the heritage of Pinochet's dictatorship continues to this day. In October 2019, students in Chile sparked what is now referred to as the *estallido social* which was triggered by the increase of costs for public transportation. One of the most common slogans heard during this *estallido* was "No son 30 pesos, son 30 años."[129] Chilean citizens' discontent with the politics of precarity stemming from the

[128] Several images were posted to Twitter following Marcela Ojeda's tweet which features girls and their teachers depicted making placards featuring the hashtag, #niunamenos. For example, see Valeruiz (@TValeruiz). "#NiUnaMenos Niñas del Apoyo escolar del Merendero también se sumaron a la campaña. Tarde de reflexión y acción." 18 May 2015, 08:50AM

[129] One of the notable results of the *estallido* was the national referendum which proposed writing a new constitution that would replace the current one elaborated and approved under the Pinochet dictatorship. The country rejected a proposed replacement constitution in September of 2022. The process of electing a new constitutional council that will draft a new document is underway as of January of 2023.

neoliberal economic model adopted during Pinochet's dictatorship materialized in social protests that rocked the country for 5 months and involved over 3.5 million participants. In response to the social unrest, the then president, Sebastián Piñera, declared a state of emergency and deployed Chilean Army forces to aid the national police force, the *Carabineros* of Chile, in "restoring order." In another demonstration of the legacy of the Pinochet dictatorship, the Interamerican Commission of Human Rights found that the military and police forces of Chile committed human rights violations ranging from the use of excessive force to rape, torture, and murder.

Amid these protests, which surfaced primarily from social discontent with the operative neoliberal model in Chile and its effects on social inequality, political abuses, and deficiencies in services due to privatization, other protests gathered steam. This is the case with the viral hymn, "Un violador en tu camino," written and choreographed by the Chilean collective, LasTesis, whose planned debut was initially interrupted by the *estallido*, but whose eventual representation complemented the cry of economic and social injustice with the remonstration of gender violence perpetuated by the Chilean state. In other words, Pinochet's legacy, which is one with the patriarchy's, is not only evident in the structures of inequality which have kept the economic model intact, but also in the sexual violence that is carried out by state institutions, such as the *Carabineros,* which recalls the specifically gendered forms of punishment and torture reserved for girls and women during the dictatorship. The institutions that are charged with protecting girls and women, instead, aggravate their victimhood by subjecting them to gendered forms of violence. This irony did not go unnoticed by the colectivo LASTESIS and is central to the hymn.

Irony as a strategy for revealing the conflict between the discursive construction of childhood innocence in need of safeguarding and the violence enacted onto children by those charged with protecting them is employed in "Un violador en tu camino." The hymn was originally

performed in three locations in Valparaíso on November 20th, 2019 (World Children's Day), at the Plaza Aníbal Pinto, the Plaza Victoria, and in front of the Segunda Comisaría de Carabineros. The song was performed again five days later on the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women in the country's capital city, Santiago. Like the NUM movement which reverberated throughout the Spanish-speaking world, the live performance staged by Sibila Sotomayor, Daffne Valdés, Paula Cometa, and Lea Cáceres became a viral hit, spreading beyond Chile and being reenacted in over 50 countries.[130] The lyrics of the hymn composed by colectivo LASTESIS are a powerful condemnation of statist violence, patriarchal oppression, and victim-blaming.

> El patriarcado es un juez/que nos juzga por nacer/y nuestro castigo/es la violencia que ya ves (x2)/Es feminicidio/Impunidad para mi asesino/Es la desaparición/Es la violación/Y la culpa no era mía ni donde estaba ni como vestía (x4)/El violador eras tú (x2)/Son los pacos/Los jueces/El estado/El presidente/El estado opresor es un macho violador (x2)/El violador eras tú. (x2)

The performative expression of the hymn turns the tables on blame both in lyrics and choreography, whereby performers point the finger back at the rapists, murderers, and the patriarchal state ("los pacos, los jueces, el Estado, el Presidente," "El violador eras tú"). The connection between state institutions is reinforced in the hymn's opening line, which equates the patriarchy with the figure of the judge, who rather than preserving the tenets of justice, condemns girls and women for being born as such. The sentence he issues, according to the hymn, is the everyday violence to which girls and women are subjected. In an act of setting the record straight,

[130] GeoChicas, a group created at the State of the Map LatAm in 2016, has mapped via OpenStreetMap the various performances of "Un violador en tu camino" around the world. The power of this digital mapping is built into the performativity of the maps themselves. Clicking on a pin in a specific location takes viewers to a video source, on a variety of social media sites, where one can watch the protest being performed. See, https://umap.openstreetmap.fr/es/map/un-violador-en-tu-camino-20192021-actualizado-2905_394247#3/19.64/-43.95

which in the choreography of the performance is accompanied by fits of reverie whereby women dance as if lifting weights alternatively with each arm, they reverse the discourse of victim blaming which we saw in the case of Alcàsser: "y la culpa no era mía, ni donde estaba, ni cómo vestía."

As members of colectivo LASTESIS have explained, the creation of the hymn pulls from the critical theory of the scholars Rita Segato and Silvia Federici and hammers away at the wall separating the ivory tower and the public, granting females the world over access to an outlet of public expression which makes visible the private, invisible violence inflicted onto their bodies by a series of actors, institutions, and systems. Deborah Martin and Deborah Shaw comment that this public display "establishes the female body/female subject as something collective and public" (4). This collective impulse, the process of unveiling invisibilized patriarchal violence, and the effort to make elitist feminist theory accessible, recall the efforts of second-wave feminism which sought to connect to the masses through consciousness-raising. Yet, CR groups remained largely behind closed doors, while "Un violador en tu camino" takes the list of grievances to the patriarchy's front door. LasTesis has proclaimed in their manifesto that, "Nuestro objetivo era y es difundir teoría feminista. Y ese deseo nace tras constatar la falta de acceso a estas ideas en los canales de la educación formal" (107). To combat this lack of access, which is arguably rooted in the patriarchal foundation of education systems, as well as the inaccessibility of some of the headier ideas advanced by these feminist scholars, the collective made a digestible, memorable, performable anthem that synthesizes the formula of female oppression, while settling accounts with the individuals and systems that are responsible for this oppression.

Part of the bridging underway between the academy and the masses is a result of the implementation of irony and parody in the hymn's compilation. The title, "Un violador en tu camino" is a reworking of the Chilean police force's (*los Carabineros*) slogan "Un amigo en tu

camino" used in the 1980s and 1990s, and recognizable to a local Chilean audience although perhaps less so to audiences around the world. This did not have an impact, however, on the overall influence of the performance which moved beyond the local, resonating with global audiences. *Los Carabineros*, historically presented and identified as the keepers of public order, are implicated as perpetrators of violence through this cooptation of slogans and the choreography which sees performers squatting four times in accompaniment to crimes committed by agents of the patriarchy: "Es feminicidio/Impunidad para mi asesino/Es la desaparición/Es la violación." Additionally, the final stanza of the hymn preceding the last "pos-coro" is extracted directly from the police anthem, "Orden y Patria," which was a staple feature in primary schools during the dictatorship of Augusto Pinochet: "Duerme tranquila, niña inocente,/sin preocuparte del bandolero,/que por tu sueño dulce y sonriente/vela tu amante carabinero" (67). Immediately present here is the discourse of childhood innocence and the assurance that the *Carabinero* is safeguarding that innocence, a point that Dafné Valdés decries highlighting the irony of the stanza in the face of the violent actions of the police force: "[c]uando escribíamos la letra analizamos el himno de la institución y era casi una broma de mal gusto, sobre todo la frase que citamos que velan por nuestros sueños y hacen precisamente lo contrario" (Huenchumil J.). Its incorporation into the hymn resignifies its content, showcasing that girls and women are not safe from the institutions that claim to protect them. This is a double bind, especially when we consider Barjola's comments regarding the dichotomy between the public woman and the protected woman. What this stanza indicates through its parodic insertion into the hymn is that neither of these categories represents safety for females. Its incorporation traces a genealogy of statist sexual violence from the Pinochet dictatorship to the modern-day violence still committed by *los Carabineros*.

Like the NUM movement, this public performance is catalyzed through its viral potential becoming a node on the map of transnational feminist networks. It exposes the systematization of sexual violence, spotlighting where this vulnerability is exploited with specific reference to childhood. Lola Proaño Gómez underscores the similarities between the two movements, signaling that protesters and participants are breaking the systemic limits. Instead of remaining in the private sphere, invisible and isolated, these social actors are making the decision to "negar públicamente el acatamiento y la reproducción de las normas hegemónicas" (19). Like the NUM march, the "Un violador en tu camino" performance opened the door for displays of counterpower across generational lines, a point clearly illustrated by Isis Fuentealba Quiñones' photograph below taken in Concepción, Chile on March 9th, 2020 (Figure 2).

Figure 2 A young girl wearing a Mapuche flag faces a group of individuals performing "Un violador en tu camino." The photo was taken by Isis Fuentealba Quiñones in Concepción, Chile on March 8th, 2020. Open source image.

This photo captures a powerful scene where performers stand with their arms raised, many of their bodies bearing their own discursive signifiers of violence and resistance. Some are bare-chested, and many wear black. The girl in the photo has her back to the camera and faces these performers. Her hand is raised in a gesture that recalls Liniers' Enriqueta. In stark contrast to the black of the performers, the girl has the Mapuche flag draped around her shoulders, unifying the femi(ni)cide crisis and the history of extermination of the native Mapuche people at the hands of

the Chilean State. Her participation in this protest activates a series of interstices that the term femi(ni)cide can occlude unless representation and its tools showcase them. Through her presence at this Women's Day march, she harnesses representational power and invites us to consider how the resistance to femi(ni)cide is being evoked in public spaces. In her case, this resistance is plural, a characteristic reflected in her developing subjectivity. Her active role in shaping this subjectivity, despite the hegemonic frameworks that would see her subjugated, suggests the prospect of hope for a better future and a better humanity. Castells tells us that this "humanity [has] to be reconstructed from scratch, escaping the multiple ideological and institutional traps that [have] led to dead ends again and again, forging a new path by treading it" (3). Girls like the one pictured above indicate to the adult world that even children can walk the walk.

Where We Go from Here

The place of girls in the femi(ni)cide resistance has been questioned by those citing their vulnerability and the dangers that their online and offline participation pose to their persons. This should recall the protectionist discourses that have been weaponized against girls and their older counterparts, imprisoning them in frameworks that keep them docile, silenced, and invisible. For example, former Mexican Senator Arturo Zamora has decried the presence of young folks in protests claiming that it qualifies as an abuse of their innocence and that they should not be permitted to partake (Barajas). [131] Yet, LasTesis lays bare the irony of that statement: "es mentira que nos protegen. Porque es mentira que nos quieren vivas. Lo vemos cuando rechazan la educación sexual integral. Lo vemos cuando rechazan el cambio sociocultural y político que

[131] Mexico classifies child femi(ni)cide as "feminicidio infantil" and places the age range between 0-17. From January of 2015 until February of 2023, the *Secretariado Ejecutivo del Sistema Nacional de Seguridad Pública* registered 687 "feminicidios infantiles" (Secretariado).

necesitamos para abolir las opresiones y violencias de género" (24).[132] In other words, the strategies of exclusion and silencing for which the likes of Zamora advocate miss the point entirely. What makes girls and women vulnerable is not that they are girls and women, but that they are girls and women in a world structured by patriarchal logic which prevents the systematic and institutional changes necessary to eradicate the culture of violence to which they are being subjected. However, they are taking matters into their own hands, and actively attempting to dethrone this logic from its position of supremacy.

Central to this overthrowing is the act of taking back space. In the case of girls, their online and in-person presence at protests situates them as protagonists within these movements of resistance, moving them into the public eye as active, speaking agents. Additionally, the power of social media platforms has made visible the efforts and engagement of girls resisting femi(ni)cide beyond the streets. This undermines the sexist construction of the "mujer pública" that Barjola identifies in the discourses responding to the Alcàsser crime (167). Still, the role of girls in this resistance and their place as victims of femi(ni)cide engages a set of contradictions that surface when we examine their representation and their self-representing in response to this crisis. April Mandrona elaborates on this tension stating that "the lived realities of girls involve both vulnerabilities and agency/resilience largely related to intersecting factors of age, sex, and gender" (5). She highlights that to better understand girls and their lived experience we must "bridge the gap between the at-risk and the can-do girl particularly since many girls are both victim and agent" (5). This seemingly contradictory duality that is characteristic of real girls is echoed in the *niña*

[132] This has not stopped creators from attempting to reform sexual education through alternative routes. One such example which dialogues with the contents of this conclusion and the politics of representation of girls can be seen in the work of Peruvian artist and illustrator, Alesia Lund Paz, creator of #emmayyoperu comic. Lund Paz uses social media platforms to share advice and education through Emma, a young girl who discusses sexuality, gender, and the violence which accompanies the two.

fatal who also bridges binary oppositions. Both girls, fictional and realm, undermine the flagship of the patriarchal ordering system.

Mandrona's call to action for a more "girl-centered research" explores the underlying tensions in the cultural conceptions of childhood. These conceptions stem from a set of contradictions that activate the discursive polarity of childhood innocence and deviance. The former facilitates the consumption of the cultural drama cultivated by the media, while the latter engages one of patriarchy's most recurred apologias: victim-blaming. Movements like NUM and "Un violador en tu camino" react to both discursive frameworks by decrying *machista* violence and the strategies that exculpate the individuals and ideologies responsible for the perpetuation of this violence. By allowing for in-person and digital embodiment of resistance in the public realm and the public eye, these movements have kicked off the labor of reclaiming the female body from its occupation by masculine supremacy. Additionally, they have provided an aperture for girls to express their discontent with/in these frameworks and to showcase their hope for a future where, instead of raging against the murder of their sisters, they can instead celebrate the death of the patriarchy and truly become "las mujeres que les da la gana de ser." This is the common struggle that links these girls in the lifeworld to the *niñas fatales* in the fictional realm, despite their differences in execution, in both senses of the word.

The success of these girls in the life world is hard to measure, much in the same way that Leticia and Amalia's realization of their own subjective potential is unknown given that we are not privy to their self-realization as adult women. The inability to glimpse the future and see what becomes of this girlhood resistance to the violence of the patriarchy makes assessing progress difficult. To that end, a longitudinal study that maps girls' participation in these movements and tracks them into adulthood would be useful in that it could provide more concrete answers

regarding the success of their demands and the impact of the influence of resistance on girls' journey into womanhood. For now, we can see that girls are participating in the rejection of the violence of patriarchy and that their participation is productive because it disturbs the patriarchal dictates that condemn them to be permanently at risk and in need of male overlords. It also brings us back to an uncomfortable duality: the girl as an activist/victim.

This uncomfortable contact is central to the *niña fatal's* deployment and helps immerse us in that which lies beyond the limits of understanding. Language is one of the primary vehicles through which understanding is articulated and knowledge is maintained. Dale Spender tells us that, "[r]eality is constructed and sustained primarily through talk. Those who control the talk are also able to control reality" (119). Because femi(ni)cide is an expressive form of patriarchal violence that speaks through the medium of women's bodies, it is an act of resistance for girls and women to commandeer the narrative authority over how they exist in the world and how the world exists for them. When we turn to the *niña fatal* and women creators like Rosa Chacel, Isabel Allende, and Lucrecia Martel the relationship between language and power, representation and reality is problematized. The primacy of the male voice and the male-generated symbolic order is threatened because these authors encode meanings into their works and imbue their girl protagonists with the potential to defy the hegemonic definitions of the authentic, the good, and the victim. Instead, they play with the gray zone elicited by these *niñas fatales*, who bring patriarchy's binaries into uncomfortable contact: good/bad, saintly/perverse, authentic/other. In *Memorias*, "Niña perversa," and *La niña santa*, the precocious sexual development of Leticia, Elena, and Amalia, and their early acquisition and understanding of the rules of patriarchy's regulatory structures allow them to lay bare and subvert the institutions that would seek to replicate

the father's law. In their case, this begins at the ground level with the dismantling of the nuclear patriarchal family ruled over by the paterfamilias.

The unraveling of the patriarchy in the fictional realm is complemented by our turn to girl child activists who are attempting to do the same in the realm of the real, albeit through different mechanisms. For both, subjectivity beyond the offerings of the discursive bounds of patriarchal culture is a main concern. Heather Hlavka explains how youth's subjectivation is steeped in heteronormative discourses that stress the submissiveness of women and the dominance of men as a fact of life: "[w]omen come to be justifiable objects of sexual exploitation . . . [and] heteronormative discourses have allowed for men's limited accountability for aggressive, harassing, and criminal sexual conduct" (339-340). Still, this limited accountability is not limited to institutional failures alone but is rather incorporated into the very discourses that are used to justify adult male sexual aggression against female minors. In societies with deeply ingrained patriarchal structures, sexist and *machista* attitudes of female morality and "authentic" womanliness make girls and women vulnerable to the dominant ideals of masculinity and men, not to mention the institutions that uphold these ideals. The fabricated order of male power and control over the definitions, bodies, spaces, behaviors (etc…) of females put women at risk of transgressing the demarcations developed for them, but not by them. The demand for control over subjective development, "Voy a ser la mujer que me da la gana de ser," combined with the loud and collective denunciation of patriarchy's crimes has situated Latin American and Spanish feminist movements at the vanguard of feminist protest and resistance.

To finish, I would like to address the shortcomings of the analysis herein and leave the door open for more nuanced investigations regarding other factors of identity that intersect with age and gender. A significant pitfall of this investigation has been the absence of readings centering

on class and race. Put differently, neither of these categories of intersectional oppression enter my analytic focus. In the case of *Memorias,* "Niña perversa" and *La niña santa*, while there does appear to be mild signs of class distinction between the three, it is not enough to move Leticia, Elena, or Amalia out of the range of the middle-class. The class position occupied by these protagonists corresponds to their creators, as does their race: white. This is important to signal for several reasons. Firstly, it provides avenues for future investigation of the *niña fatal* regarding the intersections of age, gender, class, and race. Secondly, it suggests that disobedience and alterity among "protected" classes and race (intentionally singular) is a privilege, which is not met with harsh reprisal. This is not necessarily the case for unprotected classes and races.[133] The potential to undermine this protectionist discourse is intensified when it is made available to girls, this availability being intimately linked to socioeconomic standing and whiteness. The connection between race, class, and protectionist discourse suggests that this discourse exists in relation to the degree to which these girls are deemed worthy of protection and protecting by society.

Additionally, the *niñas fatales* herein are all partially orphaned, with missing or decadent fathers. This absence potentiates their power. In the case of poor *niñas fatales* of color, however, their orphanhood is one of far greater scope. As societal orphans, future analysis would be well served to identify the potency of their unbecoming and where that potency falters because of structural challenges. In the ways of a premature hypothesis, while the *niñas fatales* of this investigation are capable of dismantling patriarchal structures responsible for creating sex-based violence, their destruction does not extend to the capitalist and racist systems that generate their

[133] Valerie Walkerdine speaks to the portrayal of girls in pop culture stating that the innocent "blonde-haired girl to be protected is inevitably middle-class and the little seductress is the working-class girl who presents the danger of the fecund masses" (*Daddy's Girl* 5). While the literary and cinematic pieces in the dissertation, as well as *Lolita*, suggest that cultural representation can and does portray middle-class girls as "little seductresses," they are also still represented as to be protected. We see this clearly in *Memorias* with Leticia's exile to Switzerland to live with her Aunt and Uncle, and in "Niña perversa" with Elena's exile to the boarding school run by nuns.

own forms of brutality. Recognizing that the patriarchy is not the only system preventing the full potential of subjectivation for girls, turning the analytic and representational lens towards girls of marginalized classes and races would provide a radical blueprint for navigating a more holistic version of change that speaks to the plurality of the sites of violence in our world as well as the plural ways of becoming and existing in it.

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